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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Georgetown Historic District</b>	(x) Agenda
Address:	<b>1023, 1025 and 1027 31<sup>st</sup> Street NW</b>	
Meeting Date:	<b>September 22, 2022</b>	(x) Subdivision
Case Number:	<b>22-269</b>	(x) Alteration/addition (x) Concept

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The applicant, property owner Jemal’s Georgetown 31<sup>st</sup> Manager Inc. (Douglas Development), requests Board review of a concept to subdivide to consolidate three lots into one in order to connect the buildings thereon and construct a five-story addition behind two historic buildings (1025 and 1027 31<sup>st</sup> Street) and a penthouse addition to a five-story 1980 office building (1023 31<sup>st</sup>) on the project parcel.

The intent is to expand the office building and convert it to a hotel, a post-pandemic adaptation. Since June, the project has been under review by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) pursuant to the Old Georgetown Act. On September 15, the Commission approved this conceptual application for the project. The Historic Preservation Review Board is not required to take up Georgetown projects that are in CFA jurisdiction (D.C. Code § 6-1105(b)), but subdivisions are not subject to CFA review under the Old Georgetown Act, and anything more than a minor lot change is not delegated to HPO staff review (10C DCMR § 320.3). Thus, the project comes before this Board for the proposed subdivision.

The Board certainly may make recommendations about the design, about demolition, etc. But it must decide the matter of the subdivision. Discussions of similar consolidations of lots have turned upon whether a project itself—or potential projects made possible by a subdivision—are compatible.

**Alterations to the office building**

The changes to the office building are pretty minimal, having been pared down during the CFA review. Replacement storefronts and widened window openings are the major moves proposed for the façade. The larger alterations are the additions, a setback penthouse story on top and the side addition. The visual effects of these are less consequential for this large, noncontributing building than for the historic ones adjacent.

**Historic houses**

The project would incorporate two abutting two-story brick buildings to the north; 1027 31<sup>st</sup> dates to 1907 and 1027 is part of a 1907 row. These were originally homes but have been in commercial in recent years. They would contain ancillary uses, but their principal purpose in the concept is to provide the rear-yard space for the five-story addition. To provide both the addition and the court separating it from these modest buildings, rear wings would be demolished. That at 1027 31<sup>st</sup> appears to be the original, one-story kitchen encapsulated within a later, commercial

addition. All the additions at both buildings date to the 1980s or later, the most recent being an unpermitted sunroom addition erected in 2015 (there is an aerial photo and a photo of the rear of the buildings on the page 4 of this report).



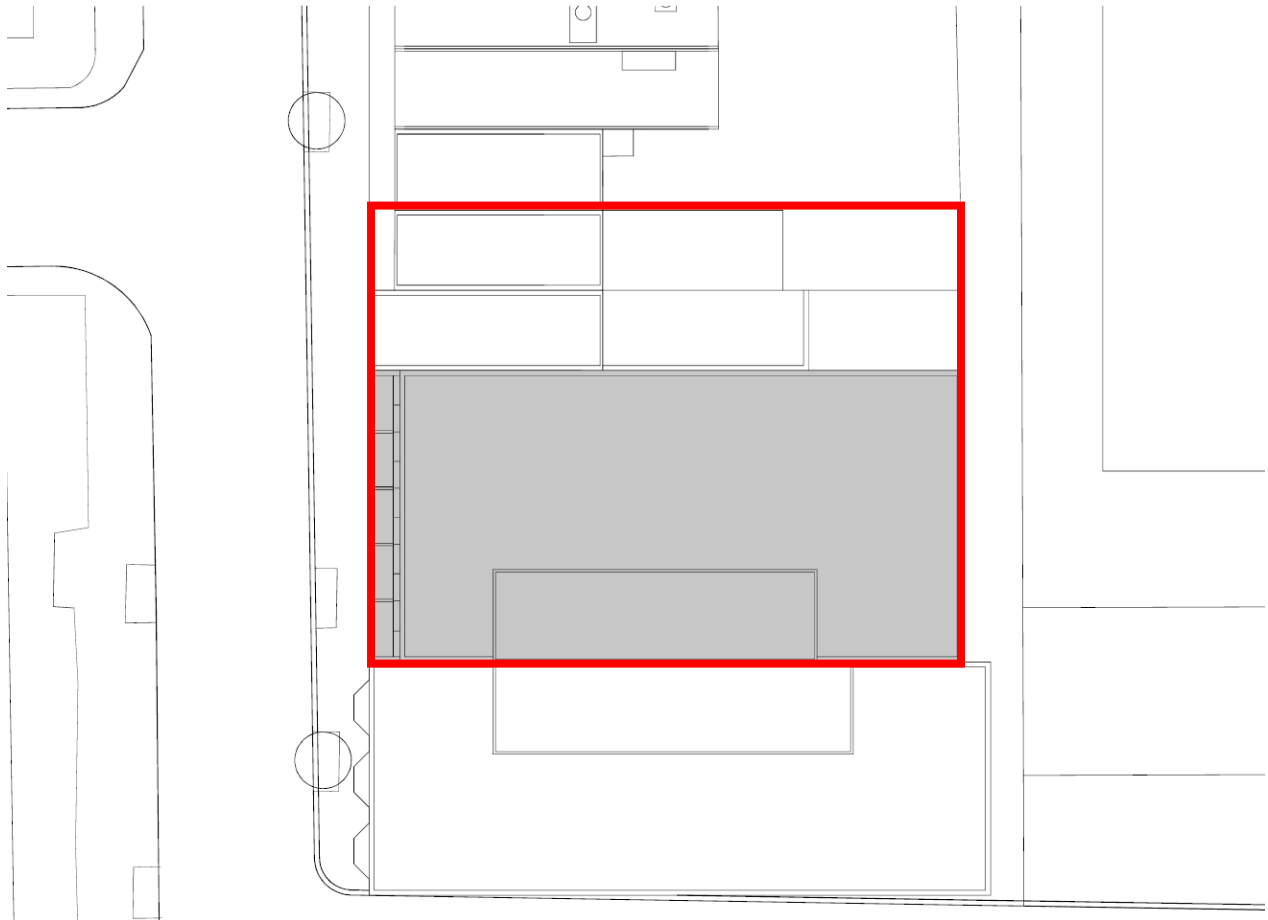
*Project area and context*

That proposed demolition constitutes a distinct minority of the historic fabric and is consistent with the magnitude of demolition the Board has supported on similar projects. The question of what remains on the interiors remains important. The applicant has committed to retaining the floor assemblies, which do not align building to building. In permit review, staff can ensure that further demolition is minimized.

### **Five-story addition**

The provision of a court behind the former houses retains a reasonable amount of back yard to the former houses. The area is inaccessible to the public now, viewed only off a private alley. The height of the addition is slightly mitigated by the fact that the top floor is recessed. But any way one looks at it, it is a lot of volume to build behind such modest historic buildings. The saving grace is the immediate context of larger buildings to the south and east, which already overlook the buildings. There have not been similar projects in Georgetown since the large buildings were introduced between the river and M Street in the 1950s to 1980s, but the approach is similar to projects the HPRB has supported in U Street, Fourteenth Street and even Anacostia. For that reason, HPO has not objected to the project during CFA review. Far from ideal, yet reasonable within this inside corner between large buildings, it would *not* be compatible in instances where such historic buildings stand on a corner, for instance. Despite the size of the addition, its visual and physical separation make it more compatible than upward

additions would be on the historic row (proposals for which are surely to follow) or even taller additions visible immediately behind the contributing buildings.



*Proposed consolidation of three lots*

**Subdivision**

If the project is sufficiently compatible, then the Board may find the subdivision compatible. Of course, the effects of a subdivision may appear only over time. Staff will have to exercise its usual diligence in reviewing any additional demolition of historic fabric that may be proposed over subsequent years.

**Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept for the project, including the necessary subdivision, as consistent with the purposes of the historic preservation law, and that the Board delegate to staff further review with the understanding that the permit application will also be reviewed by CFA.*

