
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	1634 North Capitol Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Bloomington Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	September 27, 2018	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	18-556	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	X	New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

Syga Thomas and James Buckley, representing Fuzion Limited 2 LLC, seek conceptual design review for construction of a four-story plus penthouse building in the Bloomington Historic District. Plans have been prepared by Bonstra/Haresign Architects.

Property History and Description

The site is currently occupied by two one-story commercial buildings, both constructed in 1909. While falling within the period of significance for the Bloomington Historic District (1892-1948), demolition permits were obtained for the structures prior to the effective date of designation for the district. They will be demolished for the construction of the proposed project.

To the south of the subject site is the landmark Old Engine Company #12, a Flemish Revival styled building designed by municipal architect Snowden Ashford and constructed in 1897. Immediately to the north at 1644 North Capitol is a three-story brick commercial building that was originally constructed in 1908 as a two-story building. In 2011, the building's decorative metal cornice was removed, a third floor inserted, and the cornice reinstalled. The applicants, who also own 1644, propose in the future to add one additional floor and adjust the awkward spacing of the windows on the existing third floor in the same manner (by moving the cornice up again), which is shown in the rendering for this project. Despite the change to its historic character, 1644 was classified as contributing to the historic district in the Bloomington nomination.

Proposal

The plans call for construction of a four-story building with a penthouse, with retail or a restaurant on the ground-level, hotel rooms on the second and third floors, residential condominiums on the fourth floor, and a roof deck off the penthouse. The building would be clad in brick and have a central projecting bay.

The plans are more schematic than is typical for a submission to the Board, and some inconsistencies become apparent when comparing the rendering, floor plans and elevations (the fenestration in the elevations show Juliette balconies and doors that are not shown in the rendering; the bay in the section drawing is more than 6 feet deep and shows doors and Juliette balconies on the side elevation but is scaled closer to four feet in the plans). While a few revisions to the plans have been made in response to recommendations by HPO to improve the compatibility of the proposal – the extent of glazing has been reduced and the front elevation has been aligned with the facades of the adjacent buildings -- the applicants have been reluctant to expend the resources to

fully re-engage their architects until obtaining an indication from the Board that their basic concept for a 50-foot, four-story building is determined compatible with the historic district.

Evaluation

The Bloomingdale Historic District has remarkably few vacant sites and only eight non-contributing buildings, so there is very limited potential for new construction. Although not yet adopted by the Board, the proposed design guidelines for district provide the following direction for new construction:

New construction should be compatible with its site, taking into account the immediate context and the broader character of the historic district. Compatibility does not mean or require duplicating existing buildings, and the review of new construction is not intended to discourage good contemporary design or creative architectural expression. New construction should be consistent with the principles outlined in the guideline “New Construction in Historic Districts.”

In applying the principles outlined in the Board’s guideline, the concept is clearly compatible with its context in terms of setback (built to the building line), orientation (with primary entrances and retail storefront oriented to the street), and material (brick, the most common material in the district). Regarding height, the proposal is consistent with the guideline’s statement that “a new building built in a street of existing buildings of varied heights may be more than one story higher or lower than its immediate neighbors and still be compatible.” Height also has to be considered in the context of the proportion of height to width; in this instance of a double lot width, the four-story height has the potential to ensure that new construction has a vertical emphasis (as is typical of buildings in the historic district) and won’t be incompatibly horizontal.

From a broader planning context, the Mid City East Small Area Plan recommends a future land use designation change for the intersections of North Capitol with New York and Florida avenues (the latter of which is a half block to the south) from low density commercial/moderate density residential to moderate density commercial/moderate density residential. A seven-story planned unit development has been approved by the Zoning Commission for the large vacant site at the northwest corner of North Capitol and Florida. Urbanistically, a mid-sized 50-foot building on the subject site could provide a needed transition between those taller buildings and the smaller buildings to the north.

The one aspect of the height and mass that has not been fully developed for evaluation is the relationship of the building with the adjoining landmark firehouse. If the project proceeds, the view of the proposal from the south will be important to illustrate.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find that a four-story plus penthouse building in this location is compatible in height with the character of the Bloomingdale Historic District, and that the project plans be further developed for a more complete presentation to the Board when ready.