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

Property Address:	1100 6th Street NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Mount Vernon Square Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
		<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	June 2, 2022	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	#22-274	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Bonstra Haresign Architects, on behalf of owner Aydin Hayri, seeks concept approval for four-story and seven-story additions to 1100 6th Street NW, a contributing property in the Mount Vernon Square Historic District.

Property Description and Context

The site was originally four building lots fronting 6th Street which are now combined by subdivision into a single lot. The sole surviving historic building on the lot is a substantial three-story, gable-roofed house on the corner, originally constructed in 1855 for owner James Essex. The house was converted to commercial use in the 20th century and has several small additions from that era including a corner projection, a one-story side addition facing 6th Street, and a one-story rear wing facing L Street. Prior to these alterations Essex House originally had an attached house on its north and a rear wing set back from L Street. In 2006, the house was extensively rehabilitated. Interior framing was substantially replaced, exterior walls were repointed, windows replaced, and a new roof was installed. Its front facade millwork at the front door and cornice was replaced with reconstructions based on historic photos.

Proposal

The applicant proposes to a build a project of new construction consisting of two distinct compositions and only minor interior connections to Essex House. Facing 6th Street, the project is conceived as three, three-story projecting bay rowhouses connected to Essex House by a two-story glass entrance. This new row would share a continuous fourth floor in a different material than the brick of the houses. On top of this also is a setback glass-railed uncovered roof deck.

Facing L Street, the project consists of a seven-story building running the full depth of the site and would be connected to Essex House with a two-story glass entrance repeated from the one on 6th Street. The front facade of the tower, consisting of a framework of piers and cross members, organizes the floors into two-story groups with inset residential units of fenestration and panels. This pattern wraps onto the east elevation, where it backdrops Essex House, and transitions into a facade treatment that differentiates the upper story with proportionally more glazing and vertical ribs that appear to clip down the roof. The tower is set back from the west property line to allow for a two-story screen for the driveway and loading area. Above, the west elevation hosts an even pattern of fenestration and balconies.

Essex House would be lightly touched by the surrounding new construction. It would be connected to the interior circulation of the new construction with narrow openings at the second and third stories of the house.

Evaluation

The conditions of the site and its surrounding context are conducive to a wide range of options for a concept design compatible with the character of the historic district. Essex House was substantially rehabilitated recently and poses no vital preservation concerns. The site gives ample room for new development. The site does not sit in an area sensitive to matters of scale and height because of the tall new construction to the south, the non-contributing apartments to the west, and the monumentally scaled church just to the north. This project could be designed in any number of compatible ways and the one presented by the applicant should be counted amongst those. While no major incompatibilities are identified by Staff, the Board should discuss the following points, evaluate their sufficient compatibility, and advise the applicant in the Board motion of any necessary revisions or conditions.

The projecting-bay rowhouse form selected for the 6th Street elevation is a sound choice for blending in with the historic rowhouses lining the block to the north. They are designed as three-story houses with a contrasting contemporary fourth floor across the group, but four-story rowhouses would be compatible here as well. There is little advantage to disguising the fourth floor as something other than part of the new rowhouses. Rendering the fourth story as brick to match the houses below, or as a mansard, while keeping the bays as three-story elements, would produce a compatible composition very similar to a common type of massing found in historic rowhouses.

The two-story glass facades abutting the north and west sides of Essex House separate the new construction from the historic house, giving it space to stand out. They act as hyphens between old and new and are useful in this way, but they are not the only compatible option. Alternatively, the house originally hosted an attached neighbor on the north and a rear wing on the west, so attachment is its natural condition. Bringing the rowhouses against the house or cladding the hyphens in masonry materials could work as well.

The east elevation of the seven-story addition, which would be the new back drop for the views of Essex House, is an articulated facade of primary materials and embellishments. The seven-story height is not incompatible with the historic district and does not require an embellished facade design to make it so. Offering a more restrained facade here would create a back-drop less likely to overshadow Essex House, allow the seven-story facade on L Street to read more clearly as the front of the building, and take advantage of historic building patterns where tall buildings had plain and unadorned sides. The glass railing of the roof deck on the four-story portion should be considered similarly. It generally blends into the overall composition of new construction but setting it back so its not visible from 6th Street would reinforce the effort made to portray the new rowhouses as an independent four-story row.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the four-story and seven-story additions to 1100 6th Street NW to be compatible with the character of the historic district, consistent with the purpose of the preservation act, provide direction to the applicant for any revisions necessary as conditions of approval, and that final approval be delegated to staff.

Staff contact: Brendan Meyer