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

Property Address:	1250 9 th Street NW	(X) Agenda
Landmark/District:	Shaw Historic District, Blagden Alley/Naylor Court Historic District	() Consent Calendar
ANC:	2F	() Denial Calendar
Meeting Date:	May 31, 2012	(X) Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	#12-301	(X) Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Brendan Meyer	(X) New Construction
		(X) Demolition
		(X) Subdivision

The applicant, owner CAS Riegler and CityInterests, seeks concept review for a new five-story with penthouse, multi-unit residential building with a commercial ground floor. The new construction will surround and be built partially on top of an existing apartment building at 1250 9th Street NW which is a contributing property in both the Shaw and Blagden Alley/Naylor Court Historic Districts. Plans were prepared by PGN Architects, PLLC.

Property Description and Context

The project site will join two lots at the southwest corner of 9th and N Streets NW. The corner lot at 902 N Street is mostly vacant, but the rear is occupied by the remnants of a Mission style gas station built in 1931 which is listed as a contributing structure in the application for the historic district. The site is used as a temporary garden supply store. The second lot at 1250 9th Street is L-shaped, wrapping around 902 N Street and fronts on both 9th and N streets. On it stands a three-story brick colonial revival apartment building built in 1923 and designed by Upman & Adams. The original T-shaped plan and ground floor have been highly altered by a circa 1950 large brick and CMU rear addition.

This part of 9th Street NW is representative of more than 150 years of development along a major commercial corridor. Victorian rowhouses dating from 1870 to 1890 survived as commercial uses were introduced after 1920. Interspersed among the two and three-story rowhouses are smaller one and two story commercial structures and an early automotive showroom. Taken together, the immediate blocks are a diverse collection of heights, materials and architectural styles reflective of the accretion of generations of development. The same variety of height and form is also seen on the 900 block of N Street, with no one style or type of rowhouse dominating.

The opposite side of 9th Street is dominated by the Walter E. Washington Convention Center which spans between 7th and 9th Streets from Mount Vernon Square to N Street. As a series of diminishing volumes, the Convention Center stands about 40 feet tall at its north end across from the project site.

Proposal

The design breaks the project down into several distinct components in order to give the project the appearance of several medium sized buildings. Ninth Street would be the primary retail face of the building with individual entrances along the length of the street. The retail spaces would extend past, and incorporate, the original footprint of the 1923 apartment building. Behind the retail spaces, a 30 x 120 foot enclosed courtyard parallel to 9th Street would be the center piece of the residential component and have its main entrance at N Street. Floors above the

ground floor would have residential units served by an H-plan corridor system, part of which would be elevated above the open courtyard.

The complex is anchored at the corner by a five story brick and stone block tower with metal and glass bays. The corner element is capped by a prominent gull-wing metal canopy stemming from a steel pier that runs continuously from just above the ground floor. The fifty foot wide face on 9th Street is dominated by the metal and glass skin which projects into public space above the ground floor. The same materials are carried around the corner and along the 130 foot length of N Street, with the relationship inverted so that the metal and glass sections are set on the property line while the brick and stone sections are the projections. The arrangement on N Street produces three brick projections framed by giant order piers with large industrial style windows. The bay farthest west houses the main entrance to the courtyard and the residential lobby and is demarcated by a steel canopy.

Both the south flank and west flank of the project are held down by sections that appear as separate buildings. On 9th Street, a 19 foot wide 4-story brick façade is punctuated by a 2-story central oriel that projects above a single storefront at the ground floor. On N Street, a fee-simple 16-foot wide brick residential building has been carved out and is a contemporary version of a Washington projecting bay rowhouse.

Upper floors include a number of setbacks to provide relief above the historic apartment building. Along 9th Street the fourth-story is setback ten feet and the fifth-story is setback an additional 13 feet. Both floors, unlike the other brick and steel façade elements, are to be clad in fiber cement panels and include glass railings.

A penthouse--which is not rendered in elevation but is shown in roof plan (Drawing 20) and section (Drawing 11)—would be setback a total of 32 feet from 9th Street.

Evaluation

The variation of forms, materials and arrangement of projections successfully breaks down the new construction into smaller pieces that relate harmoniously in size and scale to the historic buildings on 9th and N Street. The historic 1923 apartment building is surrounded by the taller new construction on either side at a scale not out of character for the varied heights found in this part of the historic district.

What could have been a very problematic “wedding cake” profile of successive setbacks on the south end of the project has been significantly mitigated by the separate four-story component south of the 1923 apartment building. It acts as a bookend to the overall composition and blocks the long sight lines along 9th Street from the south.

The arrangement and orientation of the corner coupled with the long N Street elevation infer a building of medium size, broken down by projections and balconies. It offers a contemporary primary facade to the 9th Street thoroughfare, which relating to the rowhouses on N Street with its repetitive masonry forms. Here again, the project is successfully bookended, but in this case with a rowhouse form that steps down to the smaller heights of the historic rowhouses.

While the amount of demolition to the 1923 apartment building is not substantial, the project would result in the demolition of what remains of the 1931 gas station. However, the integrity of the gas station is significantly compromised by large portions of demolition to offices, ancillary

facilities and site layout. The surviving remnant stands without context and should be determined a non-contributing structure to either historic district.

The visibility and impact of the penthouse floors above the subject historic building and the other historic buildings along 9th Street is difficult to determine without including them in the elevations and perspective renderings as seen from the south. The sight line studies for 9th Street and the perspective rendering of the N Street view both indicate visible penthouses. The HPO recommends that HPRB require that prior to making a final determination on the compatibility of the proposal additional renderings be prepared that unambiguously exhibit the significance that all penthouses will have on the historic district.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board determine the existing structure at 902 N Street NW to be a non-contributing structure in the Shaw Historic District and a non-contributing structure in the Blagden Alley/Naylor Court Historic District.¹

The HPO recommends that the Board find the extent of removal of the rear portion of 1923 apartment building at 1250 9th Street, NW to constitute an acceptable level of alteration to the building, not constituting demolition under the act.

The HPO recommends that the Board find the general concept for the proposed five-story building compatible with the historic district, but direct the applicant to return to the Board to provide renderings and elevations that clearly show the appearance and effect of any penthouses and roof structures before the Board delegates final approval to staff.

No part of this recommendation shall be construed as a recommendation for approval or disapproval for any necessary zoning relief or interpretation.

¹ *Certification of buildings proposed for demolition, DCMR 10A, 705.2. Considerations for determining non-contributing status, DCMR 10A, 703.1(a), (b).*