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

Property Address:	1126 9th Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Shaw Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	September 24/October 1, 2015	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	15-487	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	X	New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

1126 9th Street LLC, with plans prepared by Peter Fillat Architects, seeks conceptual design review for construction of an apartment building on a T-shaped lot that has frontage on 9th and M streets in the Shaw Historic District.

Property Description

The M Street portion of the lot is vacant. It abuts a three-story-with-raised-basement 1870s (contributing) rowhouse on the corner and an eleven-story apartment building on the east that was reviewed and approved by the HPRB since the designation of the historic district.

The 9th Street portion of the lot is occupied by a two-story brick structure constructed in 1925 as a retail building with an apartment above. The first floor of the building extends roughly 100' into the 138' deep lot and is topped with four large skylights; the second floor is only 32' deep. While not architecturally extraordinary, the building retains a remarkable degree of integrity inside and out.

1126 is flanked by modest one-story contributing buildings on each side – 1124 was built in 1920 and the unusually small (25' wide x 20' deep) building at 1128 was built in 1917.

Proposal

The project calls for new construction that would retain and be internally connected to 1126. The addition would be composed of two masses -- a five-story block facing M Street and a nine-story block above and behind 1126. The M Street block would have a symmetrical elevation composed of two four-story oriel bays above the ground level entrance. The asymmetrical 9th Street block would be modulated with oriel bays on the east and north elevations; the mass would have setbacks ranging from 14 to 20 feet behind 1126.

The historic building would be retained in its entirety. The first floor retail/shop space, with its pressed metal ceiling and skylights, would be retained with the skylights converted to lay lights.

The project will be submitted as a Planned Unit Development, requiring review and approval by the Zoning Commission. That application will request flexibility in lot occupancy, parking, rear yard and court relief due to the small and oddly shaped nature of the site and the existence of the historic building.

Evaluation

The height, massing and general architectural direction of the M Street portion of the building is compatible with its context of rowhouses and apartment buildings. As this portion of the building continues to be developed, the design of the first floor should provide a strong base and prominence to the entrances to ground the composition.

While the setback of the new construction behind 1126 is somewhat less than the Board typically finds compatible, in this instance the approach provides both preservation and urban design benefits. The proposed new construction will provide needed modulation from the long elevation presented by the hotel project to the south, where setting back the same amount as the hotel could result in a canyon like wall. The amount of setback pulls the tower away from the adjoining apartment building and reduces the extent to which windows in that building would be blocked. The design compensates for its shallow setback by the relatively small size of the tower, the variety and breaking down of its mass through the use of vertically oriented oriel bays of different sizes, and the lifting up of the east-facing oriel several stories above the historic building. The proposal has a modulated sculptural quality that is rare for contemporary construction and which further helps soften the building's size in relation to the surrounding smaller scaled historic buildings. Finally, the project presents a scope of building preservation that is laudable and unusual in its retention of the building's early 20th century interior character.

As this portion of the building continues to be developed, the south wall should continue to be studied with the goal of making it commensurate in design with the other elevations. While it is understood that the extent of fenestration on this party wall will be limited by building code restrictions, this elevation will likely always be fully exposed and designed accordingly. The roof deck and associated guard rail atop 1126 should be designed so that it is not visible from street view.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board approve the concept and delegate final approval to staff.