

<b>HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION</b>
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Property Address:	<b>801-811 N Street NW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Shaw Historic District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
ANC:	<b>6E</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
		<input type="checkbox"/> Permit Review
Meeting Date:	<b>March 26, 2015</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>#15-109</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Brendan Meyer</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Architect Michael Vallen, representing owner Mufu Sanni, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a new 5-story apartment building on a vacant lot in the Shaw Historic District.

### Property Description and Context

The site is a vacant collection of 6 building lots that had been most recently used as a parking lot and storage facility for car sales. It is at the south end of the short block of 8<sup>th</sup> Street between the Convention Center and O Street Market. Across 8<sup>th</sup> Street is Immaculate Conception Church (designated landmark). To the north of the site is a small collection of 2 and 3 story rowhouses of varied dates and styles that contribute to the character of the historic district. The contemporary 4-story brick apartment building at 1306 8<sup>th</sup> Street NW was produced by the same owner/architect team that is making this application.<sup>1</sup>

### Project Summary

A five-story, L-shaped apartment building with a regular arrangement of projecting bays is proposed. The building plan has both the N Street and 8<sup>th</sup> Street facades filling their entire street frontage, with the front entrance on N Street. A rear courtyard shares space with a ramp off of the alley that descends to two levels of basement parking, trash service and utility rooms. In addition to the entrance, the south elevation is further emphasized as the front of the building by a deep slab overhang at the roofline and by giving the bay projections a contemporary glazed treatment. The projecting bays on the east side elevation are treated in a more subdued traditional brick and are shallower in depth than the bays on the front. A combined projection is at the corner where front glass rail balconies are juxtaposed against a brick projection. Two brick colors are alternated on both facades for a vertical banding effect with sections of the fifth story rendered as stucco panel.

### Evaluation and Recommendation

In terms of height, massing, rhythm, and orientation the proposal is solidly compatible with this part of the historic district. Distinguishing separate front and side elevations for a corner building was the typical historic approach to organizing an apartment building of this scale, like the nearby Atlantic Apartments at 1305 10<sup>th</sup> Street. Orienting the front of the building to N Street matches the orientation of the Immaculate Conception Church and simplifies how the side elevation blends with the historic rowhouses along 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

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<sup>1</sup> HPA #06-230, January 2009

Besides these fundamental strengths, a small collection of building details could be deleted or developed without the issue of compatibility hanging in the balance. This includes:

- The historic approach to corner bays, regardless of time period or style is to treat the corner as a single unified form rather than different abutting conditions. Corner balconies are a modern arrangement not necessarily incompatible with the historic district, but combining the two different treatments into a single form would be more consistent with historic patterns. A corner consisting of only balconies or only a projecting bay would be the simpler, more compatible arrangement.
- Basement units compel the use of areaways and egress windows across the full length of both facades. While some may be necessary, limiting the extent of them would improve how the building sits on the grade. Removing them from the projecting bays in particular will improve the distinctive quality of the projecting bays and the building will not appear to sit in a pit overall. This matter is more important on the N Street elevation where the amount of public space is narrow (24 feet), but less so on 8<sup>th</sup> Street where the public space is deeper (35 feet).
- Specifying two different brick colors is not uncommon, but arranging it in vertical sections gains no advantage for the concept. A more helpful arrangement would be to choose a main color for the first four stories, then clad the fifth story in a different color. This would be very similar to how the top floor of apartment buildings were historically treated as an attic story with added elements of detailing, ornament and scale to differentiate it from the common floors below.
- The front entrance needs some minor refinement to its organization so that the ramp is better integrated with the steps and entryway.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for a 5-story, L-shaped apartment building at 801 N Street NW compatible with the character of the Shaw Historic District and that final approval be delegated to Staff.*