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

Property Address:	Florida Avenue at 9th and 8th, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	U Street Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	July 26, 2012	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	12-159		Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	X	New Construction
			Demolition
		X	Subdivision

Florida Avenue Residential LLC (JBG Companies), represented by the Miller/Hull Partnership architects, seeks ongoing conceptual design review for construction of two residential and retail buildings in the U Street Historic District on Florida Avenue between 9th Street and 7th streets.

When last reviewed the project in May, the Board expressed concerns that the project did not sufficiently relate to the surrounding historic district; the strong horizontal emphasis of each building and the scale and texture of elements were specifically cited as incompatible. As well, the buildings' storefronts were found to be disconnected from the upper portions of the buildings and in need of further study and development.

Revised Proposal

The facades of the larger Florida Avenue blocks of each building have been redesigned with stronger vertical orientation. Full building height niches are now used to modulate the mass and break the buildings down into smaller, more vertically-oriented blocks and vertical metal panels used to overlay the horizontal floor slabs. The metal panel system proposed for the upper floors has been selectively pulled down into the storefront base of the building.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The buildings are decidedly more vertical in emphasis, and the use of niches (paired with the use of color) creates a more compatible vertical orientation and rhythm of building elements along the long Florida Avenue frontages. By pulling a few of the metal panels down into storefront zone, there is more of a relationship between the buildings' storefront bases and the upper floors.

However, based on the Board's comments in May, the HPO had anticipated further development. There had been discussion between the HPO and the architects about providing variety to the size and width of the metal panels to provide additional texture and scale to the wall surfaces as requested by the Board. While this might not ultimately be the right solution, it was the sort of idea that it was anticipated would be presented for review and discussion. Similarly, the storefront elevations represent a step towards establishing a relationship between the buildings' bases and upper floors, but lack the

sense of scale, materiality, or component parts that make for an interesting and fully developed commercial streetscape. While future tenants will certainly want the opportunity to individualize the storefronts, some unifying architectural character for the building base should be established.

The HPO recommends that the Board:

- *find the changes that have been made to be steps in the right direction to improving the compatibility of the design but that further development is needed,*
- *convene a group of Board members to have a design working session with the applicants to discuss and explore alternatives.*