

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address:	2213 14th Street NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	U Street Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	October 27, 2016	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	16-699		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Anne Brockett	X	Alteration

Working with The Eisen Group, owner 14th and R Street Enterprises LLC, seeks concept review of a five-story addition on top of a three-story non-contributing building. The 1980s commercial building will also be refaced so that the resulting design reads as a seven-story building with a recessed 8th floor.

The large building site sits between a non-contributing seven story building to the north and five two and three story historic buildings to the south. These were built as small apartment buildings and stores with residences above. These buildings have been surrounded to the south and east (rear) with newer construction, somewhat altering their setting, but preserving the original blocks of the historic structures.

Project Description

The applicants have included three designs, two of which present slightly different iterations of a three-bay design (original design and option 1) and a two-bay design (option 2). All of the options are the same height and use the same palette of stone-faced storefronts at the street level, red brick veneer on floors 2-5 and a panelized system for floors 6-7. The 8th floor is set back 10 feet from the façade and 13 feet from the south wall and is clad in an unknown material. A roof deck with glass railing surrounds the 8th floor.

The floorplans submitted appear to match the original design, not options 1 or 2, and show the first floor as slightly recessed from the property line with entrances into the residential building under the bays. All options include projecting balconies in a variety of different configurations and slightly differing treatments at the tops of the bays.

Evaluation

Since initially submitted, the proposal has been studied and modified in response to HPO comments. These have included:

- The window sizes have been made somewhat smaller and the proportion of masonry increased;
- The number of materials has been reduced;
- A two-bay option has been developed (option 2);
- At risk windows have been added to the side walls to alleviate the large wall plane that will be exposed in perpetuity on the south side;
- Variations in the height, width, and design of bays and balconies has been explored; and
- A lighter material was introduced in the upper floors in an attempt to lighten the mass.

However, no substantial changes have been made in response to the concern that the building provide a more graceful transition to the historic buildings to the south, where the disparity in height and resulting relationship remains abrupt. This disparity is not as evident in the elevation drawings, which show the extant new construction behind the historic buildings, as it is in the perspective studies, where the relationship is more accurate in conveying how the new building would tower over the historic buildings. While it does help that the upper floors are proposed in a different color and material, it is recommended that the new building step down in height in a meaningful way along the south property line. This may require that the building be composed as two different elements in which the two sections are designed in different styles and use different materials, responding to both the historic character of the district to the south and the modern architecture to the north.

Option 1 is the most successful of the three in reducing the number and clutter of too many projections, although it is unclear if the balconies in this option have been made smaller or eliminated. If projecting bays are going to be used on the design, the balconies should be eliminated or recessed into the mass of the building. The southwest corner of the building may be the most appropriate location for recessed balconies where carving away the corner of the new building could help give some breathing room to the buildings to the south. Overall, a further reduction and simplification in the number and variety of balconies is warranted.

It is also recommended that the bases of the bays should be strengthened considerably to properly ground them. Entrances should be reconsidered so that they are not carved out under bays, eroding what should be read as more solid edifices.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the design incompatible and direct the applicants to further study the massing and design as per the comments above.