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

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Property Address:	<b>301 N Street, NE</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>[possible landmark]</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>June 25, 2015</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>15-300</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Steve Callcott</b>		New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

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Contract purchaser Foulger-Pratt Development, with plans prepared by architects AA Studio, seeks conceptual design review for alterations and new construction to a former printing press building at 301 N Street, NE. While the property is not currently subject to review under the preservation law, the applicants are considering nominating it for landmark designation. As part of that consideration, they are requesting a conceptual review of a proposal to see whether it would meet preservation standards.

**Property History and Description**

301 N Street, NE is a three-story industrial building originally constructed in 1931 to house the offices and printing presses of the National Capital Press Company. The corner building's primary elevation faces N Street, and is clad in red brick with Art Deco detailing and steel casement windows. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Street elevation expresses the building's reinforced concrete frame, with infill brick panels and steel industrial sash windows. In what is perhaps the building's most distinctive feature, it is capped by five large saw-tooth monitor skylights that span almost the entire width of the structure.

The building was expanded on its south side with slightly shorter three-story additions in 1947 and 1949, and to the east with a two-story addition in 1963. The additions are similar in materials and construction to the original portion of the building but do not have the same level of character nor are they capped by the distinctive monitor skylights as the original portion of the building.

With the consolidation of railroad tracks and construction of Union Station in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the surrounding area became the center of the city's warehousing and industrial economy. In this same period, printing presses were expanding in both size and number to support the expanding federal government and associated industries. A 1935 article on manufacturing in the District stated that the city's 67 newspaper and periodical printing companies and 63 book and job printing establishments produced goods valued at over \$17 million; no other single industry in Washington produced more than a third of the amount generated by printing companies. The building is representative of the many printing presses that relocated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century from locations in the commercial downtown to this industrial zone to take advantage of the larger available parcels of land and access to the railroad lines.

National Capital Press printed Congressional Records, Bulletins for the Pan American Union, training manuals for the War Department, and a Choctaw Indian language version of the Catechism of the Catholic Religion.

The property is not currently a landmark, but was identified as potentially eligible in the 1991-1992 DCHPO-sponsored warehouse survey.

### **Proposal**

The project calls for rehabilitating and converting the building to ground level retail use with residential above, removing its later additions, and constructing an eleven story apartment building to the east and south. The project would also remove a portion at the rear of the 1931 building to create a mid-building courtyard, and a rear portion of one of the skylights.

The new construction would be composed as three differentiated parts – a tower facing 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, a tower facing N Street, and a connecting “knuckle” element for vertical circulation. The two residential towers would be clad in brick with slightly differentiated windows; the knuckle would be clad in metal.

### **Evaluation**

While comprising a slightly greater extent of alteration than is typical for a landmark, the conversion of the building’s ground level office windows and loading docks into commercial storefronts will retain the building’s character and façade composition while allowing it to be converted to an alternative use that will more successfully enliven and animate the street. The modifications to the roof top monitors are limited to areas that will not be perceptible from street views, and the removal of the later less distinctive wings will not compromise components of the building that are character-defining. In an acknowledgement of the difficulties of converting unusual building types to new uses, the Board has sometimes applied greater flexibility for buildings with an extremely specific original design or function in order to encourage their rehabilitation and adaptation for modern use.

The new construction has been organized to break down its size and massing into smaller components, with some variety between the two apartment towers. The vertical towers will provide a contrasting but not incompatible backdrop to the horizontal warehouse and its distinctive roofline.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the HPRB find the conceptual design for alterations and adjacent new construction to be compatible with the potential landmark, and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act.*