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

Property Address:	610-24 Eye Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Downtown Historic District		Consent Denial
		X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	July 31, 2014	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	14-242		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott, David Maloney	X	Demolition
		X	Subdivision

Monument Realty, with plans prepared by Hickok Cole Architects, seeks on-going conceptual design review for a project in Square 453, bounded by 6th, 7th, H and Eye Streets, NW, in the Downtown Historic District. The project includes renovation and alteration of nine contributing buildings on Eye Street and demolition of a five-story contributing alley warehouse for construction of an 11-story retail and residential building. The applicants have made a major change, however, by eliminating the portion of the project on H Street and the section that was proposed to be built over the east-west alley. The applicants will be seeking approval from the Mayor's Agent for a project of special merit for the demolition of the one alley warehouse

Previous Review

When last reviewed in May, the HPRB made the following findings:

- the proposed preservation plan for the retained historic buildings was commended and found to be sufficiently developed;
- the concept for new construction was found to be incompatible with the Downtown Historic District; specifically,
- the mass and height of the new construction was too great and needed to be reduced and given greater variety
- the setbacks for the upper floors should be increased and the projections smaller in scale and less horizontal in emphasis;
- the new construction should better respect the open volume above the alleys and the alley buildings;
- the infill elements fronting Eye and H Streets should better relate to the surrounding streetscapes and the proposed new construction.

Revised Proposal

Since previously presented in May, the project has been substantially revised. The H Street parcels – the vacant sites at 613-615 and the lot occupied by the 19th century row building at 617 H Street in the area outside of but proposed for inclusion in the Downtown Historic District – have been taken out of the project, and the connection over the east-west alley has been entirely eliminated.

The new construction atop the alley buildings has been redesigned and the massing changed to include projecting bays above to provide a smaller scale to the new construction that is more harmonious with the retained buildings. The connection over the north-south alley has been reduced to the width of a hallway, and has been raised by one floor (now connecting at

the third floor rather than the second), as well as lowered in height by about three feet at the top. The mass of the new construction behind the Eye Street buildings has been further modulated with varied intermediate scaled elements and greater setbacks for the upper floors.

The revised submission is intended as a massing model only. The intent is for the building to be clad in brick to relate to the predominant building material of the historic district. Based on comments made by the Board at the last meeting – that the revised proposal should focus primarily on a revised plan with regard to the treatment of the height, mass and construction over the alleys and alley buildings – no architectural skin has yet been designed.

Evaluation

The revised proposal represents significant progress in response to the Board's concerns. Separating the H Street parcel makes the most dramatic change, resulting in a building that is notably smaller (by roughly one-third) and less of a super-project weaving through the block. The elimination of the connection above the east-west alley clearly respects the solid-void relationship of buildings and rights-of-way in the block and the historic district. The removal of this alley connection also has a beneficial effect in retaining more of the setting and relationship of the alley buildings to their context.

On Eye Street, the revised setbacks for the upper floors, more complex massing, and use of intermediate cornice heights are also more successful in bridging the disparity of height between the historic buildings and the new construction.

While complete removal of the connection above the north-south alley would be the most compatible way to address the Board's comments on this concern, it would likely make it essential to create a street-level apartment entrance through the most compromised historic building on Eye Street. The staff has encouraged investigation of this possibility, but the applicant argues that the changes that have been made to the alley connection will minimize its intrusion above the alley to the greatest extent possible. The elimination of apartment units in the connection would allow the glass-walled connector to be more transparent and differentiated from the towers on each side. Raising the link an additional floor to the third level, for a clearance of 28 feet underneath, would also open up views through the alley at the pedestrian level and reduce the mass of new construction adjacent to the retained alley buildings.

Despite the eliminated or reduced construction above the alleys, the applicant still proposes to include part of the east-west alley and the full section of the north-south alley within the boundary of the project. This would allow an interconnected garage underneath the east-west alley, but the section drawing in the plans shows a garage under only about half of the north-south alley. Since the expanded lot increases the allowable size of the building, the Board should ensure that the reason for including these areas is fully justifiable within the requirement for compatibility.

Recommendation

The Historic Preservation Office recommends that the Board find the elimination of construction above the east-west alley to be a major improvement in the project concept, and requests that the Board give further consideration to the concept revisions including the proposal for reduced construction above the north-south alley.