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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Foggy Bottom Historic District</b>	(x) Agenda
Address:	<b>0 Snow's Court NW<sup>1</sup></b>	
Meeting Date:	<b>June 25, 2020</b>	(x) New construction
Case Number:	<b>20-312</b>	(x) Concept

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The applicant, Alexander Gallo, contract purchaser and agent for property owner William H. Cowdrick, trustee, requests the Board's review of a concept to construct a single-family residence abutting the west end of a seven-unit row of two-story alley dwellings erected in 1890. The lot predates 1958, so it may be developed, assuming the granting of zoning variances for required lot area and rear yard, requests for which are pending. The exposed side of the new building would abut a perpendicular branch of the alley.

The applicant desires three levels, so the main entrance has been placed at grade, with the uppermost portion of the building set in from the front and rear, maintaining a cornice height consistent with the abutting row. Overall, the massing works well, and the new construction does not loom over the old or look especially out of place. The at-grade entrance is a practical advantage over the projecting, high stoops of the neighbors. However, it makes the relationship of the floor levels to the front windows a bit odd (see section, Sheet 4), presumably rendering the windows in the front bedroom non-compliant for egress/rescue.

A central question is the degree to which the building should resemble or differ from the abutting row. With the exception of the lower openings on its façade, the building is intended to mimic the historic facades, right down to wood shutters. While the differences will be noticeable, preservation practice holds that new construction should be of its time and distinct from old fabric, so as to not lend a false sense of history or water down historic properties by copying them. Still more important, when one turns the corner of the new building, the fenestration is quite different as are some of the materials. In contemporary construction, it is acceptable to experiment, but the building would be more compatible if it were more unified; the stark differences and the slot windows at the front corner signals that the façade is a historicist false front.

What works best about the side elevation is the wrapping of the brick around the corners, to be cut away at windows. Indeed, it might be better to eliminate the brick between the first- and second-floor windows. It would be better still if the brick was not interrupted by the slot windows just behind the façade. It is not clear if the gray brick color is meant to be integral to the material, or is a paint finish as on the entire historic row. As this row and many other homes in Foggy Bottom have been painted, painting new construction is compatible. But if the brick is to be bare, a red brick would be more compatible with the character of the historic district's

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<sup>1</sup> No street number has been assigned to this lot, but it fronts Snow's Court and is next to 1 Snow's Court.

rowhouses. The proposed dark color of the metal panels are not especially compatible with the predominant colors of the district; something similar to common trim colors would be preferable.

It is recommended that the façade not emulate the neighbors' so closely. The windows should not be six-over-six sash, as that is not even the original configuration for the historic row. The shutters may be eliminated, and there can be some play with the heights of the openings, as long as the space between the second-floor windows and a cornice is maintained. The most important relationship to the alley dwellings is the two-bay rhythm. The cornice itself need not exactly continue that of the row, except for its location and thickness. It is worth retaining the segmental arches, as that gives some texture to an elevation that could end up too flat and featureless.

The windows of the side elevation should be proportioned similar to the front ones, to tie together the composition. They should also be given deeper and broader mullions, to provide more relief to the side wall and make the whole read more vertical, as ganged windows, rather than ribbon windows. The I beam along the side wall is in line with that wall, until it projects as a canopy at rear. The brise-soleil near the top of the building is likely not permitted to project over the public alley (12A DCMR §§ 3202.7.2 and 3202.10.1).

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board support the concept's height, massing and materials, but that the brick be either a compatible red or painted; the fenestration be adjusted as suggested above; the shutters be eliminated; the color of the metal panels be reconsidered; and any code issues be addressed.*