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

Property Address:	717-719 H Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Downtown Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	July 23, 2020	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	20-345	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		New Construction
			Demolition
		X	Subdivision

L3 717H Street NW LLC, with plans prepared by Eleanor Krause (MV+A Architects) seeks conceptual design review for storefront alterations to three adjoining properties (717, 719 H and a rear ancillary building facing 8th), and a roof addition on the ancillary building.

Property Description

717 H Street is a three-story Italianate rowhouse constructed around 1868. It features segmental-arched two-over-two windows, a bracketed wood cornice, and a gabled roof.

719 H Street is a three-story Queen Anne rowhouse constructed in 1888 for owner Carl Mueller by architects C. Graham & Son. It features robust projecting bays and a corner turret, patterned brickwork, and a second story balcony with an original iron railing facing H Street.

According to building permit records, the two-story brick ancillary building behind 719 (803 8th Street) was constructed in 1885 as a stable for Carl Mueller, three years before the construction of the corner house.

All three buildings have been combined and substantially altered on their interiors, with changes to and numerous penetrations through bearing walls, changes in floor alignments, new structural framing, and openings cut through floor assemblies. All of the buildings have mid- to late-20th century storefronts.

Proposal

The project calls for rehabilitating the buildings for ground level retail and upper story office use. The projecting storefront at 717 would be replaced in the same form, with a stone base and aluminum storefront system and retaining the existing wood transom windows. The projecting storefront on 719 would be removed and replaced with a flush aluminum storefront within an earlier masonry storefront frame, accessed by a new set of granite steps.

The stable would serve as the primary entrance to the upper story offices, with a new flush retail storefront and office entrance set within an angled metal surround. A third story addition would be constructed atop the stable to provide elevator access to each level. The addition would be set back approximately 6 feet from the existing façade with a roof deck in front and clad in a contemporary vocabulary of metal siding and a glass Nanawall system opening to the deck.

Evaluation

The conceptual plans for the storefront replacement are compatible with the character of the Downtown Historic District. As the plans are finalized, a few details should be incorporated into the construction plans, such as providing a heavier profile to the horizontal division between the storefront glazing and the transom windows and a putty glaze or beveled profile between the storefront framing and the glazing.

While the Board typically discourages visible roof additions, the very modest and altered character of the stable and the dynamic urban context of the Downtown Historic District makes a case for an exception to that general rule. The Board has allowed visible roof additions in similar instances where the design qualities and character of the building are modest, where there is a clear distinction between the historic building and the addition, and where the context includes a variety of heights, all circumstances which are present here. Nearby projects approved by Board that also met these criteria include a two-story contemporary addition on the two-story commercial building at 875 7th Street and the multiple floors added to the garage building at 443 Eye Street. The proposed addition and roof deck, set back from the street elevation and clad in contemporary materials with a high proportion of glass, is secondary in massing and clearly distinguishable from the stable building, and compatible with its urban context.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board approve the concept design for building alterations and roof addition as compatible with the character of the historic district, and delegate final approval to staff.