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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Capitol Hill Historic District</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>1225-1227 Pennsylvania Ave SE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>October 25, 2018</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>18-662</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Owner Ty Simpson, with plans prepared by architect Lynnette Brunson, seeks concept review for a one-story rooftop addition on a one-story commercial in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

### **Property Description**

1225-1227 Pennsylvania Avenue SE is a one-story commercial building designed by Julius Wenig and built in 1925. The property is located within a row of purpose-built residential rowhouses; to the east are flat-front brick rowhouses built in 1888; and to the west are porch-front rowhouses built in 1915. The historic projecting storefronts remain intact at the ground-floor. The property has a very shallow rear yard with no alley behind.

### **Proposal**

The plans call for the construction of a one-story rooftop addition. The addition would be set back 5' 0" from the front elevation and 1' 0" from the front elevation at 1223. The primary elevation of the addition would be clad in metal panels and feature two banks of single-pane windows with transoms. The rooftop addition would measure 11' 31/2" in height and feature an interior floor to ceiling height of 9' 10". The addition would be seen from Pennsylvania Avenue.

### **Evaluation**

While the *District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines* state that any "rooftop addition should be located so it is not visible to pedestrians," the Board has made exceptions to this principle, particularly for flat-roofed commercial properties along commercial corridors. In such instances, the Board has sometimes found visible additions to be compatible on architecturally modest buildings if they incorporated a sufficient setback for the form and character of the original building to continue to be understood and when the addition was compatible in height and character with the surrounding context of the historic district. Examples of projects approved by the Board for visible additions atop one-story historic buildings include: 1407 T Street NW (a one-story glass addition atop a one-story post office), 1314-1318 14<sup>th</sup> Street NW (a two-story addition atop a one-story commercial building), 2655 Connecticut Avenue NW (a three-story glass addition atop a one-story commercial building), and 645 Maryland Avenue NE (a two-story metal-clad addition atop a one-story garage building).

A visible one-story rooftop addition could be found compatible at this location for similar reasons as were cited by the Board in these past projects. 1225-1227 is modest in design and is unusual as a one-story commercial building embedded in a row of purpose-built two-story rowhouses. However, the block is not purely residential in character. The residential buildings within the row have been converted to commercial uses and a gas station is located at the corner of Pennsylvania and 16<sup>th</sup> Street. The simple stream-lined design has been developed to be differentiated from the underlying building and light weight in character, and the height of the proposed addition is compatible with the established heights in the block.

However, for the proposal to be found compatible, two minor modifications are recommended. The proposed 5' 0" set back from the primary elevation and 1' 0" set back from 1223 does not go far enough to differentiate the mass of the addition from the mass of the one-story building and the adjacent neighbors. The near alignment with the front façade at 1223 suggests parity between the addition and the rowhouses, when a more clearly deferential relationship is called for. Setting the addition back further from 1223 will result in it reading as a separate secondary volume unique from both the one-story commercial building and the two-story rowhouses. Similarly, the plans show the height of the proposed addition aligning with the height of the adjacent neighbors, but the proportional relationship of the addition's 11' 3" height is too similar to the historic ground floor storefront. Buildings historically were hierarchical in floor arrangements and the ground floor, especially in commercial buildings, featured taller floor to ceiling heights. Reducing the height of the proposed addition would reinforce its subordinate relationship to the ground floor historic building and further reduce the addition's visibility from the street.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept to be compatible with the historic district and to delegate further review to staff with the following modifications:*

- *The rooftop addition should be set back a minimum of 8 feet from the front façade,*
- *The height of the proposed addition be reduced.*

*Staff Contact: Gabriela Gutowski*