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

Landmark:	Embassy and Chancery of Italy	X Agenda
Address:	2700 16th Street, NW	Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	January 27, 2011	Demolition
H.P.A. Number:	10-495	X Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	X New Construction

Potomac Construction Group and Valor Development, represented by Michael Beidler of Trout Design, seek on-going conceptual design review for redevelopment of the former Italian Embassy. The project includes conversion of the mansion to apartments, construction of a three-story addition in the north side yard, and construction of an eight-story apartment building at the rear of the site.

When presented in December, the Board approved the conceptual site plan and treatment of the landmark structure, but directed the applicants to continue working on the design of the north addition in the side yard and the height, massing and design of the residential tower at the rear of the site.

Revised Proposal

Since previously presented, the design of the apartment tower has been substantially edited, rationalized and improved. The conceptual approach remains essentially the same in which the building is broken into two parts – an eight-story L-shaped tower with its entrance facing Mozart Place, and a shorter five-story block at the corner of Mozart and Fuller. However, the redesign has resulted in each component being more fully and congruously developed to support this concept.

The L-shaped tower building no longer bleeds over onto the roof of the five-story block, and the gap between the two components has been reduced and redesigned so that it is more evocative of the spacing between two adjacent buildings. The massing has been simplified and regularized, with fewer setbacks, a single cornice line at the top of the seventh floor, and a uniform setback for the eighth floor. In both footprint and elevation, the tower has been developed to have greater consistency on all sides. The corner tower facing the courtyard and the secondary towers on the north and east elevations have been eliminated (visually lowering the building’s apparent height) and the building capped with a recessive hipped red tile roof that serves to unify and provide visual interest to the roofline. The five-story block has been given a more prominent entrance porch facing Fuller Street, appropriate in scale for a small-scale apartment building.

The architectural character of the north wing has also been revised. The idea of using a decorative glass curtain wall has been retained, however, masonry has been introduced to balance and break up the curtain wall into smaller, more residentially-scaled elements. The glass would be set within a series of stucco piers that would relate in coloration and finish to the stucco on the mansion. The glass curtain wall would not be used on the east elevation facing 16th Street, which is now proposed as stucco with a spare punched window and door. As seen from the street, the

design is evocative of a small secondary building without devolving into being seen as an historic garage or stable. The north addition is quieter and has a stronger, more obvious relationship with the landmark, particularly as seen from 16th Street.

Recommendation

While there is additional refinement to be done, the revised proposal addresses and successfully resolves the height and massing concerns raised by the earlier design. The HPO recommends that the Board approve the overall conceptual design for new construction on the site, and direct the applicants to continue working with the staff on design development.