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

Property Address:	1301 11th Street NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Shaw Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
		<input type="checkbox"/> Permit Review
Meeting Date:	March 25, 2021	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	21-221	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The property owner of the lot at 1301 11th Street NW, Trustees of New Bethany Baptist Church, together with the applicant, Shaw Ventures LLC, seeks concept review for construction of a new 4-story multi-family residential building. The site is currently a surface parking lot in the Shaw Historic District. Plans were prepared by Eric Colbert and Associates.

Property Description and Context

The site is a large record lot at the northeast corner of 11th and N Streets with a 14-foot alley to the north. To the east on 10th Street is New Bethany Baptist Church built in 1902 in the Romanesque Revival style with a corner bell tower embraced by two over-sized gables fenestrated by arched windows (Figure 1).

The Shaw Historic District is primarily oriented along the 11th and 9th Street corridors. While it is overwhelmingly populated by two- and three-story rowhouses there are a handful of taller historic apartment buildings in the vicinity of this site.¹ These apartment buildings date to the beginning of the 20th century and generally are composed of prominently articulated main entrances and regular rhythms of projecting bays. Most sit flush with their property lines, with 1206 10th Street being an exception of a courtyard type of apartment building.

Proposal

The applicants propose a contemporary 4-story masonry building of varying brick and stone types and window sizes. It is sited with a 20-foot setback from the alley on its north side which provides surface parking for nine vehicles. The site also provides two small courts; a seventeen-foot square on 11th Street that includes the main entrance and a slightly smaller court at the southeast corner meant as a memorial garden. A roof penthouse is set back at a 1:1 ratio from all sides of the building. The south elevation includes fenestrated basement units which all sit in a continuous areaway that wraps slightly onto the west and east elevations.

The 11th Street elevation emphasizes vertical dimensions by organizing the façade into four unique columns of material and fenestration patterns with the back wall of the court being a fifth element. Windows are generally large and coordinated with masonry panels into groups of asymmetrical arrangements. The N Street elevation emphasizes horizontal dimensions primarily through a gallery of connected balconies on the east half of the elevation from the basement through roof. The secondary east and north elevations are simplified versions of the primary elevations which make use of fewer masonry types and window sizes.

¹ The Henrietta, 933 N St NW (1900), The Plymouth, 1236 11th St NW (1903), 1206 10th St NW (1910), The Atlantic, 1305 10th St NW (1911)

Evaluation

It is a simple conclusion that the historic district will be improved by a new building at this site, and in this case the proposed height of four stories and the masonry materials are an easy fit with the surrounding historic buildings. Key components of the design warrant revision for the purpose not of erasing its contemporary approach but moderating some of its incompatible components and strengthening some of its attributes to relate it more with the character of the historic district.

The setback of the building from the alley is not consistent with historic pattern of siting buildings in Shaw. Historically buildings, even large buildings, were set at the alley without a setback. While zoning requirements may require some setback from the centerline of the alley, the large gap in the street wall proposed is incompatible. A small setback sufficient enough to meet zoning requirements could be compatibly accommodated, but increasing it and utilizing it for parking brings car storage into the foreground of 11th Street instead of keeping parking in a utilitarian area away from the street.

The connected balconies on the south elevation, with their roofs and dividing screens, create a prominent and monolithic projection into the N Street streetscape. Historically, for both rowhouses and apartment buildings, bays are the more common projection into the public, and these bays follow mathematically-based public space regulations which is what creates a harmonious rhythm of architecture in this district's streetscapes. Balconies on new apartment buildings can fill the role of rhythm keeper, but in order to do so they should be disconnected, adequately separated and set to a similar rhythm as in found in the bay projections across the historic district.

The entrance on 11th Street does not claim a prominent place in the elevation or achieve the scale expected in a large apartment building. Creating a court at the entrance helps orient one to where the entrance is, but placing a modest doorway on the north wall of the court hides it. Including a canopy that wraps the corner onto 11th creates an ambiguity to the premise that the court hosts the entrance. Removing or reducing the canopy to just the area of the entrance, or giving the entrance its own unique arrangement of masonry and glass could give it a prominence and scale suited to a large building. Not to be overlooked in this court, the horizontal ribbon of windows in the west face are inconsistent with the pattern of vertical punched windows on primary elevations in the historic district.

The exposure of the basement units on N Street with large windows and a continuous areaway undermines the building and takes away any strong architectural base for the building. Articulating the base of a building with masonry and reducing windows to a minimum size was the historic approach. The Board is no stranger to the differences between historic base floors and the current desire to use basements as extra residential units. Basement units are more compatible when their window spans are divided by mullions or narrow sections of wall giving basement windows a scale distinct from the floors above, and when areaways are individual to windows rather than continuous across the façade.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the general height and mass for a new four-story masonry building with setback penthouse at 1301 11th Street NW to be appropriate for this site but revisions are needed to achieve compatibility with the Shaw Historic District. The project should be revised in response to the concerns raised above and by the Board, and return for further review when ready.

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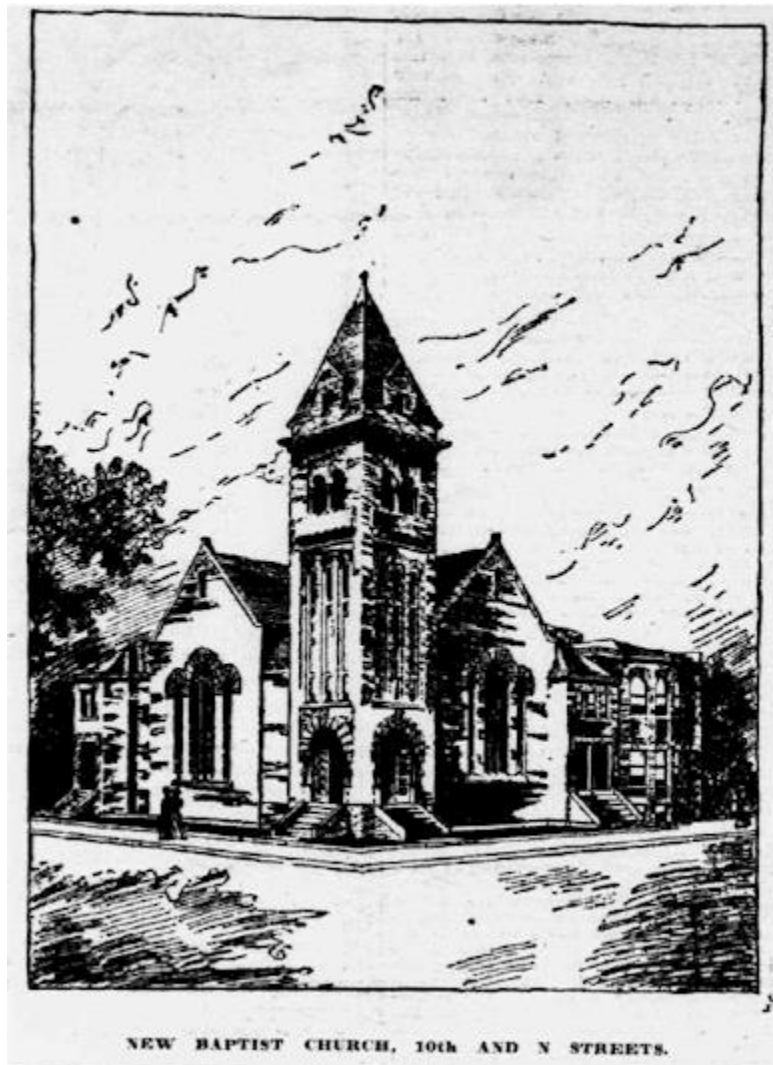


Figure 1. Evening Star, January 25, 1902