

New Building Planned for ‘Prominent’ Tribeca Site

BY MATT DUNNING

A Tribeca resident is hoping to build his dream house on one of the last slivers of empty land in the neighborhood.

Brandon Miller, a resident of 90 Franklin Street, plans to build a seven-story, three-family home on the vacant lot two blocks from his current apartment, at 137 Franklin St. The narrow property, at the corner of Varick Street and across the street from Finn Square, had been the site of a restaurant that, in the mid-1990s, was torn down for a residential project that never materialized.

Miller said he hopes to move his family into one of the proposed building’s three apartments and sell the other two as condominiums.

“For the last few years, I’ve been trying to figure out how I could buy the property and develop it,” Miller said of the lot, just 24 feet by 92 feet. “It’s taken about a year and half, but I finally accomplished part of that goal. I’ve been walking past this site for a long time, seeing it sit vacant.”

Miller and his architects appeared recently before Community Board 1’s Landmarks Committee in hopes of winning advisory approval for the new building, which would be located in the Tribeca West Historic District.



Brandon Miller's proposed seven-story condo building would occupy the narrow tract of land at the corner of Franklin and Varick Streets.



The proposed building, viewed from the east across Finn Square.

The design takes many of its cues from the former warehouse buildings that are typical in Tribeca—including several of its neighboring buildings at 152, 140 and 100 Franklin Street—according to the project’s designers.

“It was important to us was to create a building that fits in with the warehouse character of the neighborhood, but at the same time recognizes the sort of provincial character of Finn Square,” Markus Dochantschi, a principal architect at Studio MDA, told the committee.

Clad in deep red brick and dark grey steel, the building would include nods to the classic Romanesque styling that can be found on other Tribeca facades. Soaring radial arches would rise over the five window banks on the north, east and south facades, and an angular steel cornice at the top of the building would mimic stone counterparts around the neighborhood, while retaining an overall modernist look.

The Landmarks Committee declined to render an opinion because Miller and his architects did not have physical samples of the decorative glass and the cornice. They asked the project's representatives to return to the committee in August with a full set of samples. "We've done it before when there's only one missing element, but this is so substantial," committee co-chairman Bruce Ehrmann said. "I'm disposed to like it, but it's a very, very prominent site."