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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Capitol Hill Historic District</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>818 Potomac Avenue, SE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>July 27, 2017</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>17-426</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Gabriela Gutowski</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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The applicant, Thomas Jefferson Real Estate LLC, with plans prepared by PGN Architects, seeks concept review for the combination of lots and the construction of a four-story residential building in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

### **Property Description**

The location of the project is currently comprised of eight lots. Seven of the lots are undeveloped (10, 14, 800, 801, 816, 817, and 828), and one contains a two-story semi-detached rowhouse built c.1857 (819 L Street). The lots have street frontage on Potomac Ave, 9<sup>th</sup> and L Street. The square is comprised of buildings dating from the 1850s into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Directly across from the site are the Virginia Avenue Park and Community Garden to the east and the Navy Yard Gates to the south.

### **Proposal**

The plans call for combining the lots to accommodate construction of a new four-story residential building with a penthouse, cellar and below-grade parking. The existing historic building at 819 will remain and will be separated from the proposed new construction by a driveway. The primary entrance to the new building would be at the corner, marked by a cylinder shape tower aligned with the corner of Potomac and 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The elevations would feature projecting rectangular bays and single-pane fixed and tilt-and-turn windows. Smoothly finished large scale gray brick would clad the ground floor and the upper floors would be clad in a combination of alternating light-colored brick and gray fiber cement panels. The recessed portions of the elevations would feature projecting balconies with black painted metal railings. The penthouse level will be set back from the street elevations 10' 4". The below-grade garage would be accessed via two roll-down garage doors at L Street. Along L and 9<sup>th</sup>, the public space will be planted. A circular walkway will provide access to the main entrance at the corner, and a zig-zag shaped paved path embedded within landscaping is proposed along Potomac.

### **Evaluation**

The proposed height and massing of the proposed building is compatible with this block, streetscape, and the surrounding historic district. The use of rectangular project bays and a rounded corner tower element recalls projecting bays that are common for residential buildings

throughout Capitol Hill, albeit expressed here in a more contemporary vocabulary. The use of brick as the primary material is also consistent with other multi-unit dwellings within Capitol Hill. The fenestration pattern is regular and although the single-pane windows clearly read as modern, the masonry-to-window ratio is not incompatible with historic buildings within the district. The new construction along L will be separated from the historic rowhouse at 819 by a driveway, therefore not overwhelming the small scale of the rowhouse or the adjacent historic houses within the row.

As the design continues to be developed, further consideration of the material colors for the building is recommended. The proposed color palette of white, black and gray is industrial in character and emphasizes contrast, where masonry in the Capitol Hill Historic District is characterized by its warm, natural earth tones and complementary relationships when used together. While it is not suggested that the colors need to be precisely replicative of those in the historic district, some greater degree of compatibility would enhance the building's relationship with the historic district. As well, it is recommended that the complicated walkway system proposed for the public space on Potomac Avenue be simplified and the amount of paving reduced.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board approve the general concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff with the condition that the applicant work with staff to refine the material color selection, public space plan, and construction details.*