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

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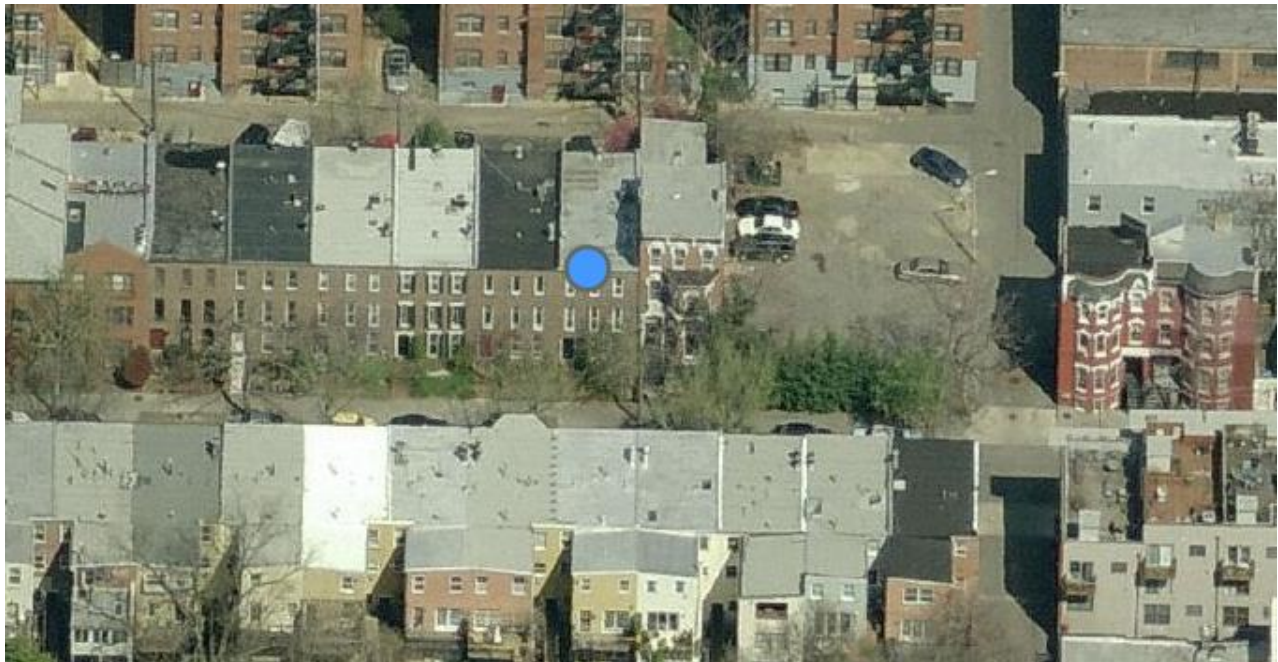
Property Address:	<b>1421 Corcoran Street, NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>14<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>March 26, 2015</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>15-139</b>		Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Steve Callcott</b>	<b>X</b>	New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

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Architect Gregory Rubbo, representing owner Bashir Halabi, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a three-story row house in the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District.

**Property Description**

1421 Corcoran Street is a three-story, flat-front, slab-on-grade brick rowhouse, which is the end unit in a row of six constructed in the 1970s.<sup>1</sup> The house is adjacent to a brick, bay-fronted Victorian rowhouse to the east. The subject property does not contribute to the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District based on its date of construction outside the district's period of significance (1855-1940).



**Proposal**

The project calls for demolishing the building and replacing it with a new three-story house atop a partially raised English basement. A partial fourth floor would be set back from the street elevation.

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<sup>1</sup> The other end unit house in this row – 1431 Corcoran – was demolished and replaced with a three-story raised basement rowhouse in the past two years. HPA #13-062, heard by HPRB on January 24, 2013.

The façade would be set flush with the face of the adjoining buildings, composed of three vertical bays of single pane punched windows capped by a cornice element. The rear elevation would be entirely glass; the side elevations indicate that the third floor would project three feet out as a bay element.

### **Evaluation**

The proposal's three-story height, the alignment of the façade in both height and plane with the adjoining buildings, its orientation to the street, and the conceptual façade composition of three vertical bays of openings are compatible with the character of the historic district and specifically consistent with the character of this streetscape. The rear elevation is somewhat unusual in its window-to-wall proportions and the inclusion of the third floor projecting bay element, however, the Board has typically given flexibility for rear elevations on both historic buildings and new construction particularly where the alley context is varied and lacking a strong historical context, as it is in this instance.

Despite the setback from the front façade, the proposed fourth floor level would be seen in perspective above the shorter houses to the west, raising concerns about the compatibility of the building's massing and form. In its review of the new construction at 1431 Corcoran, the Board found a similar visible partial fourth floor to be unprecedented on this block, and not consistent with the character of rooflines and rowhouse massing in the historic district. The Board approved the proposal at 1431 Corcoran contingent on the elimination of the fourth floor.

The organization and orientation of the basement stairs is not typical for the historic district (where the stairs run parallel to the primary stairs) and results in an areaway that is proportionally large to the small front yard. It may be worth studying whether slightly raising the building (thus reducing the number of steps down to the basement) and/or some alternative organization could minimize the extent that the areaway projects and whether more green space could be gained.

Without further information on materials and detailing, it is premature to determine whether the proposal is compatible in terms of materials, scale, and detailing.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Review Board make the following findings:*

- *the three-story height, façade alignment, and conceptual façade composition are compatible with the character of the historic district;*
- *the partial fourth-floor should be eliminated or designed so as to not be visible from perspective views from the street;*
- *the basement stair and areaway should be studied to retain the maximum amount of front yard green space;*
- *the project should return to the Board with further information on materials and detailing.*