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

Property Address: **1128 10th Street NW**
Landmark/District: **Shaw Historic District**

Meeting Date: **January 31, 2019**
H.P.A. Number: **19-145**

Agenda
 Consent Calendar
 Denial Calendar
 Concept Review
 Permit Review
 Alteration
 New Construction
 Demolition
 Subdivision

The applicant, A3 Development, LLC, seeks concept review for construction of an eight-story residential building at 1128 10th Street NW. The existing building is a non-contributing property in the Shaw Historic District that would be demolished. Plans were prepared by Eric Colbert & Associates.

Property Description and Context

The site is in the south end of the Shaw Historic District below M Street NW where historic buildings consist primarily of mid-rise apartment buildings on wide lots and a scattering of 19th century rowhouses on narrow lots. New construction in the historic district between M Street and Massachusetts Avenue, with few exceptions, are tall buildings (9 stories) on wide lots.

1128 10th Street is a modest three-story brick apartment building constructed in 1935. As it was built after the period of significance for the Shaw Historic District (1833-1932), it is non-contributing. A narrow public alley to the north separates the property from a collection of six rowhouses that occupy the southwest corner of 10th & M Streets that date from between 1870 and 1890. The two-story house on the corner with its mansard roof, dormers, cornice and ornamental chimneys is the most distinctive of the group. To the south of 1128 is another group of lower buildings before the streetscape completes a transition to the tall modern architecture typical of Downtown.¹

Proposal

The plans call for construction of a 90-foot residential building of eight stories, penthouse and mechanical enclosure. The current design shows a front facade of brick and expresses a two-story base of prominently coursed masonry, a five-story shaft, and a one-story attic story above a masonry cornice. A series of projecting balconies that are half the width of the façade and composed of brick railings, piers and aluminum columns runs from the third through seventh floors. This design is revised from the original concept design that featured a palette of materials that delineated the building into more distinct sections.

¹ In sequence: a three-story non-contributing building, a 6-story historic apartment building, and a three-story historic rowhouse. The modern structure immediately adjacent to the site is part of the development at 1111 11th Street. Development above the three-story building next to 1128 10th should not be anticipated because it has maximized its FAR by moving floors from 10th Street to the 11th Street side of the development.

The unattached north elevation would be brick with a regular pattern of fenestration at each floor. The unattached south elevation is similar except that it only has one column of windows. The penthouse story would be set back 10 feet from the front elevation and clad in matching brick; a mechanical house sits on top with a setback of 6 feet from the front, rear and north side of the penthouse.

Evaluation

The question of compatibility for this site rests primarily on the height and proportions of the new construction and how it will sit within a collection of small historic buildings; a collection that itself abuts the northern fringe of Downtown's tall modern buildings. The nature of the question is seen in renderings of the front elevation and north elevation. From the front, the stark difference in height between 1128 10th and its historic neighbors is exacerbated by the narrow width of the façade. From the north, the low height of the historic buildings on the corner of 10th & M means the profile of 1128 10th will be a prominent element with a substantial impact on the historic rooflines of mansards, turrets and gables.

From the south, the design blends more comfortably into the historic district. On this side, the 6-story historic apartment building at 1124 10th Street is 55 feet tall and is a better complement to the height of the proposed building. Further south, 1001 L Street is also 90 feet tall, but it takes up more than 200 feet of frontage on 10th Street and establishes a scale and context all its own which diffuses the impact of the building's height. By comparison, the narrow width of the proposed building isolates and concentrates attention on the contrast in height between it and its historic neighbors.

Adjusting the proportions of 1128 10th by widening or lowering the front façade could improve to a compatible extent how it would stand in this part of the historic district. If the lot could be widened, façade proportions similar to a historic apartment building could be achieved.² Much like 1001 L, a wider façade would provide room to organize the scale of the elevation to fit the street pattern of the historic district. But widening the lot is obviously not feasible. An earlier design rendered the top two floors and penthouse in metal and glass in order to offset it with the masonry floors below. However, the change of material did not convincingly mask the perceived height of the building but had the opposite effect. The extra material and setback produced a complex and prominent profile that drew more attention to the building's height rather than less.

That leaves lowering the height of the building as a necessary solution to achieving a compatible design. A seven-story building approximately 75 feet tall with a setback penthouse of matching materials should be explored further.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board advise the applicant to revise the concept design and return for further review.

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² Historic apartment building height to width proportions in Shaw are generally 1.5 to 1. Two examples shown in Sheet A8A are 1124 10th which is 1.25 to 1 and 1216 10th which is 1:1. For comparison, the proposed proportions of 1128 10th would be 3 to 1.