

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

Property Address:	2009 18th Street NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Washington Heights Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	March 23, 2017	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	16-698	X	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Anne Brockett		Alteration

Owner Jurassic Properties, working with architect Angel Clarens, seeks concept review of a new construction project in the Washington Heights Historic District. The site at the corner of 18th and California Streets is largely open, with a circa 1968 service station sited along the alley and a parking lot fronting on 18th and California. The project would demolish the existing building to create a new restaurant above a subterranean parking garage.

The site is situated between a non-contributing building to the south and the tennis courts and playing field of the Marie Reed Recreation Center on the north side of California Street.

Project Description

The proposed building would stand two stories high and occupy the southern 2/3 of the site (main block) as well as the entire east side (rear block), leaving the northwest corner as an open courtyard framed by the L-shaped building. A clerestory would rise an additional six feet in the center of the roof. Materials include reddish brick above a limestone base on the main block and tan brick on the rear portion. Much of the west wall and the entire north wall of the main block would be fenestrated while none of the west wall of the rear block would have openings. The rear is punctuated by a loading dock and parking garage entrance. A garden wall and fence would surround the terrace on the north; a fence with a feature gateway would sit along the 18th Street side of the site.

Other features include a tower-like element where the stairs are located behind the one-story entrance, a bracketed cornice, and horizontal details under the second floor window sills. The roof of the rear block would have a railing surrounding it for outdoor rooftop seating.

Evaluation and Recommendation

While it is somewhat unusual for a corner building in the historic district not to meet the lot line on both frontages, the siting of the primary mass of the building on the south aligns it with other buildings on the street and results in an open landscaped courtyard that complements the open space of the Marie Reed Rec Center. The use of brick with punched openings is a compatible design approach for the façade of a building in a historic district in general terms, however, the scale and proportions should continue to be evaluated. A previous iteration of the design had shorter first floor openings with a more solid separation between floors. The fenestration was also broken down as casements within each opening, adding to the sense that the windows were smaller and more contextual with buildings in the historic district.

The façade's projecting, bracket-like ornamentation also seems out of place on an otherwise modern building. While some ornamentation of the cornice is not inappropriate, is it not necessary unless the desire is for a truly historicist design, in which case other elements of the design should follow suit. The HPO recommends eliminating the brackets and/or using a contemporary vocabulary for the ornamentation. The stair tower, designed as a taller, fully enclosed element should also be lowered and better integrated into the design on both the north and west sides to eliminate a feature more commonly associated with suburban architecture.

The HPO has recommended that a door facing the street would be more typical of a commercial building in this historic district, and seeks the Board's input on this as well as the overall entry sequence through a fence and arch feature and the appropriateness of a full glass wall facing the courtyard.

The HPO recommends that the Board find the form, massing, and siting compatible with the historic district and request the applicant to return to the Board for further review of other elements of the proposal as discussed above.