

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

Landmark/District:	Mount Vernon Triangle HD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	901 5th Street NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	September 24, 2015	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	15-491	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Kim Elliott	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The Peebles Corporation with WDG Architects seeks conceptual design review for construction of a mixed-use 12-story building with a roof deck and two levels below grade on a vacant site at the corner of 5th and I Streets in the Mount Vernon Triangle Historic District.

Proposal

The new development replaces a parking lot and anchors the busy corner adjacent to Massachusetts Avenue. The first eight floors will be dedicated to the hotel, and the top 4 floors will be residential. In addition, a roof deck terrace with amenities will be accessible for hotel guests and residential owners. The first floor will include the hotel lobby entrance at the corner, and a restaurant facing I street. Two below-grade levels will be for hotel amenities and parking. Large metal and glass canopies line the tall first floor above the metal and glass storefront – home to the residential entrance, the hotel entrance, and a restaurant. The building elevations consist of a metal and glass with limestone cladding, with a variation in the pattern as the building transitions from the hotel levels to the residential floors. Metal and glass balconies are interspersed throughout the 5th and I Street elevations and large protruding balconies occupy the corner on the upper floors. The parking garage is accessed from the rear through the alley.

Evaluation

Architecture

The proposed project provides an opportunity to define and anchor the corner at 5th and I Streets adding to several commercial storefronts that are starting to line 5th Street. The height and mass are appropriate for its urban context, and the scale of the building is reflective of existing and forthcoming projects along I Street. With the smaller scale along 5th Street, HPO has encouraged the applicant to make the 5th Street elevation as engaging and pedestrian friendly as possible. The removal of the parking garage entry to the rear of the building (accessible now through the alley) has dramatically improved this elevation, however, the scale and detailing of the two street-fronting elevations should continue to be refined and developed. The clean metal and glass storefront system could be developed and further designed through detailing, proportions, and materiality to relate more to the human scale and also elevate the design possibilities to make this an exciting architectural corner. This could be achieved through additional detailing of the first floor, further breaking down the storefront divisions, lighting, creating a hierarchy of the canopies (hotel lobby entrance versus other storefront canopies), paving patterns, and developing the public space on both streets. Outdoor seating is expected for the restaurant on the very deep public space along I Street, but the public space elements could be further developed to include more green space and public outdoor seating to activate this otherwise bland corner along the Massachusetts Avenue corridor.

As the elevations continue to be developed, further development of the top of the building is recommended, perhaps to include additional masonry or a more proportionally substantial capping element. Further development of the corner, including the projecting balconies at the top three floors, is also recommended to fully integrate those elements into the rest of the design.

Archaeology

The Mount Vernon Triangle Historic District was designated, in part, for meeting National Register criterion D (archaeological significance), and this vacant site adjacent to Prather's Alley was specifically identified as one of potential significance:

In addition to providing a greater understanding of the business element of the area, archaeological evidence could yield important information on 19th and early 20th-century alley life. Near the turn of the century, eleven African-American families lived in dwellings located in Prather's Alley in the historic district. Archaeological resources, which most likely remain beneath the present-day parking lot in the alley, could provide new and useful information on the living conditions of the poor and under-employed African Americans of the alley as compared to the working-class white immigrants who occupied the dwellings facing the public streets. Although various ethnic groups represent were well-represented in Washington and in Mount Vernon Triangle during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this aspect of the city's history is not well known. Based upon documentary research conducted on the historic district, there is a strong potential for archaeological resources to be present which would reveal significant information on the former residents of the historic district and on early commercial enterprises that operated in Mount Vernon Triangle.

The lot at 5th and Eye was partially excavated as part of a Phase 1 investigation in 1990, prior to the designation of the historic district, and yielded a high concentration of artifacts likely associated with the former resident—a tailor by trade. However, remnants of that site are known to still be in place and a work plan for further testing and evaluation should be developed in consultation with the DC State Archaeologist.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept consistent with the preservation act and that the project continue to be developed with attention to:

- *the scale of the building's base,*
- *providing a stronger top to the building,*
- *ensuring that the roof terrace is designed so that roof furniture is not visible from street,*
- *that an archeological work plan be developed and carried out in consultation with the DC State Archeologist.*

HPO further recommends that the Board delegate final approval to staff.