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

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Landmark/District: **Anacostia Historic District** (x) Agenda  
Address: **2100 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE**

Meeting Date: **May 25, 2016** (x) New construction  
Case Number: **16-687**

Staff Reviewer: **Tim Dennée** (x) Revised concept

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The applicant, Donahue Peebles III (Peebles Corporation), agent for property owners 2100 Martin Luther King Associates LP and with WGD Architects, requests concept review of a revised proposal to construct a senior apartment building at the rear of the four-story 1990s office building at 2100 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue.

**Background**

This project is tied to another, at 5<sup>th</sup> and I Streets NW, a parcel disposed of by the District of Columbia for the purpose of redevelopment, with a condition that affordable housing be provided off site.

The Board first reviewed this project in January 2016. At that time, it was proposed at five stories tall. The building was then narrower, limited by a boundary between the avenue's commercial/multi-use zoning and the residential neighborhood's low-density zoning. The new building was to be linked to the existing office building by means of an above-grade connector across the alley space behind the existing office building. A three-story rear wing of the building was to extend onto the vacant lot behind at 1222 W Street and an existing vehicle ramp for access to the office building was to be reconfigured within the eastern half of the lot, the portion zoned for single-family homes. The Board unanimously recommended that the building be given a front yard; that its five-story height be reduced at least one story; that its massing and the application of materials be revised; that its fenestration and other elements provide a more vertical emphasis; and that the visual effect of the ramp be de-emphasized by better screening.

When next reviewed in November, with a new applicant, the building was four stories tall (at 41 feet), with some of the units relocated to an eastern wing. The above-ground connection to 2100 Martin Luther King had been eliminated, allowing the ramp to the existing subterranean garage to be relocated to a less conspicuous spot. Shallow yards were provided in front of the building.

The Board found that concept not yet compatible within the context of the V Street houses. The Board did not object to the footprint of the building but generally supported instead a three-story building (with one member suggesting a four-story main block and a lower east wing). The Board discouraged the use of metal panels and a stark color contrast in the bays, and recommended reducing the number of materials and planes on the façade. The Board requested

more development of and information on the landscape (including fencing) and on the materials of the building.

### **Present proposal**

The main block has been reduced to three stories, with an expressed attic story, and the east wing has been lowered to two. The building has repeating shallow bays and pavilions, the center one of which, on the main block, serves as the main entrance. On its façade, the east wing has four entrances to individual units.

The walls are to be faced in brick, with precast concrete lintels in a limestone color.

Some green lawn remains in front of the building, and some of the previously proposed paving was removed. The porch in front of the east wing eats into its front yard, but leaves about eight feet of lawn. There is an approximately six-foot-deep yard in front of the main block.

A fence in front of the east wing is depicted as of an open, probably 36-inch-tall, “hairpin” style.

### **Evaluation**

The building has improved in terms of its compatibility with surrounding buildings. While still reading as a distinct building type, it better relates to the two-story houses on V Street and mediates between them and the taller 2100 MLK. It also fills in the gap between 2100 MLK and 1229 V Street, healing the scar of the existing, sunken parking lot/ramp.

The design needs some refinement, however. The visual prominence of rooftop mechanical and its screening should be minimized. The drawings are specific enough to indicate that the size and locations depicted are what will likely be seen. At the very least, it appears that the mechanical enclosure on the east wing could be pushed farther rearward. Screening should be as low as possible; its extra volume often increases the visual impact of rooftop mechanical.

The elements of the porch should be lightened, especially as the porch is quite shallow and not supporting a rooftop deck.

The brick color is suggested by the renderings, but we have as yet no sample, and it is not certain whether the color is integral or a paint finish. A brick sample should be presented at the hearing, and it would preferably not be a wire-cut brick.

The window units are not yet detailed. Even if the windows are aluminum or aluminum clad, they should have traditional profiles. The apparently double-hung windows should have a mullion between them; the present drawing convention suggests instead that they are large, fixed single units.

The fence should be solid welded steel or iron, and not a tubular steel or aluminum, because the dimensions, section, and construction details of the latter are not consistent with the qualities of fences in the historic district.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept and delegate to staff further review of the project, to address the comments above and the Board’s additional comments.*

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