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

Landmark/District:	U Street Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	2005 11th Street NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	July 1st, 2021	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	21-419	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Applicant Torti Gallas Urban seeks concept approval for a new six-story multi-unit residential building on a vacant lot in the U Street Historic District. The site is located off the corner of 11th and U Street adjacent to a row of two-story rowhouses. Across the street is the landmark Industrial Savings Bank and a five-story apartment development that sits outside the historic district boundaries. The development site is flanked two contributing rowhouses. The historic U Street landmark Bohemian Caverns is located on the corner.

Project Proposal

The project calls for a six-story apartment building with 39 units. The first five floors of the façade would be brick with cast stone detailing, separated into eight bays each with triple-ganged windows and delineated by columns. The ganged windows would be separated on each floor by fiber-cement spandrel panels. The ground floor entry would be located on the left towards the residential 11th street rowhouses with a metal awning above. There will be large storefront style windows along the ground level with landscaping in the public space. The primary cornice would be metal and located at the top of the fifth floor, with the sixth story, clad in fiber cement paneling, would be treated as an attic story. Along the secondary elevations, the brick returns for a portion on the north and south sides of the building and then transitions to cementitious panel for the remainder of the side and rear elevations.

Evaluation

The site is located in one of the last intact low-scale blocks in the U Street Historic District. The U Street Historic District nomination calls out the significance of the commercial and institutional buildings constructed between 1900-1948 along the U Street corridor. In size and stature, these buildings reflect the emergence of the area as the city's African-American "downtown," while stylistically, they illustrate the reemergence of architectural classicism. Many of the commercial and institutional buildings were constructed for specialized and particular services and uses, and often designed by African-American architects and builders. The non-residential buildings erected after 1910 were generally two- to four-stories in height, constructed of brick or stone with flat roofs, and trimmed with stone detailing. Stylistic elements include projecting bays, molded cornices with brackets and modillions, semi-circular arched openings with limestone surrounds and keystones, stringcourses, pilasters, and groups of window

openings. However, interspersed with these clusters of smaller-scaled buildings are larger and taller historic buildings that comprise some of the most important historic and architectural landmarks in the district, including the True Reformers building, the Prince Hall Masonic Temple, the Bowen YMCA, and the Howard and Lincoln theaters. By the 1930s, the Greater U Street community was fully developed, comprised of ornamental, late- 19th century residential rowhouses, early to mid-20th century commercial buildings, and large institutional buildings. Predominately constructed of brick in a variety of colors, the architecture of the neighborhood continued to be stylistically compatible, despite the varying periods of development and building heights and sizes.

The proposal is inspired by the aesthetic of the City Beautiful movement that influenced the design of the larger landmark buildings. The proposal's light blond brick is common and appropriate for this style and size of building in the U Street Historic District. The use of brick and cast stone also compliments the adjacent neighborhood context of smaller scale rowhouses and commercial buildings. The large window groupings on the primary elevation and rear elevation are compatible with the size and proportion windows on the district's larger historic buildings, while the window treatments on the sides are consistent with the treatment for secondary elevations.

Since initially submitted, the applicants have worked to address concerns about the height of the building by dropping the cornice down a floor and redesigning the top floor as an attic story. The redesign is successful in bringing down the apparent height and better relating it to the shorter adjacent buildings. With the variety of historic building heights and buildings of different heights located immediately adjacent to each other found throughout the U Street Historic District, the proposed height differential of this project to its immediate neighbors is not incompatible with the historic context and development pattern of the district.

The one aspect of the proposal that is not successful or compatible is the large amount of fiber cement paneling proposed on the side and rear elevations, particularly given how visible the south-facing elevations will be over top the lower historic buildings along U Street. Historic buildings and new construction projects that are seen along the U Street corridor are primarily masonry on prominently visible elevations, and the design's compatibility would be improved with a higher proportion of masonry on the its secondary elevations.

Recommendation

HPO recommends the Board find the concept compatible with the character of the U Street Historic District on the condition that a greater proportion of masonry be used on the visible secondary elevations, particularly those that will be visible along U Street, and delegate final approval to staff.

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