
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	434 3rd Street NE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	December 15, 2016	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	16-697	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Gabriela Gutowski	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Applicant Adeniyi Talabi, of Bellview Development Inc., with plans prepared by architect Ramy Ali, seeks concept review for the construction of new two-unit building on a vacant lot in the Capitol Hill Historic District. The applicant is seeking a zoning variance from BZA in relation to the proposed building's set back and lot occupancy.

Property Description

The lot at 434 3rd Street, NE is currently vacant. To the north of the lot are four two-story brick bay-fronted rowhouses built in 1887. Directly south of the lot, 432 3rd Street, NE, is a three-story free-standing brick building built in 1939. Two lots to the south, 430 3rd Street, NE is currently also a vacant lot, although the property owner has filed permits for a three-story single family dwelling.

The block, bound by 3rd Street, NE, E Street, NE, 2nd Street, NE, and Massachusetts Ave, is located at the western edge of the Capitol Hill Historic District. The blocks directly to the north, northeast and east, are characterized by continues rows of two and three story brick rowhouses. However, 434 3rd Street, NE's block features large apartment buildings, contributing and non-contributing, ranging in heights from four to eight stories. The immediate surroundings also feature large institutional buildings, such as the U.S. Court building at the terminus of E St, NE and 2nd Street, NE, and Stuart Junior High School at 4th Street, NE and E Street, NE.

Proposal

The plans call for the construction of a 35' 0" tall three-story building and basement. All four facades would be clad in gray brick. The primary facade would feature a three-story rectangular bay projecting 4'0" with tripartite one-over-one double-hung windows. The bay would have a wood cornice and extend 3' 6" above the roof, concealing the visibility of HVAC units. Each floor would be accented by a recessed soldier course of brick and each window opening would have brick headers and lintels. A concrete stairs and landing with slate treads and wrought iron railings would lead to a single leaf entrance door at the ground floor and an interior vestibule would give access to the two residential units. Concrete stairs would lead to trash and utility rooms located at the basement level beneath the entrance landing. The proposed building footprint would take up almost all of the lot with the exception of small notch at the northwest

corner. The rear façade would have no fenestration, and instead feature a green wall on mesh panels mounted to brick.

Evaluation

The proposed height, materials and general massing are compatible with the context and historic district. The use of soldier coursed brick relates well to the subtle brick detailing at the mid-century building directly to the south, while the rectangular bay picks up the vocabulary of the 19th century rowhouses to the north and across the street.

However, as proposed, the size of the rectangular brick bay appears proportionally too large in comparison to the building and to the bays on surrounding buildings. Further development of the proportions of the bay, with study of decreasing its height and/or width, is recommended.

The use of concrete, slate treads and wrought iron railings at the entrance stair and landing is combination of materials not historically found at rowhouses within the district. The entrance stairs and landing would better relate to the historic district if it was completely constructed of iron. The detailing could be simplified to be a modern interpretation of the historic cast-iron stairs and railings found at the neighboring rowhouses

Further study of the proposed colors could also improve the project's compatibility. Buildings in the historic district are predominately composed of painted masonry or masonry in warm earth tones, which is very different from the cool industrial character of the proposal's gray brick and painted charcoal trim. The larger historic apartment buildings within the block are red, orange, and buff brick, and a color palette that more closely relates to these buildings would help contextualize the project to its site.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board find the concept to be generally compatible with the character of the historic district, but that revisions are needed to the color of the materials and to the massing, materials and fenestration of the projecting bay.