

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address: 1001 O Street NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District: Shaw Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
ANC: 2F	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
	<input type="checkbox"/> Permit
Meeting Date: June 25, 2015	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number: #15-359	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer: Brendan Meyer	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
	<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The applicant, owner Suzanne Reatig, seeks approval of a concept design for a new three-story, two-unit rowhouse at 1001 O Street NW in the Shaw Historic District. The site is currently vacant. Plans were prepared by Suzanne Reatig Architecture.

Property Description and Context

This block is typical of the Shaw Historic District in exhibiting a variety of building forms from multiple overlapping phases of development. Most of the rowhouses on the block were built individually, and are two or three stories tall with and without projecting bays. A variety of roof lines are present along O and 10th Street including corbelled brick, wood cornices, and the occasional mansard roof or turret. The rectangular 20 x 80 foot site has been vacant since designation of the historic district in 1999 with its narrow side facing O Street.

Project Summary

The applicant proposes a three story, two-unit contemporary rowhouse of brick and metal panels. The O Street elevation is composed as a front façade with a three-story projecting bay and above grade entrance with metal steps. The 10th Street elevation is composed as a 48 foot long side elevation that includes a 16 foot wide, 2-story projecting bay at the center. Both bays are clad in metal panels and fenestrated with large undivided windows and transoms. At the third floor of the side elevation above the projecting bay the brick elevation opens up to provide an open-air terrace. The terrace is covered by a trellis and includes a metal stair up to a roof deck screened by four foot tall parapets. The rear elevation facing north is clad in metal panels with a vertical pattern and includes large areas of glass block in the west bay of the elevation away from the street.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The proposed contemporary concept is compatible with the historic district in many criteria including setback, orientation, rhythm, massing, height, and roof shape. Like the other houses on the block the new building is oriented with a clear front façade facing O Street which includes a ubiquitous projecting bay opposite a front entrance. The formal composition of the front is counter balanced by the informality of the long side elevation along 10th Street where the building material palette remains the same but the arrangement and shape of components is more irregular or specific, in particular the terrace at the third floor.

The informality of this elevation and the terrace at the third floor is very similar to the character of the historic corner rowhouse at 945 O Street across 10th Street from the applicant's project site. 945 O has an architecturally composed formal front façade facing O Street, but along 10th Street has an informal arrangement of unornamented blank wall, two-story side porch, and undisguised main block/rear wing massing. The large porch is the most prominent feature of the side elevation; it belies the short depth of the front of the building and creates a large open semi-private space. The third floor terrace of the proposed concept does the same in a contemporary fashion; it expresses a short depth for the front of the building and creates a prominent semi-private space in an otherwise blank and informal wall. As a study of solid and void, the two elevations play off of each other in a complementary way. A creative and special benefit of the terrace is how it provides roof top access without resorting to a penthouse stair that would otherwise clutter the profile of the flat roof.

While strong on the most basic and important criteria, the concept could benefit from some additional refinement and guidance from the Board. While the overall dimensions of the building fit the historic district, the compatibility of the scale and proportion of some components could be improved. Dividing the glazing into smaller glass units could add a stronger residential scale to the projecting bay; this is already done to some extent on the 10th Street elevation. Three-story projecting bays are found elsewhere on this streetscape, so the overall height of the proposed bay is not out of character, but its proportion and relationship to the façade and parapet behind seems blunt. It could be improved with a more gradual transition between materials or a minor adjustment to the height of the bay so that it does not exactly align with the top of the brick. Contemporary materials like metal panel and large areas of glazing are frequently approved by the Board for new construction when scaled and proportioned in a way consistent with the surrounding historic district.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for a 3-story, 2-unit brick and metal rowhouse at 1001 O Street NW to be compatible with the character of the historic district, consistent with the purpose of the preservation act, and that final approval be delegated to staff.