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

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Property Address:	<b>1617 14<sup>th</sup> Street, NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>14<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>June 28, 2012</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>12-426</b>		Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Steve Callcott</b>	<b>X</b>	New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

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Hickok Cole Architects, representing 1617 14<sup>th</sup> Street, LLC, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a seven-story apartment building with ground-level retail on a vacant site at the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> and Corcoran Streets. The property, formerly an Amoco gas station and now used as a Zip Car parking lot, is adjacent to a row of early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings to the north and a coordinated row of Italianate row houses to the east on Corcoran. The Romanesque Wesley AME church is located on the opposite corner on the south side of Corcoran.

**Proposal**

The design composition calls for a five-story masonry block fronting on 14<sup>th</sup> Street and a four story masonry block behind it on Corcoran, each with punched windows deeply set within the masonry walls. The 14<sup>th</sup> Street block would have projecting storefronts and a vertical projection consisting of canted glass bay windows extending to the top of the fifth story. The top two floors would be largely metal and glass, each floor angled in juxtaposition with each other and with the wall planes broken between apartment units. The design intent is to provide a contrast between the more formal, disciplined masonry blocks below with the more dynamic canted glazed upper stories.

The project involves zoning variances to reduce the number of required parking spaces and to extend the roof structure height to accommodate the elevator overrun.

**Evaluation**

The design has been developed in recognition of its site, influenced by the large auto showrooms along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, the smaller-scaled row houses on Corcoran, and its location in the Uptown Arts District. The building's primary orientation would be to 14<sup>th</sup> Street, with a prominent retail presence with projecting bays. The height, masonry materials, and formal façade organization are complementary and compatible with the Wesley AME Church across the street character, the Central Union Mission building on the opposite end of the block, and the other auto showrooms on the street. On the Corcoran Street side, the step down in the height of the masonry block, the smaller window openings, and the depth of the recess for the windows scales the building down so that it successfully relates to the character of the adjoining rowhouses.

The building's overall height is consistent with that allowed by the underlying zoning and other new construction projects that have been reviewed and approved by the Board. The use of setbacks for upper floors has been a common design response for new construction along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, often used in an effort to lower the building's apparent height or relate more closely to established cornice lines. However, what is unusual and exemplary about the proposed design is that the top floors don't appear as begrudgingly recessed simply in an effort to squeeze additional space while trying to make the building appear smaller. Instead, the setbacks and unusual geometry are an integral part of the design, resulting in a harmonious juxtaposition of elements and a distinctive roofline that simultaneously celebrates its height while ensuring that it is compatible with and enhances its context.

**Recommendation**

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the conceptual design to be compatible with the character of the historic district, and delegate final approval to staff.