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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	900 11th Street, SE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	September 18, 2014	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	14-527	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Sarah VanLandingham	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
	Frances McMillen	<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Applicant Madison Investments with plans prepared by PGN Architects requests ongoing concept review for a multi-unit new construction project at 900 11th St SE in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

900 11th Street SE is currently occupied by a parking lot and small auto service station that is non-contributing to the Capitol Hill Historic District. The site is located at the corner of 11th and I (“Eye”) Street adjacent to a small two-story brick building on 11th Street and across an alley from a three-story brick residential building on I Street. The site is an incomplete rectangle measuring approximately 130’x150’ with a total square footage of 16,142 sq. ft.

This part of Capitol Hill is less homogenous than some other areas and there is a mix of building types and uses including a few rowhouses, some small scale apartment buildings, and small scale commercial structures. In addition, there are large open spaces such as the baseball field on the opposite corner. The area is also impacted by the Southeast Freeway that cuts through this section of the district.

Proposal

The proposal calls for the construction of a four-story building above a raised basement to contain 48-units. The building will be comprised of units with townhouse-type individual entrances as well as units accessed from an interior corridor. It will be clad in brick up to the third story with the final story clad in fiber cement panels. Most of the parking will be located in an underground garage accessed from the alley.

The roof will feature both a shared roof deck for tenant use as well as a green roof. The mechanical equipment will be screened by the roof deck. The stair access structures will likely be visible from the street.

Evaluation

The size and scale of this building, although larger than others in the immediate vicinity, is generally compatible with the historic district and not inappropriate for a lot of this size and

corner location. The design is contemporary but incorporates materials and some details common in historic buildings, such as corbelling and defined lintels. The inclusion of townhouse style entrances relates to the rowhouse architecture prevalent throughout Capitol Hill. The ratio of glazing to solid of the fenestration is compatible with the historic district and the relatively few window types create a simple rhythm that contributes to the notion of vertical modules typical of Capitol Hill.

As the project continues to be refined, the following areas are suggested for further development:

1. The use of a single large projection is unusual for Capitol Hill where bays are typically used to break up a façade into smaller vertical pieces. While this is somewhat mitigated by the corner location and the lack of a cohesive collection of bay front architecture in this section of Capitol Hill, breaking this up into smaller projections and distributing them across the facades of the building could help reduce the scale of the building and animate the long flat elevations. This alternative approach to the use of projections should be studied, as was recommended by the Board in the previous review.
2. The composition struggles proportionally in utilizing a tripartite arrangement due to a base that doesn't fully ground the building and a mid-section that is not fully realized in two stories. It would benefit from pulling the language of the middle section down to the first floor and creating a stronger water-table to ground the building.
3. The penthouses should be pulled in to respect the 1:1 setback standard that is typical of penthouses. Ideally, the penthouse structures could be reduced in size, reduced to their minimal height, and disconnected from each other; if zoning relief is otherwise sought for this project, the applicants are encouraged to seek this type of relief to reduce the penthouse mass and visibility.
4. The site plan should continue to be developed to illustrate in detail how the building and its stairs and window wells will sit on the ground, how much green space can be provided and how the property will meet the public sidewalk. The plan should also incorporate a fence or wall to screen the parking at the rear of the building from sidewalk view.

November 2014 Update

At the September meeting, the Board found the general concept to be compatible and asked the applicant to return with revisions based on the recommendations of the staff report and comments from the Board. In addition to approving the staff report, the following issues were raised as part of the final motion. The applicant should:

- Consider how the building is entered,
- Further study the projections, detailing, and materials and avoid a projection that acts as a “land grab”,
- Develop the landscape to create a buffer along 11th Street and continue the residential feeling of I Street,
- Develop the south façade, and
- Design the penthouse

The applicant has revised the plans as follows:

- The units are now all accessed from internal corridors instead of with individual townhouse-style entrances. The main entrance has been reduced in height and is better scaled for the pedestrian experience.
- The organization of the façade has been simplified into a more traditional tripartite arrangement with a base, three-story mid-section, and a lighter cap.
- A more robust water table and window sills have been added.
- The south elevation and penthouses have been rendered in Nichiha panels to match the top story.

Overall, the project is improved by these changes. The design of the façade has moved away from the hybrid concept and benefits from employing more traditional apartment building vocabulary.

Some elements of the project have not been updated to address the Board's comments. The projections continue to be employed as a large bay that wraps the corner instead of smaller units breaking up the façade vertically despite comments from the Board about avoiding a "land grab."

The continuous use of Nichiha panels on the south wall and penthouse results in a monotonous appearance that would benefit from some use of contrasting colors, patterns, textures, or windows given that this elevation is likely to remain exposed. Adding some detail to the penthouse would help to make this element look more intentional.

The applicant has made some strides toward landscaping around the building and has expressed a willingness to berm the landscape slightly around the base to improve the way the building meets the ground. As the project develops, the applicant should work with staff on the detailing of this space. Additionally, the parking area adjacent to the alley should be screened in some manner.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept compatible with the Capitol Hill historic district and direct the applicants work with staff to refine the design.