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

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Property Address:	<b>641 S Street, NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>White Cross Bakery</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>January 26, 2012</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>11-485</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Steve Callcott</b>		New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

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Architect Sasha Rosen (R2L Architects), representing owner Douglas Development, seeks conceptual design review for additions and alterations to the White Cross Bakery, a recently designated landmark located just outside the U Street Historic District.

**Property Description and History**

The complex of buildings at 641 S Street, and which extend north on the west side of Wiltberger Street, were constructed between 1913-1936 for the White Cross Bakery, owned and operated by Washington native Peter Dorsch. The bakery was one of several in the area owned by German-Americans that provided bread and baked goods to grocers throughout the region. Dorsch sold the complex to the Continental Baking Company in 1937. Continental's contribution to history was its invention in the 1930s of pre-sliced Wonder Bread, however, despite being commonly known as the "Wonder Bread building," this facility was used for the production of Hostess cake products. In 1953, the former White Cross Bakery was one of 17 major bakeries in Washington, and the largest processing facility in the city.

The complex includes two impressive monumental façades facing S Street – one two-stories, the other three – but otherwise of the same design; the original name of the bakery is memorialized in the white cross in the pediment of each. The facades are characterized by their full-height attenuated brick piers, classical cornices and pediments, multi-light industrial windows, and metal spandrel panels. Along Wiltberger Street and the rear alley are a number of utilitarian additions, all of red brick but with a variety of window types and sizes. As is not atypical of an industrial complex, there have been a number of alterations to window and door openings over the years reflecting changing needs and functions. The northern-most addition, constructed after 1936, was determined non-contributing to the landmark.

The Board favorably reviewed a concept proposal for a three-story roof addition to the property in 2008, proposed for the owner by a different architect.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> At the time, the property was not designated a landmark but was proposed for inclusion in an expansion of the U Street Historic District. While not subject to review, the owner sought the Board's guidance on compatibility of the design in anticipation that the property would be included in the historic district.

## **Proposal**

The plans call for the complex to be rehabilitated, with the front facades restored to their original appearance and an enlarged areaway created on the western portion of the façade to provide exterior access to a basement retail space. The side elevations will be renovated with new industrial sash windows inserted in existing and blocked up openings.

Up to two additional floors will be added on the eastern half of the building (one floor added on the existing three-story sections, two floors added to the existing two-story sections), for a total of four stories. One additional story will be added to the western half of the building, which will be set back 45 feet from the façade to ensure that it won't be visible over the façade or change the perceived height or massing of the building as seen from S Street. The non-contributing one-story wing of the building will be removed and replaced with a new three-story addition.

The additions are proposed to be expressed as a series of pavilions that alternate in color (green and orange) and roof shapes (flat and sloped). Each of the pavilions would have industrial sash windows and be clad in metal panels.

## **Evaluation**

The proposal represents a creative and sensitive approach to adding to this industrial building complex. In massing and design, the additional floors are proposed as a respectful, contemporary contrast to the underlying brick buildings. They are pulled back substantially from the designed front elevations and broken down into smaller scaled, lighter-framed elements. The new roof line would be evocative of the repeating monitor skylights often found on this type of industrial building; the massing and roof line would provide both visual architectural interest and break the additions down into smaller scaled elements to allow the historic portion of the building to remain predominant in the composition. Such an approach is particularly suited to this type of industrial/production complex which are characterized more by their box-like massing, simple materials, and utilitarian character than by their finely composed façades and architectural detailing.

## **Recommendation**

The HPO recommends that the Review Board determine the proposed conceptual design to be compatible with the character of this industrial complex of buildings, and delegate final approval to staff.