

---

---

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

---

---

Landmark/District:	<b>Georgetown Historic District</b>	(x) Consent calendar
Address:	<b>2900-2922 M Street NW</b>	(x) New construction
		(x) Subdivision
Meeting Date:	<b>July 27, 2023</b>	(x) Alteration
Case Number:	<b>23-323</b>	(x) Concept

---

---

The applicant, Jonathan Mellon, agent for property owners MEND 2900-2908 M Street LLC and MEMD2910-2922 M Street LLC (Meridian Group Inc./Martin-Diamond Properties) requests the Board’s review of a proposed subdivision to combine eight lots in order to create what is, for zoning purposes, a single building, to include at least nine contributing commercial buildings (depending how they are counted) and a six-story residential “addition” at the rear of the site.

This is a major project to place on the consent calendar, but it has undergone three reviews at the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, with the Old Georgetown Board recommending concept approval this month. The Commission will review design development and permit drawings, with input from HPO staff. Technically, the construction and demolition need not be reviewed by the Board, because the project is being reviewed by the Commission, but the Board must review the proposed consolidation of lots, a matter which is not within Commission jurisdiction. But the purpose and character of the project inform any discussion of subdivision.

**New Construction**

Normally, a new six-story building may create too much of a disparity juxtaposed with mostly two-story historic buildings, but this one sets far enough rearward of the contributing properties to not directly affect them, leaving a couple of courtyards. Although it will be seen over them from M Street, the prospect is little changed, because of the still-taller building behind the site, erected in the late 1970s. For these reasons, the staffs of both HPO and CFA supported the project.

**Demolition**

Most of the proposed demolition is of twentieth-century additions. When buildings are connected, their lots must be consolidated. Conversely, when their lots are consolidated—in this case, principally to assemble the rear yards for the new construction—the buildings must be connected. To improve the commercial spaces, there is more demolition of side walls than is ideal, and it likely could be reduced more, but it has already been reduced at the recommendation of staff. In no case does it reach the level of demolition of any of the buildings “in significant part. In the instance of 2902 M Street, this is because the western demising wall was already replaced by partitions.

**Subdivision**

It is the proposed consolidation by subdivision that brings the project before the Board and requires a decision. Subdivisions are typically evaluated in light of their likely consequences. If the Board finds the other elements of the project compatible and sufficiently retentive of the fabric and character of the properties, then it may approve the concept of subdivision.

**Archaeology**

The rear yards of the current structures on the M Street and 30<sup>th</sup> Street frontages all have archaeological potential for the prehistoric era and the colonial period through the nineteenth century. The four westernmost lots in the project area (2916-2922 M) stand within a former Lot 120, the home of the Georgetown Presbyterian congregation and its churchyard cemetery until about 1873. Human remains may still be present within the basements and rear yards of the structures on the former church lot. Regardless of whether archaeological investigations will be required, the District's regulations relating to the discovery of human remains would have to be observed (D.C. Code § 5-1406 and § 43-101 et seq.). The applicants are encouraged to work with District Archaeologists Ruth Troccoli and Christine Ames at the Historic Preservation Office regarding the process and procedures for identifying human remains prior to commencement of work.

**Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board approve the project in concept, including the subdivision, as consistent with the purposes of the preservation law, and that further review be delegated to staff.*