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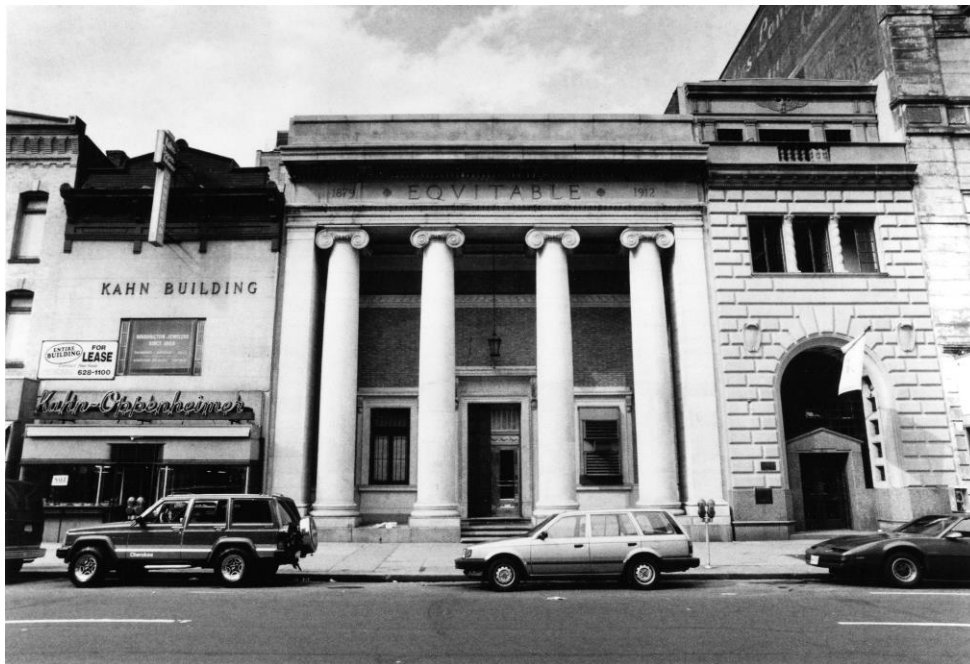
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Property Address:	<b>915 F Street NW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Equitable Co-Operative Building Association (Interior Landmark)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar <input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Meeting Date:	<b>October 30, 2014</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
H.P.A. Number:	<b>#14-712</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Brendan Meyer</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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The applicant, owner Jemal's Equitable, LLC, seeks concept approval for altering the front façade of the Equitable Co-Operative Building Association, a landmark that is also located in the Downtown Historic District. The landmark designation includes the interior banking hall. Plans were prepared by Studios Architecture. In 2012 the Board approved the addition of five new stories at the rear of the building that is yet to be constructed.



*Equitable Cooperative building at the time of designation, 1989*

### **Property Description and Context**

The Equitable Co-Operative Building Association is a monumental scaled, one-story bank building in the classical revival style. Built in 1912, it is a prototypical example of a “temple front” bank building, with a façade that features four marble Ionic columns *in antis* supporting a flat entablature. Behind the row of columns, a brick façade sits on an articulated limestone base with central monumental entry and flanking windows. The entry includes a pair of outer sliding bronze doors behind which is pair of non-original wood doors with brass transom above. The windows are wood casements capped by a single transom. All openings are surrounded by limestone aediculae consisting of a entablature, brackets and banding resting on the limestone base of the façade.

Many components of the building's landmarked interior have been recently and substantially restored. This includes the large banking hall skylight that had been painted over, but now provides ample natural illumination, and a Tennessee marble patterned floor that had been covered by travertine.

## **Proposal**

The applicant proposes a series of options of varying extent that would add display space to the front façade. All three options endeavor to not alter, remove or damage the existing conditions of the façade and to be entirely reversible. Each option would use glass panels with minimal metal profiles. Option 1 is a storefront system that would encase the porch to a height of 13 feet except for the center of the façade which would be left open for the entrance. The face of the new glass would be in front of the columns and the top of the storefronts would be built around the columns. Option 2 is a glass façade the full height and width of the temple porch only leaving an opening for the entrance. The new glass façade would be in front of the columns and be proud of the entire limestone facade by 2 feet. Structural fin glazing about halfway up the height of the glass wall and an integrated gutter are included in this option. Option 3 proposes two separate glazed display cases behind the columns and around each window flanking the main entrance. These display cases would rest on the temple plinth and stand 13 feet tall, approximately in line with the top of the aedicula around the entrance.

## **Evaluation**

The purpose of the law, with respect to historic landmarks, is to retain them and encourage their adaptation to current use.<sup>1</sup> By regulation, applicants are encouraged, but not required, to meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* when altering or adding to a historic landmark.<sup>2</sup> The Secretary's Standards advise that properties should be used for their historic purposes or given a new use that requires minimal change to defining characteristics like historic materials, features or spatial relationships.

The Equitable Cooperative landmark is a work of high design, materials and craftsmanship. Each component of the temple front is finely measured to fit a system of interlocking proportional relationships in the tradition of classical architecture. The effect is monumental, but also foreboding; a very purposeful expression by the financial institution that commissioned the building. This makes for a good bank building, but does not lend itself easily to a store needing to display merchandise.

Putting the historic bank building into service as a store, rather than holding out for an institutional tenant, is a reasonable approach that is consistent with the commercial character of this part of the Downtown Historic District. The applicant offers that any alteration will be temporary, but the Historic Preservation Office has no apparatus or ability to enforce any such arrangement, so realistically the alterations need to be evaluated as permanent alterations. Options 1 and 2 would so drastically change the features and spatial relationships of the temple-front bank façade that they are inherently incompatible with the landmark and the historic district. The glass wall systems would be transparent in some respects, but not under all lighting conditions or angles and would close off access to most of the temple porch. From many angles the deep shadow of the porch, one of the richest features and visual effects of the façade, would be replaced by reflections of the surrounding streetscape.

The only option that should be considered further is Option 3 because it offers the smallest amount of intrusion into the spatial quality of the temple porch, would have a minimal impact on the historic façade, and would sit behind the row of Ionic columns. A minimized version of this option could also be explored that reduces the display cases in size to fit the width of each window opening and rest on their deep sills rather than on the plinth of the temple porch. If Option 3 (or the minimized version suggested) is found compatible, the applicant should develop and submit detailed fabrication drawings that exhibit how the display cases will be accessed and affixed in a way that would not damage historic fabric.

## **Recommendation**

*The HPO seeks the Board's direction on whether Option 3 or a revised Option 3 that reduces the cases to the size of the window openings would be compatible with the landmark and worthy of further design development.*

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<sup>1</sup> Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act of 1978, D.C. Law 2-144, Section 2(b)(2).

<sup>2</sup> DCMR 10 Historic Preservation, Section 2003