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

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Property Address:	<b>150 S Street NW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Bloomingdale Historic District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
		<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
		<input type="checkbox"/> Permit Review
Meeting Date:	<b>April 4, 2019</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>#19-233</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Property owner 150 S Street NW LLC seeks concept review for construction of four three-story rowhouses on raised basements on a vacant corner site in the Bloomingdale Historic District. The request also includes subdivision of the lot into four new lots. Concept plans were prepared by Arcadia Design.

**Property Description and Context**

The large vacant site, formerly occupied by a church, is at the southeast corner of S Street NW and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW. To the east is a row of 16 rowhouses built in three groups in 1900 and 1901. These rowhouses are uniformly two-stories tall on raised basements. A regular terrace of wide brick and limestone stoops runs the length of the group of houses. Each house has a projecting bay and turret roof. This pattern of development and scale is mirrored across the street on the north side of S Street. A later generation of porch-front rowhouses lines 2<sup>nd</sup> Street south of the site; these two-story, mansard roof houses were built in 1911 and 1923. A singular rowhouse flat at 151 S Street with a prominent octagonal corner bay and a metal cornice reminiscent of Louis Sullivan stands directly across from the site.

**Proposal**

The applicant proposes to divide the lot into four new lots, each 29 feet wide. Each new building would be divided into two adjacent units each with an accessory basement unit. The arrangement is effectively 8 rowhouses with basement units. The row would be three stories of dark gray brick on raised basements of ashlar stone masonry. A series of three-story projecting bays of various widths are equally distributed along the length of the row. The third stories of each bay, which align with the turret roofs of the 1900 rowhouses to the east, are glass and metal solariums. The corner bay is distinguished from the other bays by spandrel panels between the first and second stories and a larger solarium.

At the ground level, the site will be regraded about two feet higher than the existing site. At the building a line of masonry planters would screen wide basement areaways at the face of each projecting bay. Between bays, entrances are paired on shared metal stoops and covered by metal tie-rod canopies. Fenestration is varied across floors with square basement windows, pairs and banks of casement windows at the first and second floors, and narrow punched openings at the third floor between the solariums.

At the rear of the row, space will be laid out for rear yards, parking and a driveway accessing each house. The rear elevation is organized in a strongly horizontal arrangement of clapboard siding, balconies and window assemblies. Third floors are set back to provide room for balconies and open stairs between units up to roof top decks.

### **Evaluation**

In general, the concept replicates or continues several fundamental characteristics of the surrounding rowhouses and is substantially compatible with the historic district. Specifically, though, there are several prominent components and details that require the Board's careful consideration.

The design shows that a subdivision of four 29-foot lots can host a group of new buildings compatible with the historic district. The general height, massing and rhythm of the project fits comfortably on the block. The main roofline of the building aligns with the peaks of the adjacent turret roofs, and the solariums on top of the projections are level with these turret roofs. The juxtaposition of the triangular turret roofs and square solariums produces a harmony of three-dimensional geometries. The raised stone basement is a suitable complement to the terrace of brick and limestone stoops that already line both sides of S Street.<sup>1</sup> The rear is particularly successful because it is the same height as the front of the buildings, arranged so that each house is identifiable as a unit, and roof top decks are accessed by an innovative and inconspicuous system of open stairs between third floors. The lack of penthouses and stair enclosures is a refreshing compatibility to see in new construction.

In other ways, the concept design falls short of significant Bloomingdale characteristics. Much of the historic district was built during a time when the public space regulations and projection codes dictated an *either-or* architectural choice for builders. The heights of projections were either limited to the window sills of the third floor, or if taller, were required to project past the roofline of the building as a tower with an articulated roof form. The former resulted in two-story projections with walk-out balconies on three-story houses; the latter resulted in the eponymous turret roof. This regulatory framework allowed private builders to create a variety of attractive streetscapes and roof lines. Bloomingdale is a rich collection of these forms.

Applying this standard to 150 S Street would suggest that the solariums are a form inconsistent with the patterns and rhythms of Bloomingdale's rowhouses and that they should be removed in favor of open balconies. From the other end of the historic rule, the corner projection is too short and to match the pattern of the neighborhood would need to be a tower that projected past the roof line and included a roof form. A corner tower would be much like the one across the street or the four corner towers at the intersection of 1<sup>st</sup> and S. The proportions of this tower element would be further compatible if it was narrowed and rounded. Corner bays were historically round, polygonal or chamfered to comply with the historic regulation that no corner bay could

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<sup>1</sup> Consultation with the Development Review staff of the Office of Planning has identified a potential zoning issue. There is a three-story height limit for this site. Zoning review might concur that the raised basement qualifies as a basement and the current concept could proceed to permit; conversely, it may be determined that the basement is a first floor masked by a regraded site. This latter determination could trigger significant revisions to the ground floor, roof height, or site plan of this concept which could need further review by the Board.

project more than three feet into public space. That regulation effectively restricted against disproportionately wide rectangular bays like the one currently designed.

The bays of S and 2<sup>nd</sup> streets would need to be narrowed to conform to the historic dimensions of projections. For instance, the eastern-most building in the concept (Building G-H) has a width of 29'-4" which allows a projection 13'-10" wide; this suggests that a reduction in width of 2 feet would be more consistent with the historic context. This minor adjustment should similarly apply to all of the projections on the four new buildings.

Lastly, dark gray brick is not a material historically found in Bloomingdale. Brick is generally red, tan, or umber in the case of houses done in thin Roman brick.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept to subdivide 150 S Street NW into 4 new lots and build four new, three-story tall brick buildings on half basements to be compatible with the character of the historic district, consistent with the purpose of the preservation act, and that final approval be delegated to staff, on the condition that dimensions, proportions and components of the projecting bays be revised as described and that the brick color be specified as either red or tan.*

*Staff contact: Brendan Meyer*