

---

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

---

|                    |                                   |                           |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Property Address:  | <b>819 H Street, NW</b>           | Agenda                    |
| Landmark/District: | <b>Downtown Historic District</b> | <b>X</b> Consent Calendar |
|                    |                                   | <b>X</b> Concept Review   |
| Meeting Date:      | <b>December 3, 2020</b>           | <b>X</b> Alteration       |
| H.P.A. Number:     | <b>21-053</b>                     | New Construction          |
|                    |                                   | Demolition                |

---

Marx Realty, with plans prepared by Studio 3877 Architects, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a sixth story roof addition atop a five-story historic building in the Downtown Historic District.

**Property Description**

819 7<sup>th</sup> Street is an imposing five-story Romanesque Revival styled red brick building constructed in 1891 as a furniture store. It was designed by architect Julius Germuiller (1859-1929), a native Washingtonian who became one of the city's most prolific and noted designers of row buildings at the turn of the century. Responsible for the design of more than 300 structures, Germuiller's work is distinguished by its intricate details and fine ornamentation rendered in brick and stone, as is evidenced by the superb brick corbelling at 819.

**Proposal**

The project calls for construction of a sixth story roof addition set back 16'7" from the front elevation and rising essentially flush with the side and rear walls. It would be 12' in height with an additional 4'2" for a central clerestory pulled back from all sides, although the existing roof would be removed to set the addition down to the level of the fifth-floor ceiling in order to reduce its height and mass. The exterior would be clad in gray brick and banks of dark-framed windows. The addition would not be visible directly in front of the building but due to the lower height of immediately adjacent buildings, would be visible from perspective views.

**Evaluation**

While the Board typically discourages visible roof additions, the robust character of this building, the quiet and recessive character of the design, and the dynamic urban context of the Downtown Historic District makes a case for an exception to that general rule. The building's heavy, muscular quality can visually support a visible additional story and the generous setback from the corbelled cornice at the front ensures that there will be no compromise to the building's distinctive front roofline. In addition to the front setback, the addition has been designed in a compatible and complementary earth-toned brick that is clearly distinguished from and respectful and subordinate to the underlying building. Finally, while the subject property is the tallest in this immediate row, the adjacency of taller buildings behind and the broader context of the Downtown Historic District – with its wide variety of heights - provide an environment in which this roof addition is not inherently discordant or incompatible.

**Recommendation**

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

*Staff contact: Steve Callcott*