

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address:	2001 14th Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	U Street HD	X Denial
		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	December 17, 2015	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	16-099	X Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Kim Elliott	New Construction

Bob Biroonak of Art Display Company, on behalf of owner Rich Vasey, seeks conceptual design review for a rooftop canopy at 2001 14th Street at the Lost Society restaurant.

Property Description

Built in 1905 as the 14th Street Savings Bank, this building in the classical revival style sits at the important intersection of 14th and U Streets NW. It has had numerous alterations over the years and been adapted for retail, commercial, and restaurant uses. Currently, the Lost Society restaurant occupies the second story and roof deck.

Proposal

In 2011, Lost Society erected a roof top tent without a permit, which was subsequently cited as illegal construction by the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs on September 14, 2011. The applicant went to the Board in April 2013 with a retractable rooftop canopy solution that was approved with the condition that no side sheets be attached to the canopy. Once installed, the canopy system did not perform as expected so the applicant has continued to develop a new design solution. The new proposal calls for permanent steel post structural system throughout the roof top space with a louver roof that opens and closes and curtain vinyl wall attachment at the sides.

Evaluation

The U Street and 14th Street Historic Districts have seen numerous rooftop additions along their main commercial corridors; some of these have been reviewed and permitted, while others have been erected without permits. Of the commercial rooftop additions that have been reviewed and found compatible by the HPRB, the installations have been set far back from the façade, are completely retractable, or are thoughtfully designed and permanent, compatible additions.

The subject building is located at a prominent corner with long sightlines up and down U and 14th Streets and has a higher architectural quality than is typical for commercial buildings in the district; as such, it requires a high level of design and attention for any type of addition. The current proposal does not meet the guidelines or the purposes of the Preservation Act as the roof deck addition is extremely visible and would be constructed of materials that are not compatible or commensurate in character with the building. Unlike the previously-approved proposal, the canopy is not retractable, ensuring that it would be a permanent, or at least seasonable, addition to the building.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board not approve the concept as proposed because it is incompatible with the character of the property and the historic district and thus inconsistent with the purposes of the Preservation Law.