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

Property Address: **1515 9th Street NW**
Landmark/District: **Shaw Historic District**

Meeting Date: **May 30, 2023**
H.P.A. Number: **#23-215**

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

The applicant, owner Blue Ridge 1515 9th Street LLC, seeks continuing concept review to demolish a non-contributing building and construct a new six-story plus penthouse building at 1515 9th Street NW in the Shaw Historic District. Plans were prepared by Monarch Urban. The Board heard this application at the March meeting without taking a vote.

Property Description and Context

The property is a wide lot which hosts a low, non-contributing building and side parking lot with a curb-cut to the street. The site straddles two areas of distinctly different buildings in terms of height and date of construction. To the south, below P Street, is a series of eight- and nine-story buildings on 9th and 8th Street which establishes an area of large-scale buildings on this edge of the Shaw Historic District and into the recent development done in conjunction with the O Street Market historic landmark. Between 1515 9th Street and P Street, and north of 1515 for the remainder of the block, are clusters of lower height historic buildings. Styles, materials and rowhouse types are substantially varied and include flat- front three-story houses, two-story Victorian rowhouses with projecting bays, and vernacular frame houses. Historic Shiloh Baptist Church and its large contemporary addition dominate the opposite side of the street.

Project Review Summary and Revisions

At the March meeting the Board reviewed a concept design to clear the site of existing structures, which are non-contributing, and construct a new six-story plus penthouse brick building. Its front façade was broken down into four large areas: a pair of 5-story tall frontispieces, a 3-story tall section forming a shoulder at the north end of the façade, and a 6-story block backdropping the frontispieces, (Figure 1). The Board heard testimony from constituents and neighborhood residents, some in support of the concept and others opposed to the height of the building and its fenestration. The Board's deliberation focused on three points: the height of the new building relative to the short historic buildings it would join, the static interface of the building and public space due to the proposed basement areaways, and the window proportions of the front façade. The Board did not take a vote and advised the applicant to make revisions addressing those three points.

Revisions and Evaluation

The frontispieces have both been lowered. The southern one is now four stories. The northern one is now three stories and has been widened to absorb the piece which had been articulated as a separate three-story piece. The height of the main block of the building has not been revised. The prominence of the basement areaways has been reduced by shortening them in favor of additional landscaping and also by replacing the retaining walls of the areaways with curbs topped by open railings. The

fenestration in the frontispieces have been revised to a more traditional arrangement by removing the vertical metal panels from window openings and centering the windows about a vertical mullion.

The revisions are positive responses to the Board's recommendations. The lowered frontispieces align more closely with the heights of the small historic buildings on this part of the block and the different heights of the frontispieces correlate with differing heights of the historic buildings. Revising the fenestration of the frontispieces to a more traditional configuration also synchronizes with the historic buildings. The improvements to the areaways are modest by virtue of reducing their prominence.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept design for new construction to be compatible with the character of the historic district and to delegate final approval to HPO.

Staff contact: Brendan Meyer



Figure 1. 1515 9th Street NW, concept proposal for new construction reviewed by HPRB, March 2023.