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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD**  
**Historic Landmark Designation Case No. 11-13**

**1024 1<sup>st</sup> Street, SE** (Square 740, Lot 802)

Meeting Date: April 28, 2011  
Applicant: Historic Washington Architecture  
Owner: Square 740 LLC/John Akridge Development Company  
Affected ANCs: ANC 6D  
Staff Reviewer: Tim Dennee

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After careful consideration, staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Review Board not designate the property at 1024 1<sup>st</sup> Street, SE (Square 740, Lot 802) nor that it forward the application to the National Register of Historic Places with a recommendation for listing.

The two-story frame building at 1024 1<sup>st</sup> Street, SE was erected after December 1885 as one of a series of five homes wrapping the west and south sides of the square (and including 1020 and 1022 1<sup>st</sup>, which still stand, united behind a brick façade decades ago). Built speculatively for working-class tenants, the building was probably typical of a neighborhood largely occupied by industrial uses and their laborers. The original owner-builder was H.A. Griswold, better known as a promoter of a subdivision on the south side of Uniontown/Anacostia and the operator of the first (horse-drawn) streetcar to that locale.

Designed in the Italianate style common among urban residential and commercial buildings of its period, this building has a prominent bracketed, wood cornice with unusual, turned, corner pendants. Later siding has protected what is probably original, German-lap siding. The building has decent historic integrity, although only a quarter or so of the interior can be viewed from outside, suggesting that a fairly plain interior has been harmed by alterations and neglect.

Although designed for residential use, the building was apparently adapted for commercial use—as a grocery—as early as the 1890s, becoming a typical example of the corner store with residential above.

**Evaluation of significance**

The nomination makes a case for designating the property as one of the last of the older buildings of the formerly working-class neighborhood and particularly as perhaps its last old, corner store.

The Board’s designation criteria are necessarily broad, to take in the full variety of resources conceivable as sufficiently significant. As many applications are received for buildings that represent the earliest or the remnant structures of a neighborhood, these are generally nominated under the “History” criterion (HPRB Criterion B) for association “with historical periods... or patterns of growth and change that contributed significantly to the heritage, culture or development of the District of Columbia...” The underlying idea is that neighborhoods are not merely

microcosms of the entire city, but have their own origins and character. Thus, formative or characteristic building types or examples may have a local significance that is, by extension, important to the development of the District of Columbia, in all its variety.

As a building type becomes scarcer in a neighborhood, it takes on the role of representing the whole class of similar buildings that has been lost. The Board has previously acknowledged this argument to a degree, and it is not a frivolous one in the present instance. But to accept such an argument absolutely or uncritically would set an unacceptably low bar for significance and thus, designation.

Giving some credence to hyper-local significance, we still must balance it with consideration of the importance and scarcity of the property type across the District. The nomination reveals little about the history of the property that cannot be intuited from viewing the building—speculative housing in a working-class neighborhood, converted to commercial use. Such housing built of frame or designed in the Italianate style is not uncommon. Nor are buildings that were historically corner stores. While the subject property has some nice details, the whole adds little to our understanding of the building type.

When properties have been accepted by the Board as of particular local character and significance, there has generally been an additional dimension to their history or architecture. A similar “survivor” argument was offered in the recent case of the Saint Paul African Union Methodist Protest Church, 401 I Street, SE, a property located not far from the subject property. But in addition to having the architectural distinction of any house of worship, Saint Paul’s is a rare example of a house of worship of its particular denomination. The James C. Dent House, 156 Q Street, SW, also a remnant of the largely industrial area, was designated as representing the rise of the African-American middle class, as its owner had risen from slavery to the ownership of several properties. The house also served as the parsonage to an important neighborhood congregation.

Landmarks indicative of the early development of a neighborhood have typically been the product of extensive survey. Multiple-property thematic documents—as for Tenleytown, for instance—fully investigated neighborhood origins and development and evaluated the significance of individual specimens as illustrative, counting original examples and comparing extant examples to those lost. In the present instance, we have little sense of where this 1885-1886 building fits in the development of its neighborhood, either historically or architecturally, other than to guess that it may be somehow typical and neither among the earliest nor the latest.

The building is certainly an example of its building type, whether that type be a speculative, frame house or a corner store, or the one converted to the other. There is nothing notable enough about the property as embodying any of the three to merit landmarking.

The Board has previously rejected nominations for properties that have been merely typical of their neighborhoods, taking the position that, by definition, these do not rise to the level of landmarks worthy of notoriety. In this case, the nomination and the resource itself do not demonstrate that they are sufficiently associated with historical periods or patterns of growth that have contributed significantly to the development of the District.

Rather than compellingly meeting either of the criteria asserted, history or architecture, the argument is a bit of a straddle of the two, as the last example of X in this particular neighborhood.