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

Property Address:	1701-1711 14th Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	14th Street Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	June 2, 2016	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	16-379	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	X	New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

Property owner Whitman-Walker Clinic Inc. and applicant Fivesquares at 1701 LLC seek conceptual design review for a project that would include rehabilitation and incorporation of two contributing buildings into a new six-story-plus-penthouse retail, office and residential structure. The architectural plans have been developed by Selldorf Architects and preservation plans by EHT Traceries.

Property History and Description

The site currently contains three buildings along 14th Street that have housed offices for Whitman-Walker since the 1990s, and which were renovated and internally combined in 2005 and renamed the Elizabeth Taylor Center. There is an approximately 50' x 157' vacant parcel used as a parking lot at the corner of 14th and Riggs Place.

The two-story corner stucco-clad building at 1701 14th Street is the remaining centerpiece of what was once four related buildings constructed in 1906, designed in a Spanish Colonial style by Washington architects Hunter & Bell as a florist shop and for other retail uses. The complex once had one-story wings extending east on R Street and north on 14th and a greenhouse at the rear of the site, all of which have been demolished. While the remaining building has been altered and lost some of its character-defining features, it retains its overall form, distinctive hipped roof and overhanging eaves, and the pattern of fenestration on the second floor.

The two-story stucco-clad building at 1707 14th Street was the site of the one-story north wing of the 1701 complex but no aspect of that earlier wing appears to remain. The second story was constructed sometime after mid-1980s photographs, and the interior structure was replaced in the 2005 renovation.

The two-story building at 1711 14th Street was built in 1904 as a full-service automobile storage and service facility for up to 150 cars and with "every convenience" offered to owners of the still-new technology. As originally constructed, its facade was clad in red brick with a rusticated brick base organized around three arched garage door openings. In the 1920s, the arched garage doors were replaced with large plate glass storefronts flanking a centered entrance, and the brick clad in stucco scored to look like stone. The building served a variety of automobile sales and service functions through much of the 20th century.

1701 and 1711 were constructed within the period of significance for the 14th Street Historic District (1855-1940). While they have experienced alterations and loss of some features, they retain sufficient integrity to be considered contributing to the historic district. 1707 consists largely of construction dating from outside the period of significance and does not contribute to the district.

Project Description

The project calls for exterior rehabilitation of 1701 and 1711, removal of the rear half of 1711, demolition of 1707, and construction of a six story building between, behind and to the north of the historic buildings that would be capped by a seventh story penthouse. The ground level of the combined structures would include retail and community center uses and entrance lobbies, the second and third floors would have offices for Whitman-Walker, and the fourth floor through the seventh floors would have residential units. A 4' high screen to conceal split system mechanical units would be set atop the seventh floor. The site would be excavated for a one level garage extending under the retained portion of 1711 but not under 1701.

The new construction has been designed with equal treatment of materials and design on all elevations. The skin would consist of a rationalist frame of limestone with wood or metal casement windows set deep within their openings. Glazed terra cotta would be used as returns within the window openings, transitioning in color from warm tones on the south elevations to cooler tones on the north. The ground level would be largely glass with inset entry doors between retail storefronts set at the property line; the retail level would be topped by a unifying limestone band serving as a cap to the storefronts and a canopy for the entrances. As with the upper story windows, the applicants are still studying the use of metal and wood for the storefront framing system.

Evaluation

The preservation plans for 1701 and 1711 document existing and historic conditions, and provides the methodology to guide their rehabilitation. Particularly for 1701, the approach will involve extensive recreation of missing features based on historic documentation, including replication of ornamental door surrounds, projecting storefront windows, windows and doors, and red tile and smooth stucco roof and wall finishes. Given the loss of original material on the first floor and damage to the underlying original brickwork, the treatment for 1711 appropriately focuses on returning the building to a 1920s appearance when it was remodeled as a car showroom and provided the Stripped Classical character that it still essentially retains. As the building is a very simple brick shell, the interior of which has been remodeled multiple times, the removal of the rear portion of 1711 would not result in a loss of character-defining features or diminish the public understanding of it as a historic auto-related building. As the reports point out, there is further on-site evaluation of existing conditions and precise treatments to be worked out, but they provide a solid methodology for the scope of rehabilitation work and the commitment to returning the buildings to their historic appearance is exemplary.

The high bar set for the rehabilitation of the historic buildings is matched by the quality of design and materials proposed for the new construction. The project has been designed in recognition of its site and in deference to its historic buildings, with references both to the district's classical

auto showrooms and to its location in a vibrant arts and retail district. In terms of compatibility, the building's height is consistent with the context of other new construction projects that have been reviewed and approved by the Board since the designation of the district. The placement of the historic buildings on the block, with the new construction having to be built around them, results in a mass that is broken down into smaller components that prevent the new construction from overwhelming the surrounding buildings. The vertically-oriented masses facing 14th Street have a height-to-width proportion that is consistent with proportions found in the street's historic buildings. At the rear, the height and mass step down to provide a comfortable transition to the smaller row houses on R Street and Riggs Place. The use of limestone and terra cotta, large windows set deep within their openings to provide shadow, and a formal composition set atop a differentiated retail base all relate well to the district's historic buildings many of which have these same defining characteristics.

The proposed use of colorful terra cotta that graduates across the elevations set within the limestone frame is simultaneously playful and disciplined. Vibrant color in architecture is unusual in Washington and particularly appropriate for a new building in the Uptown Arts District, but is employed judiciously as an architectural accent that wouldn't overpower the design or the surrounding historic buildings. With equal design emphasis on all elevations - itself a laudable design characteristic for a structure that will remain surrounded by lower buildings -- the changes in color and slight variations in the width of the terra cotta returns will provide the building with a subtle variety in appearance that will enhance the experience of viewing it from different perspective views.

The applicants are continuing to study the use of wood and metal for the storefront and upper floor window systems. While wood remains the applicants' preferred aesthetic option, the size of the units raise structural and cost implications that need to be more fully explored. In a district that has both large wood framed storefront and sash windows and buildings with industrial metal sash, either option could be developed in a manner compatible with the character of the historic district. Even if the use of wood windows on the upper floors proves infeasible, HPO has encouraged the applicants to consider using wood for the storefront system where it would be most appreciated by pedestrians and provide further distinction and warmth to the building's base.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the preservation plans for the rehabilitation of 1701 and 1711 14th Street and the conceptual design for new construction to be compatible with the character of the historic district, and delegate final approval to staff.