

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address:	928 O Street NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Shaw Historic District, Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
ANC:	2F	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
		<input type="checkbox"/> Permit
Meeting Date:	September 18, 2014	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	#14-631	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Brendan Meyer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The applicant, owner Brook Rose, seeks concept design review for a new three-story, three-unit residential building at 928 O Street NW in the Shaw Historic District and Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic District. The project includes demolition of a non-contributing two-story house. Plans were prepared by McGraw Bagnoli Architects, PLLC.

Property Description and Context

This block is typical of the Shaw Historic District and exhibits a variety of building forms from multiple overlapping phases of development. Most of the rowhouses on the block were built individually or in pairs, with the exception being a row of seven three-story flat-front rowhouses at the east end of the block. With an established building height range of two to three stories, the architectural context is further varied by flat front facades mixed with houses with one- or two-story bays; the mix of roof lines ranges from simple corbelled brick to ornate wood cornices, and the occasional mansard roof or turret. At the rear, the subject lot sits adjacent to a collection of brick garages and workshops along a narrow east-west alley that together are an excellent example of the dimensions and workspaces characteristic of Blagden Alley-Naylor Court. The open space to the west is a vacant lot.

The existing house at 928 O Street NW was determined by the Board to be a non-contributing structure at the time the Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic district was designated in 1990. Its brick façade is not original and the survey from the time of designation of the historic district describes the house as a burnt out vacant structure.

Project Summary

The proposal calls for a three-story, three-unit, brick building with a two-story centered brick bay. The centered bay is flanked on either side by matching entrances; one for a single unit and the other a common entrance for the other units. The height of the two story bay relates to the two-story building to the east by way of an aligned stringcourse and a brick parapet that acts as a balcony railing for the top of the bay. The third story is flush with the front property line and articulated as an attic story with windows smaller than the stories below. Fenestration at the first and second floor consists of double-hung sash windows with transoms, including on the side faces of the projecting bay. A penthouse is centered in the roof, setback from the front and side elevations such that it will not be substantially visible from the street.

A blank brick party wall runs three stories for 54 feet along the side property line. At this point the building narrows into a series of a rear wings (18 feet and 8 feet wide) clad in white vertically seamed metal panels. At the ground level, the brick of the side wall continues as a wall fence to the back of the property where it connects to an unroofed brick garage structure. The garage includes both a vehicle and a pedestrian entrance at the alley.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The applicant's concept design is compatible with the character of the historic district in regards to its massing, dimensions, proportions, and materials. Given the significance of the alley to the historic district, the proposed garage form is an important component of the proposal, achieving compatibility on both the street and alley frontages. Although unroofed, its exterior wall materials, proportions and construction allow it to fit seamlessly in with the surrounding historic alley buildings.

The rear wing of the building is a successful example of how contemporary materials in conjunction with thoughtful massing can evoke the hierarchy of the prototypical block-and-rear wing massing of a Victorian rowhouse. While the centered front bay is somewhat unusual in a neighborhood where projections on rowhouses are historically off-set, in this case the centered bay succeeds because of the atypically wide lot. This allows adequate space on either side of the bay for doors and windows that are consistent with the proportions and rhythm of fenestration established by 928 O Street's historic neighbors.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for a 3-story, brick building with 2-story centered bay and rear garage at 928 O Street NW to be compatible with the character of the historic districts, consistent with the purpose of the preservation act, and that final approval be delegated to Staff.