

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Landmark/District:	Mount Vernon Triangle Historic District	(X) Agenda
Address:	923-925 5th Street NW	() Consent
		(X) Concept
Meeting Date:	December 17, 2020	(X) Alteration
Case Number:	21-056	(X) New Construction
		() Demolition

Kline Operations, working with architect Peter Fillat, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a 11-story condominium building with ground level retail that incorporates the historic facade of 925 5th Street.

Property Description

Architect W. Ellis Groben designed 925-929 5th Street in 1946 for the Union Provision and Distribution Company. It was to house a Jewish meat market and distribution center with a refrigeration plant, and it was renamed the Director Company after the owner's surname. The front facade is all that remains of the original building which still has the original polychrome panels designed by concrete specialist John J. Earley. The panels once read "Director's Deli – Deliciously Different Corned Beef," some of which is still faintly visible today under a later coat of paint. The facade dates from the period of significance for the Mount Vernon Triangle Historic District (1869-1946), and HPO worked with the owner several years ago to ensure that the facade was properly braced so that it could be retained as part of this streetscape and incorporated into a new construction project.

Previous Reviews

Projects similar in massing and scale to what is currently proposed have appeared before the Board 3 times in the last 4 years. In September 2016, the Board approved a conceptual design by another development/design team for a 10-story residential building that retained and restored the historic facade.

In March 2018, the Board approved a hotel concept, with comments for further development, and asked that the project return on the Consent Calendar. The Board's comments included continuing work on the base of the building, refining how the tower meets the historic facade, studying the profile and material of the columns, clarifying the main entry of the building, and further design and minimization of the penthouse. In May 2018 the Board approved that revised concept on the Consent Calendar.

Revised Proposal

The new proposed design will now be for 49 condominiums, retail space on the first level, and 9 parking spaces below grade. Although the project is the same massing, height, and scale as the approved project 2 years ago, the front facade has a significantly different design direction. The new design proposes an all-glass front facade with a series of 4' deep, alternating glass projections starting at the 4th floor moving their way up the facade. The side elevations will be brick with smaller punched vertical window openings. The historic single-story facade will be cleaned up, preserved, and rebuilt with storefront projections. The penthouse will be set back and include an occupiable green roof.

Evaluation

The most significant difference between the current and previously approved concepts is the front elevation. The all-glass treatment with alternating projecting bays creates a more animated façade – although it is a departure from the other large-scale new buildings on this square that have a significantly higher percentage of masonry.

In an effort to recognize the low, simple, masonry historic buildings along this row, the first 3 floors of the new building have a slightly quieter treatment with no bay projections. This is somewhat successful in creating a datum line referencing the other 3-story buildings on this row, while the wide masonry frame around the glass façade helps bridge the material contrast of the modern glass façade with the masonry buildings on either side. The all-glass façade will result in a substantial contrast with the surrounding historic buildings, both brighter and more chaotic in massing, and the building could be more compatible with a calmer façade. However, the Board has given substantial flexibility and deference to large-scale new construction in this historic district and the proposal would not be out of character with that broader context.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept consistent with the purposes of the preservation act, and for the design team to continue to develop the front façade and to delegate final approval to staff.

Staff contact: Kim Elliott



Current proposal – Dec 2020 (architect: Peter Fillat)



HPRB approved – May 2018 (architect: Peter Fillat)



HPRB approved – Sept. 2016 (WDG architects)