

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

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Landmark/District:	<b>First Church of Christ, Scientist</b> <i>(pending landmark)</i>	<b>X</b>	Agenda Consent Calendar
Property Address:	<b>1770 Euclid Street, NW</b>		
Meeting Date:	<b>October 25, 2012</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>12-611</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Steve Callcott</b>	<b>X</b>	New Construction

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Adams Morgan Hotel, LLC seeks ongoing conceptual review for a project involving rehabilitation and construction of a seven-story addition to the First Church of Christ, Scientist.

**Property History and Description**

The First Church of Christ, Scientist is located at the corner of Euclid and Champlain Streets, NW just east of 18<sup>th</sup> Street. Constructed in 1912, it is an excellent example of Neoclassical Revival architecture and a significant illustration of the influence of the City Beautiful movement on private construction in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building was constructed as the permanent home for First Church of Christ, the first Christian Science church in the area, and was designed by the local firm of Marsh and Peter. A landmark application was submitted by the Adams Morgan Main Street Group in 2008.

**Previous HPRB Review**

When presented to the HPRB earlier this year, the addition was proposed to be 90 feet in height. As the Board’s review was focused on the compatibility of the addition with the church building itself (as opposed to its impact on the surrounding Reed-Cooke neighborhood, which is not designated as an historic district), it found the proposed height and setback from the rear of the church to be acceptable. Nevertheless, while the majority of the Board accepted the general concept design, many of the members commented that the addition would be more compatible for the surrounding community if the height was reduced.

In addition to comments about the height, the Board asked for further study of the porte-cochere/first floor treatment of the Champlain Street frontage to make it more urban and pedestrian-friendly, further study of the fenestration and materials with the goal of scaling the building down and making it more vertical in orientation, and that the top of the building and the penthouse continue to be further developed.

**Revised Proposal**

Since previously presented, and largely a result of a report by the Office of Planning to the Zoning Commission finding that the 90 foot height of the addition was inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the applicants have reduced the height by two floors, lowered from 90 to 72 feet. In order to recapture some of the square footage of those upper floors, the building has been shifted somewhat closer to the rear of the church. The

north setback has been reduced from approximately 25 feet to 15 feet and also includes two projections that extend north on each side within that 15 foot separation. The basic design approach has otherwise remained the same, although refinements have been made to the detailing, the ground-level of the Champlain Street elevation, and the corner tower element.

### **Planning Considerations**

Since the Board's last review, the Zoning Commission has conducted several hearings on the project as a proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD). Since lowered in height, the Office of Planning has issued a revised report finding the revised design to be a meaningful reduction in height from previous proposals, more in keeping with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, and meeting the guidance of the Comprehensive Plan which states that infill development should be compatible with its surroundings and that the First Church building should be preserved. The project is being forwarded to the HPRB to ensure that the proposed changes are consistent with the preservation act, prior to the Zoning Commission taking action.

### **Evaluation**

The removal of two floors to the proposed addition represents a substantial revision to the previous concept, resulting in much less of a height contrast between it and the church and the surrounding neighborhood. As shown in the various perspective renderings, the addition would have less of an impact on the skyline of the surrounding community, and less visibility above the buildings on 18<sup>th</sup> Street and above the church as seen from Columbia Road.

While the lower height makes the shift of the building closer to the church less problematic than when the Board reviewed a 90' tower immediately abutting the rear of the church in 2008, the relationship is one that has required some additional study and refinements. As a result of the diminution of space between the rear of the church and the addition, the HPO requested that the applicants study an architectural design (which is reflected in the applicant's submission) that eliminated the glass tower at the northeast corner of the addition. While originally intended as a light, glassy element to provide variety to the Champlain Street elevation and contrast to the church, when shifted immediately adjacent to the church, this element appeared discordant, heavy and out of scale with the texture, coloration and character of the historic building.

The revised design extends the masonry vocabulary of the addition, and converts the large corner tower into a smaller, narrower projecting oriel on the north elevation (a corresponding oriel is provided on the west side of the north elevation, which would be visible through the alley west of the church). The result pulls the edge of the building an additional 4 feet away from the church, simplifies and unifies the addition's composition, and converts the super-sized tower element into a more diminutively-scaled projection. As the project continues to be developed, the width of the two projections on this otherwise symmetrical elevation should be made the same.

The porte-cochere on Champlain Street has been further developed and detailed in an effort to reduce its scale and make it more pedestrian friendly. Similarly, additional detailing has been provided on the skin and fenestration.

**Recommendation**

*The staff recommends that the Board:*

- *find the revised concept – specifically the revised height, mass, location in relationship to the church and architectural changes -- to be compatible with the proposed landmark and consistent with the purpose of the preservation act;*
- *reiterate that the Board’s comments and findings should not be construed as constituting approval or recommendation of approval for any necessary zoning relief.*