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

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Property Address:	<b>3900 Nebraska Avenue, NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Swedish Ambassador's Residence</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>December 21, 2023</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>24-088</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
			New Construction
			Subdivision

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Square 1596 Partners LLC, with plans prepared by Barnes Vance Architects, seeks conceptual design review for additions and alterations to the former Swedish Ambassador's residence at 3900 Nebraska Avenue NW. A landmark application to designate the site is pending and scheduled to be heard prior to this case; the Board's review of the concept would proceed only if the property is designated.

**Property History and Description**

3900 Nebraska Avenue NW was built in 1924 for newspaper journalist and publisher David Lawrence and designed by Washington architect Arthur B. Heaton in the Spanish Colonial Revival/Mission Style. The building gained public recognition between 1950-1972, following its purchase by the Royal Swedish Government, when it served as the residence of the Swedish ambassador who frequently hosted members of the diplomatic community and public to events at the residence.

The property is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A and DC Criterion B (History) for its social history and for its association with the Swedish Royal Government and its role in diplomatic relations between the United States and Sweden. It is also significant under National Register Criteria C and DC Criteria D (Architecture), E (Artistry) and F (Work of a Master) as an excellent example of a Spanish Colonial Revival Style property designed by architect Arthur B. Heaton. The property's Period of Significance spans from 1924, corresponding with its original construction, until 1972 when the Swedish Ambassador was recalled to Sweden during diplomatic tensions with the U.S. temporarily vacating the residence.

Heaton's design for the two-story, L-shaped house illustrates the characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival style in its use of complex massing and asymmetrical facades, low pitched roofs clad in clay tile, stucco walls, round arch openings, carved wooden doors, highly detailed entry portals, enclosed courtyards, Mission-style curvilinear stepped parapet walls, and wrought iron grilles. There have been two additions to the house since its completion in 1924, including the creation of a sunroom above the original porch in 1940 and a one-story addition at the house's eastern end, which dates to the 1980s.

While the lot has been reduced from its original size, the house continues to evoke the character of a country estate occupying a generous parcel with substantial open space and landscaping. The character-defining features of the property includes a substantial setback from the street, the

original curvilinear driveway entrance, flagstone courtyards at the front and rear, a terraced garden at the rear with stone walls and steps, and substantial plantings. A freestanding garage and green house at the rear of the parking court were constructed in the 1980s, outside the period of significance, and are non-contributing.

### **Proposal**

The plans call for additions on the rear of each end of the building, removal of the small non-original second floor sun porch and replacement with a larger sunroom, and removal of the non-contributing garage for construction of a two-story garage in the same location that would be connected to the house by a two-story arcade. The non-original front door would be replaced with a new door inspired by Heaton's original design, and the red clay tile roof would be replaced in-kind.

Site work would include new terraces on the front and rear that would replicate the stone patterning of the originals, a new formal garden and stairs, a pool behind the new garage, a driveway extension across the front of the property and a vehicular entry court of permeable pavers. A new masonry perimeter wall and fence would be constructed along Nebraska Avenue to provide greater privacy and a sound barrier; the design has been modified at the request of HPO to lower the solid portion of the wall to retain some public visibility into the property.

### **Evaluation**

The additions and alterations retain important character-defining architectural and landscape features and are compatible with the character of the property. The applicants have modified the plans on several occasions as a result of consultation with HPO and the DC Preservation League.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board find the revised design to be compatible with the landmark, and to delegate final approval to staff.*

*HPO Staff Contact: Steve Callcott*