

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address: 930 O Street NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District: Shaw and Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic Districts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
	<input type="checkbox"/> Permit
Meeting Date: February 4, 2021	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number: #14-631	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
	<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The applicant, Sean Ruppert on behalf of the ownership group OPal, seeks concept design review for a new three-story, multi-unit residential building with a new accessory building at 930 O Street NW in the Shaw and Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic Districts. The project site is vacant. Plans were prepared by GPS Designs Architecture.

Property Description and Context

This block exhibits a variety of building forms from multiple overlapping phases of development. Most of the rowhouses on the block were built individually or in pairs, with the exception being a row of seven three-story flat-front rowhouses at the east end of the block. With an established building height range of two to three stories, the architectural context is further varied by flat front facades mixed with houses with one- or two- story bays; the mix of roof lines ranges from simple corbelled brick to ornate wood cornices, and the occasional mansard roof or turret. At the rear, the subject lot sits adjacent to a collection of brick garages and workshops along a narrow and short east-west alley that together are an excellent example of the dimensions and workspaces characteristic of Naylor Court.

Project Summary

The plans call for construction of a three-story rowhouse and a two-story accessory building at the rear of the lot. The brick rowhouse is organized around a dumbbell plan which provides a large court in the center. The stem of the dumbbell provides vertical circulation to the front and back units and private roof decks. The front elevation is brick with a projecting bay that extends up through the mansard roof that fronts the third story. The elevation is detailed with bracketed eaves, a small dormer, parapet caps flanking the roof ridge and multi-paned glazing. The front door provides access to a passage that runs the length of the development to provide street access for all units.

The brick accessory building is two-stories tall with a flat roof. Its alley façade consists of the two vehicle doors and three traditional windows in the second floor. Ornament is spare except for lintels and a brick cornice.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The applicant's concept design is compatible with the character of the historic districts in terms of scale, ornament, material, size and form with only small details to consider closely. The street

elevation is evocative of an early 20th century rowhouse with its intersection of the projecting bay through the eaves of the mansard roof. The eaves and small paned windows are also throwbacks to the revival styles of that time and complement the massing in a critical way. These details should not be lost in the permit or construction stages of the project. The staff also compliments the designer's creative and efficient placement of the vertical circulation so that the roof structures require nothing more than a quick appreciative glance of analysis. The accessory building is similarly concordant with the historic district by presenting a simple, nearly utilitarian building to the alley.

Two revisions are recommended as the project continues to be refined. The front door that should be expected at the center of its bay is off-center to accommodate the through-passage, making this detail out of step with the rhythm of entrances along the street. The front door and window above both should be centered in its bay and can be accommodated by giving up some small square feet of a unit to provide a small interior entry vestibule. Second, the areaway at the front of the building is large enough to give the appearance of the building sinking into the ground. Eliminating the areaway or converting it to a smaller window well and replacing the basement double-hung windows with single sash casement windows would only minimally diminish lighting on this northern exposure and improve the relationship of how the building meets the ground.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for a new three-story rowhouse and two-story accessory building at 930 O Street NW, to be compatible with the character of the historic district, and delegate final approval to Staff.

Staff contact: Brendan Meyer