

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

Landmark/District:	Strivers' Section Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1719 T Street, NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	June 4, 2015	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	15-301	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Kim Elliott	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Inscape Studio with Renew Real Estate LLC seeks conceptual design review for construction of a new 3-story rowhouse plus basement in the Strivers' Section Historic District.

Property Description

The current site is an empty infill lot, measuring approximately 20' wide by 100' deep, in a mixed row of rowhouses and small apartment buildings. While uniformly composed of residential masonry buildings, there is no consistent architectural style or builder at this end of the block. The flanking lots are occupied by small-scale apartment buildings.

Proposal

The proposed design is a 3-story plus basement and roofdeck/mezzanine level rowhouse comprised of 4 residential units. A roofdeck would be set back about 12' from the front façade, and the mezzanine level set back an additional 12'. The basement unit would be entered separately through an exterior stair and areaway 5' below grade level. The areaway is 5' wide and the full width of the building and is set back 12' from the sidewalk.

The elevation is composed of a terra cotta rain screen cladding and a projecting steel-framed glass bay that runs from the 1st through 3rd floors. The slot above the front door is recessed to create outdoor space for those units. In plan, the proposed design calls for a court space on the west side to mirror the adjacent building letting more light into the middle of the building.

Evaluation

The block includes a collection of rowhouses and apartment buildings 3 to 4 stories in height with a larger 7-story apartment building at the corner, and the overall massing and scale of the proposal is compatible within that immediate context and the historic district. The fairly deep site and the proposed length are similar to both adjacent neighbors and match their height.

While the proposed design ascribes to a few rowhouse characteristics—projecting bay, elevated front door with front stoop—there are several elements that should be revisited to improve the proposal's compatibility. While a contemporary design aesthetic of steel, glass and a rain screen could work on this block of varied architectural character, the extent of glazing should be more proportional to that which is relatively uniform within that variety. The projecting bay at the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd floors is all glass except for the spandrel panels at each floor level and one solid square and is in sharp contrast to its neighboring buildings' solid/void ratios. The current design raises concern regarding the amount of light it will project at night as well as a consideration for privacy. It is recommended that the architect develop the design to include a greater density of opaque panels or a composition with less glass and to further revise the proportions of the projecting bay to relate to the district's rowhouse typology.

The other area that needs development is the recessed portion of building over the front door. While the recess creates a small outdoor space for each unit, the solid wall begs for a window at each level. The interior program does not support windows at these locations, but the elevation suggests that something is missing.

A basement areaway and stair is introduced as a separate entrance and to define some outdoor space for this lower unit. While there are several examples of basement stair entries along this block, they are all more compatible, tucked under the front stairs and none include a large areaway. The lack of precedent for this treatment, along with the 5' depth of this proposed areaway—creating the need for a railing around the areaway—is not a recommended treatment in the Board's guidelines for basement areaways. Furthermore, the outdoor space created at this basement level will be dark and unpleasant with the bay projecting over the majority of this space. An alternative design solution would be to allow the bay to run to the ground with a smaller areaway to make better use of this space and bring more light into the basement unit.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept generally compatible with the historic district and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act, with the following conditions:

- *That the applicant work with HPO to resolve the elevations as outlined above;*
- *That the applicant minimizes the areaway following the HPRB's basement stairs and areaway guidelines and locates the basement entry under, or closer to the front stairs.*
- *That the Board advises on whether to delegate to staff review or request a return to HPRB.*