16999

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address:	**1510-20 14th Street, NW**	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	**14th Street Historic District**		Consent Calendar
		X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	**September 26, 2002**	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	**02-410**	X	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	**Steve Callcott**		Demolition
			Subdivision

2003 APR -7 PM 4:44

The applicant, Metropolis Development/Mid City Development, LLC, with RTKL Architects, seeks on-going conceptual design review for renovation of a matching pair of 1928 classical revival auto showroom buildings, with construction of a six-story addition behind and a three-story addition partially on top of the buildings. When reviewed in June, the Board expressed concern about the proposal's massing, articulation, and what was felt to be an uncomfortable relationship between the historic buildings and the addition. As an alternative, the Board suggested that the design team look at a different approach which would add a single classically-inspired attic story on top of the full footprint of the auto showroom buildings, thus allowing the additional two stories in the rear to be better concealed, further modulated, and pulled back off the showrooms. This suggestion was made with the acknowledgement that these were the type of classical buildings that often had an additional attic story added on to them, and that the proportions, materials and detailing would have to be very carefully and skillfully worked out in order to succeed.

The applicants have developed two schemes in response to the Board's direction. Option A proposes a fourth story added on the full footprint of the showroom buildings, expressed as a classical attic story on the 14th Street elevation, and as an extension of the utilitarian brick and steel sash windows on the Church Street elevation. The intent is to make the fourth floor as seamless as possible, replicating the materials and stylistic expression of the classical buildings in the additional floor. The six-story rear addition would be executed in a somewhat more contemporary, industrial-inspired vocabulary with large expanses of steel framed windows and a complementing blond brick. The additional two stories on top of the auto showrooms would be set back about 12 feet from the Church Street façade (north elevation) and the south elevation party wall. Option B is essentially the same, except that the fourth story added on top of the showroom buildings would be pulled back 18 feet from the 14th Street facades, to the point where the limestone façade changes to brick, and simply extend the utilitarian brick and steel sash vocabulary up into the additional floor.

The approach suggested by the Board, and as developed in Option A, is a somewhat unorthodox one, as the Board has more typically required that roof top additions be set back from the front facades so that they are not visible from the street or otherwise compete with or disturb the facade composition of historic buildings to which they are being added. However, in certain situations visible roof additions have been allowed, when they have been proposed in a manner consistent in spirit with the building's original design intent, and where the addition didn't result in the removal or alteration of original roof elements or cornices. While the approach is

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probably not entirely consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Standard 3: "Changes that create a false sense of historical development shall not be undertaken" and Standard 9: "New additions shall be differentiated from the old"), an argument could be made that the subtle distinctions in detailing and fenestration between the original buildings and the new fourth floor do serve to distinguish them, and the addition reflects a natural and historically common method for buildings of this type to grow and expand. From an architectural standpoint, Option A is well thought out and articulated, and works compositionally with the design of the historic buildings. The applicants have worked closely with the staff to refine the proposal, including lowering the height of the additional floor and studying alternative fenestration options, in an effort to make it as attractive and stylistically appropriate as possible.

While content with Option A, Option B remains the applicants' preferred solution. While having somewhat less square footage, Option B proposes more fenestration on the front elevation of the set back additional floor, resulting in more desirable top floor units. More important from the Board's standpoint, Option B results in less alteration to the appearance of the historic buildings, and would maintain the strong three-story cornice line established by the buildings on this and adjacent blocks. The approach is also consistent with that taken on the applicants' project on the north side of Church Street, in which the additional floor was also set back to the point on the building where the limestone changed to brick. While perhaps not as compelling from a design standpoint, Option B is probably the better preservation solution, in the sense that it better preserves the existing appearance of the historic buildings. Its merits can be more fully appreciated in model form, which the applicants will be providing at the meeting.

The staff recommends that the Review Board approve the Option B design concept, and delegate final approval to the staff.