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

Property Address:	1728 14 th Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	14 th Street Historic District		Consent Calendar
		X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	July 26, 2012	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	12-506		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		Demolition
			Subdivision

Architect Bill Bonstra, representing Perseus Realty, seeks conceptual design review for façade alterations and construction of additional floors on a non-contributing building in the 14th Street Historic District. The new four story building would house retail on the first and second floors and office uses on the two additional floors.

Property History and Description

The existing two-story red brick warehouse building on the site was constructed after the period of significance for the historic district (1855-1940). The 60' wide site was occupied by three 20' wide row buildings in 1965 that may have been damaged, demolished and replaced following the riots in 1968; the present building was constructed prior to 1979.

The site is immediately flanked by two- and three-story contributing commercial buildings from the late 19th and early 20th centuries; at the southern end of the block are the much larger Verizon (originally Northern Exchange) telephone switching station buildings. The non-contributing Frontiers housing complex (1970s) is located immediately across the street.

Proposal

The project calls for removing and recladding the façade and adding two additional floors to the existing structure. The new third floor would be set flush with the building face; the fourth floor would be set back a few feet from the façade plane. The façade would have a formal, monumental symmetrical composition inspired by the historic district's classical auto showrooms. The first three stories would have brick piers with patterned brickwork, steel columns, and large plate glass windows with glass sun screens. The slightly recessed attic fourth floor would be clad in composite (cementitious) panels, and recessed continuous wall of windows facing the street capped by a metal sun screen.

Evaluation

The historic auto showrooms that characterize 14th Street provide an appropriate model for a new retail and office building. The applicant's desire for large expanses of glass for retail display and the general proportion of building height to width are similar to that found in the historic building forms in the district. Proportionally, the greater width of lot

warrants the slightly taller height than is found in the narrower surrounding buildings; without the additional floors, the proposal would be too horizontal in emphasis.

As the design continues to be developed, the HPO would encourage that the proportion of masonry be somewhat increased. The masonry piers in the first three floors of the building appear a little too thin and lacking in the weight expected of a building with monumental proportions. The relationship, floor height and relative visual weight of the fourth floor should also continue to be studied; the floor height and thickness of the enframing walls on the fourth floor attic currently appear taller, heavier and more solid than the underlying building. Finally, some judicious editing of the vocabulary might also be warranted. In combination with the relatively thin proportions of the masonry, the use of polychrome brick work, thin steel columns, glass and metal sun screens, and different materials on the top floor than the base results in a somewhat busy composition that might benefit from some minor simplification.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board:

- *Find the project to be generally compatible with the character of the 14th Street Historic District;*
- *Direct the applicant to study the relative proportion of masonry to glass, the proportions of the fourth floor, and the simplification of elements, as discussed above; and*
- *Delegate final approval to staff.*

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