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

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Landmark/District: **Georgetown Historic District** (x) Consent Calendar  
Address: **2801-2803 and 2805 M Street NW**

Meeting Date: **March 28, 2019** (x) Subdivision  
Case Number: **19-170**

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The applicant, Brian Friedman, agent for property owners 2805 M Street LLC and 23 Bond 2801 M Street Owner LLC, requests review of a proposal to join 2801-2803 M Street (Lot 834 in Square 1212) to 2805 M Street (Lot 802) through a subdivision.

The historic preservation law gives the Board the authority to review subdivisions for their potential implications. By regulation, HPO staff may clear subdivisions of historic property only if said subdivisions are “minor or insignificant lot changes compatible with the character of the property...” or are “required to implement a rehabilitation or construction project approved by the Board.”



The Board has not reviewed a project at these properties. Recently, the Commission of Fine Arts has been reviewing proposed alterations of 2801-2803 M, Federal-period commercial buildings that comprise a historic landmark and that are already joined on the interior.<sup>1</sup> The initial proposal called for demolition of the framing of the first floors, in order to rebuild them at grade, but this involved not only too much removal of fabric, but also extensive and incompatible exterior alterations. The applicant is revising that project.

The present application asks to join 2805 M, a two-story 1916 commercial building, to the landmark property. The Board reviews consolidations of lots in part to anticipate whether such a combination may add to the development pressure on the properties. But another important consideration is how much demolition is proposed, because when two such lots are joined, so must the buildings be connected, so there is at least minimal demolition. For these reasons, the Board typically reviews subdivision applications along with the projects that necessitate the subdivisions.

The plans submitted show no connection between 2803 and 2805 at the main floors. This is a good thing, because the ground floor of the latter is at sidewalk grade, meaning that connection would signify the demolition of the floor of 2803, because there is insufficient space to ramp or step between the buildings. It is said that there would only be a minimal connection at the second story, where the floors more nearly align, but drawing illustrating this have not been submitted. They are said to be part of the revisions under way on the whole project.

Given the strict review of Georgetown properties, it is unlikely that the combination of the buildings would result in a project with, say, substantial additions to the buildings. It is more likely that connection of the upper stories will simply provide a more efficient residential or office use of the three buildings. But the exact amount of demolition or alteration remains uncertain until final plans are submitted.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board recommend approval of the subdivision to consolidate the two lots, with the condition that HPO staff not clear the subdivision until after reviewing the plans for the renovation project and finding that the connection between the second stories of 2803 and 2805 M is minimal and that the total demolition of structure is less than what constitutes “demolition in significant part” of each and all of the three buildings.*

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<sup>1</sup> The fact that the 2801 and 2803 M share an assessment and taxation lot suggests that their original lots of record may never have been combined or extinguished. But those buildings have been connected internally for at least 60 years.