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

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Property Address:	<b>467-469 M Street NW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Mount Vernon Square Historic District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
		<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	<b>August 2, 2018</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>#18-517</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Brendan Meyer</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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The applicant, owner Metropolitan Community Church, seeks concept review for a subdivision and two new three-story rowhouses at 467-469 M Street NW in the Mount Vernon Square Historic District for a total of four residential units. Plans were prepared Square 134 Architects.

### **Property Description and Context**

The property is currently part of an extended surface parking lot for the Metropolitan Community Church located at the corner of Ridge and 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The subject site fronts on the 400 block of M Street which is one of the most architecturally interesting and diverse blocks in the Mount Vernon Square Historic District. The entire block is a varied and eclectic collection of 2-, 3- and 4-story residences built from 1850 through 1920. The simplest forms are small 2-story vernacular rowhouses setback from the front and sides of their lot. More robust buildings exhibit grand scaled Italianate ornament on three-story flat-faced rowhouses, while other elevations are composed of stacked, quirky masonry forms and fenestration patterns. The block also includes small apartment buildings from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and several non-contributing structures that pre-date designation of the historic district in 1999, as well as new construction approved by the Board (410 and 426 M Street).

### **Proposal**

The applicants propose to subdivide off two new buildings lots from the church parking lot, each 20 x 100 feet. Proposed for construction are two rowhouses of similar detailing but different composition, each to be three-stories tall, 42 feet deep, and have brick facades. The west house (469) would include a left-hand projecting bay two stories tall capped by a parapet-railing terrace. The third floor would be a tall mansard roof with a front-gable dormer above and behind the projecting bay. The east house (467) would include a right-hand projecting bay three stories tall backdropped by the slightly taller third floor. Roof decks are proposed for each house at the rear and will be accessed by exterior stairs attached to the rear elevation.

Each building would be accessed by metal stairs set against a raised concrete basement which accommodates window wells across the front of each projecting bay. The facades are articulated by a variety of brick coursing patterns and string courses including a band of header courses at the top of the second floors and stacked bond for the entire third floor of 467. Fenestration is proportionally large, but varied with undivided casements and transoms in 469 and divided and mullioned casements and transoms in 467. Utilities, including trash service, electric meters, bicycle racks and parking would be located in the rear yard. The rear 27 feet of the lots will be paved and by easement will continue to be used as church parking with outlet to 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

## **Evaluation**

The concept design substantially and compatibly fills in a long-standing void in this architecturally rich block of M Street. Designing the pair as separate, unmatching houses is consistent with the pattern of development here which is dominated by individual houses; only a very few of the houses on the block were built as matching groups of houses. The heights of the new houses comfortably fit with their neighbors by judiciously placing the mansard house against the short two-story flat building to the west. The taller three-story house nearly aligns with the height of the three-story historic house to the east. The roof decks are sufficiently set back from the front property line that they will not be visible from M Street by a comfortable margin.

The front fenestration of the rowhouses is slightly larger in scale in comparison to the surrounding historic houses but the rhythm of openings and proportion of glass to masonry is not incompatible with the streetscape. The rear elevation, arranged in a pattern of fiber cement panels and contemporary fenestration, will not be prominently visible and offer only oblique angles of view to 5<sup>th</sup> Street. This visibility can be moderated sufficiently by selecting colors that relate to the earth-toned brick, stone and stucco that characterize the district.

An important feature of the design that specifically refers to its historic surroundings is the variety of brickwork used to organize the front façades. The use of stringcourses, header bonds, and stacked bonds segment the front facades into sections in a way very similar to how the surrounding historic rowhouses appear as stacks of eclectic building parts. The inclusion of these masonry details by the applicant are crucial to the compatibility of the design and should not be omitted from final construction.

## **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the subdivision and concept design for two new, three-story rowhouses at 467 and 469 M Street to be compatible with the character of the historic district, consistent with the purpose of the preservation act, and delegate final approval to staff.*

*HPO contact: Brendan Meyer*