

---

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

---

Property Address:	<b>1333-43 H Street, NW</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Real Estate Trust Company</b>	<b>X</b> Consent Calendar
		<b>X</b> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	<b>December 18, 2014</b>	<b>X</b> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>14-652</b>	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Steve Callcott</b>	Demolition

---

RP MRP 1333H LLC, with plans prepared by Gensler Architects, seeks on-going concept design review for façade replacement of a 1980s office building addition to the landmark Real Estate Trust Company.

### **Property History and Description**

The Real Estate Trust building is a twelve-story commercial office building at the northeast corner of H and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets. It was constructed in 1913-14, designed in a highly ornate Beaux Arts Renaissance Revival-style by the Washington-based firm Milburn, Heister & Company. The building is architecturally notable for its façade of ivory-colored terra cotta with polychrome accents.

Concurrent with the 1980s renovation, an 11-story addition was built to the east. Clad in horizontal bands of gray granite and dark tinted aluminum framed windows, it is an unremarkable speculative office building of its era and does not appear to have been designed with any intent of relating to the Real Estate Trust building. As it is located on the same lot and interconnected with the pending landmark, alterations to it are subject to review.

### **Previous Review**

In October, the Board found the concept to reskin the 1980s addition to be generally compatible with the adjacent landmark, with the exception of the projecting oriel bays, which were found to be too aggressive and detracted from the landmark. The Board found the new canopy and door surround on the landmark to be somewhat clunky and simplistic, and that it be further developed and detailed; a preservation plan for the building was also requested. The Board asked that the project return for further review when ready.

### **Revised Proposal**

The revised plans call for retaining the overall composition previously presented but with the projecting oriels flattened out to address the concerns regarding them being too aggressive. The canopy and door surround have been modified as well to relate more closely to the type of detailing that would be found on a Beaux-Arts building.

### **Evaluation**

After studying a variety of options, the revised proposal was deemed the best at both addressing the Board's concerns while also breaking down the scale of the addition's façade into smaller elements. Alternative options that simply brought the skin of the eastern portion of the façade over resulted in a

much larger looking building, thus retaining the composition but eliminating the three-dimensional projecting quality that competed with the landmark was arrived at. As before, the proposal is successful in breaking down the block-spanning horizontality of the existing addition and creating a more sympathetic rhythm that would better relate and tie the Real Estate Trust to the buildings of similar widths to the east of the addition. The use of vertically-oriented elements, now flattened out, still provides some depth and shadow -- important characteristics of the landmark -- without being visually dominant. The vertical proportions of the glazing in the eastern portion of the building would similarly improve the compatibility of the addition with the vertical orientation of the landmark's fenestration.

The proposed canopy has been provided with some simple detailing, but still appears heavy. Reducing the visual weight as presented by the profile of the metal framing should continue to be evaluated.

The preservation plan was still being developed at the time this report was being prepared and should be finalized with the HPO.

**Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board approve the revised proposal in concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff.*