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

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Property Address:	<b>650 New York Avenue, NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Mount Vernon Square Historic District</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>February 28, 2013</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>12-305</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Steve Callcott</b>	<b>X</b>	New Construction
		<b>X</b>	Demolition
		<b>X</b>	Subdivision

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Douglas Development Corporation, represented by Shalom Baranes Associates (architects) and EHT Tracerics (preservation consultants), returns for ongoing concept review for a project involving historic building renovation, relocation, and alteration, and construction of a new office building in the Mount Vernon Square Historic District.

When reviewed in May and October 2012, the Board found the general preservation approach, the proposed building relocation, and the extent of new construction to be appropriate and compatible for the site. In the most recent review, the Board had three primary concerns: 1) the curvilinear massing element on the west elevation (referred to as “the saddlebag”) was found to be insufficiently integrated into the design of the building, 2) the base of the saddlebag – how it was supported atop and behind the historic buildings – needed further development and clarity, and 3) the L Street elevation needed further development to compatibly incorporate the retained historic garage buildings with the new construction.

**Revised Proposal**

The proposal has been revised to respond the Board’s concerns. The saddlebag element has been revised to include the same cladding of terra cotta fins proposed for the front portion of the building. Underneath the saddlebag, the previously-proposed enclosed atrium at the back of the historic buildings (at the second and third levels) has been eliminated, creating an open courtyard that exposes the side and rear walls of the historic buildings and the saddlebag’s supporting piloti. The glass curtain wall has been eliminated on the upper floors of the L Street elevation, also substituted with terra cotta. The base of the main mass on L Street has also been more fully integrated into the garage entrance piece. Minor revisions have also been made to the 7<sup>th</sup> Street infill element, eliminating the use of terra cotta in the spandrel panels.

**Evaluation**

The more unified vocabulary provides greater cohesiveness to the composition, reinforcing that the saddlebag is architecturally related and secondary to the primary through-block mass. By using terra cotta on the L Street elevation, this elevation will have a continuity of scale and materiality with the rest of the building. Grounding the

main block of the building on L Street results in a stronger base to the tower and will better tie together the row of historic garage buildings. The removal of the enclosed atrium underneath the saddlebag will expose the sides and rear elevations of the historic buildings, both allowing the introduction of a dynamic sculptural element to the new construction while also creating the potential for a wonderful new outdoor courtyard space that will be enclosed by the historic buildings.

The design includes two different terra cotta cladding treatments. On certain elevations, such as the primary elevation on New York Avenue and the curvilinear saddlebag, it is proposed as a series of projecting fins. On other elevations, such as the mass that is recessed from the street on New York Avenue, the terra cotta is proposed as a series of flat piers. However, the rationale for why one skin is used on one elevation but not another within the same massing element is not entirely clear. For instance, on the recessed mass on New York Avenue, the south and east elevation are clad in the flat pier system, while the rear elevation of this mass is clad in the fin vocabulary. Similarly, the primary New York Avenue mass is clad in the fin system on the south, north and the portion of the west elevation to the south of the saddlebag, while the portion of the west elevation north of the saddlebag is clad in the pier vocabulary.

As the design continues to be developed, some selective removal of the terra cotta (as has always been proposed on the New York Avenue elevation) might be introduced to L Street elevation. The removal could further tie together the back and front of the building and provide relief to the large tower element. As previously recommended, the compatibility of the new four-story in-fill piece on New York Avenue would be improved by lowering the base by one floor, which is more consistent with the historic buildings on the street, and would enhance its role in the composition as a transitional element from the tower to the historic buildings.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Review Board:*

- *Find the revisions to improve the compatibility of the conceptual design,*
- *Direct the applicant to continue working with HPO on design development, scope of restoration work on the historic buildings, and material selection, and*
- *Delegate final approval to staff.*