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

Property Address:	Square 441,	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	1800 block of 7th Street, NW		Consent Calendar
	U Street Historic District		
Meeting Date:	January 18, 2007	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	05-516	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	X	New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

The applicant, architect Marshall Purnell of Devroux & Purnell for the West Group and Ellis Enterprises, seeks on-going conceptual design review for a rehabilitation and new construction project in the U Street Historic District. In previous reviews, the Board has approved the scope of preservation work for the site's ten historic buildings, the conceptual design for the Radio One office building, and the height and mass of the apartment building behind the historic structures. When last reviewed in October, the Board directed the architects to continue working to refine the apartment building to reduce its apparent height and mass, and to break up the composition's tightly packed projecting bays.

Revised Design

The revised design has been developed following the Board's previous recommendations. The top two floors have been entirely redesigned, with the masonry walls and projecting bays eliminated in favor of a simplified skin of glass and metal, successfully making the top of the building lighter in feeling and lowering its visual weight. The masonry building below has also been improved with a regularized spacing of four glass bays set against a simplified masonry backdrop. At the southern end of the 7th Street elevation, a bank of inset balconies has been inserted to balance a similar reveal at the northern end. Where the previous composition appeared as a series of projections pushed together, the revised design is more graciously spaced with sufficient space provided between the glass bays.

Work has also begun on the design of the skin of the building, with the first large scale drawings prepared to show possible articulation and detailing; these represent a work in progress rather than the final design. As the skin continues to be developed, the HPO will be encouraging the introduction of some differentiation and variety in the scale of the elements; for instance, in an earlier iteration of the façade, the top two floors of the building were grouped together into a single monumental floor. That treatment might be worth exploring for the masonry portion of the building to provide greater variety in the scale.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the revised design – the height, mass, location of the projecting bays, and general architectural treatment – as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and sufficiently developed for filing for review by the Zoning Commission. The architects should continue to coordinate with the HPO as the building continues through design development.