

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

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| Property Address: | 1355-57 U Street NW | Agenda |
| Landmark/District: | U Street Historic District | X Consent Calendar |
| Meeting Date: | June 23, 2016 | X Concept Review |
| H.P.A. Number: | 15-311 | X Alteration |
| Staff Reviewer: | Anne Brockett | Subdivision |

This project returns to the Board for further review to add a residential building to the rear of two former rowhouses in the U Street Historic District. The Board reviewed this project in July 2015 when the proposal included adding 2 floors set back 32' and 2 set back an additional 12' with a penthouse above reaching a total height of 85'. The Board found this design incompatible and suggested that the addition needed to be set back further, possibly with an increase in height. In April 2016, the applicant proposed to add 7 floors set back 48' plus a penthouse at a total of almost 109' tall. The Board found the design and material palette more appealing, but determined the project was too tall to be considered compatible.

Permit research indicates that the original footprint of 1355 U Street was 32' in length, while a distinct change in brickwork at 1357 reveals an original length of 28'3".

Project Description

The revised design limits demolition to beyond the original footprint of each building and proposes a hybrid of the previous two proposals. A 1-story addition would sit back 26' from the facade, occupying a small part of the existing roofs. Floors 4-6 would be pushed back 48'3", floor 7 would be at 54'3", and floor 8 would be set back 84' from the facade. The penthouse has been removed and a simple screen approximately 5' tall will be used around rooftop mechanicals. The total height is just above 90'.

In addition, floors 3 and 8 would be set in from the west side while floors 7 and 8 step in successively from the rear. Floors 3, 4, 7, and 8 would have glass-railed balconies, each set in from the edge of the roof below. The materials and facade treatments continue to be refined with alternating framing elements of concrete and wood cladding. The top 2 floors will be clad in a lighter material above a heavier cornice line, both intended to lower the perceived height of the building.

Evaluation

The revised proposal results in an addition that more successfully reads as an independent, mid-block building rather than as an addition to the rowhouses. The lowest floor of the addition projects toward the front as it did in the 2015 design. However, it will be only minimally visible on the alley side, and is set back further than the adjacent roof addition at 1359 U Street. The additional setbacks of the upper floors on 3 sides also adds to a reduction in scale and a refined and articulated massing. Finally, the removal of a penthouse lowers the height considerably from previous iterations, keeping the building more in line with other U Street Historic District infill construction to the immediate east and north.

The proposal is compatibly designed and brings the height and massing in line with other approved mid-block buildings and additions within historic districts. The addition creates a proportional balance between horizontal and vertical that was missing from previous proposals.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the addition to 1355-57 U Street compatible with the historic district and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and to delegate final review to staff.