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

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Property Address:	<b>1112 6<sup>th</sup> 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>September 30, 2021</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>#21-441</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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The applicant, owner Aspen Flats LLC, seeks concept approval for a three-story rear addition and two fourth-story penthouses to be added the three-story contributing rowhouse at 1112 6<sup>th</sup> Street NW in the Mount Vernon Square Historic district. Plans were prepared by R. Micheal Cross Design Group.

### **Property Description and Context**

The subject house is an unattached rowhouse built in 1893. It shares attributes common to the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century rowhouses in the historic district including a round projecting bay, shallow slate turret roof and cast-iron steps at the front entrance. One rare component that is barely visible is a two-story oriel that bridges the gap between 1112 6<sup>th</sup> Street and the house to the south. The main block of the house is shorter than most at only 30 feet while the two-story rear wing is longer than most at 47 feet.

### **Proposal**

The applicant proposes to remove the rear wing and build a full width three-story rear addition, 30 feet deep and attached to the main block with a 20-foot-long hyphen along the north property line. At the fourth-floor level two penthouses would be built on the rear of the main block and front of the rear addition and be connected by an open trellis. All new construction is rendered with a narrow clapboard siding pattern with the rear elevation hosting French doors and full-width metal balconies. Sheet 13 shows the existing condition and materials of the front façade and the owner's plans for preserving the façade and adding an egress window adjacent to the existing basement entrance.

### **Evaluation**

Adding to the rear and on top of a rowhouse has two fundamental challenges. First, excessive demolition must be avoided. Second, any additional height must not significantly change the perceived height and scale of the historic house because it is in those basic aspects that the house contributes to the character and scale of the historic district. As a rule, a rooftop addition that is set back off the top of the main block of a rowhouse could successfully address both challenges by reducing the amount of demolition and hiding the addition from primary views. The more a rooftop addition extends on to the top of the main block of the rowhouse, the more potential it has to be visible and result in excessive demolition. These assessments should be calibrated against the context of the addition. If the context has a high degree of integrity, additions that might produce a conspicuous change should be reviewed guardedly, but if the context has eroded integrity the addition could fit inconspicuously into its surroundings.

The applicant has included a helpful drawing sheet (03) which provides the demolition standard defined in the Board's regulations.<sup>1</sup> The drawings and notes on this page show that the concept complies with the demolition standard by retaining the framing and load bearing walls of the main block. The removal of the rear wing is allowable under the regulations because the wing is not a character defining feature of the historic district and removal of such wings is allowed by regulation.<sup>2</sup> Also in this regard, the interior of the square has little intact historic context remaining due to the construction of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century housing blocks to the west of 1112 6<sup>th</sup> Street.

On the second point of visibility, the applicant has submitted a flag test report which includes photos of a rooftop mock-up and views from various points on 6<sup>th</sup> Street. The report is augmented by a sight-line diagram showing the dimensions of the proposed penthouse and the point of view from the sidewalk opposite of 1112 6<sup>th</sup> Street. The flag test was conducted without Staff so verification of the results is not possible at this time, but as a whole the information in the flag test shows that the penthouse would be slightly visible from 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Considering the marginal result of the flag test it should be feasible that the dimensions of the penthouse could be reduced or setback farther to eliminate visibility and that a future flag test conducted with staff could assure that such modifications eliminate visibility of the penthouse.

For the treatment of the front façade, the note for the existing canopy should be revised. The canopy is not historic so its removal is appropriate, but it should not be replaced so that the existing transom sash and stone lintel are not obscured.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find that the three-story rear wing and penthouse additions at 1112 6<sup>th</sup> Street NW to be compatible with the character of the historic district on the condition that they are not visible from 6<sup>th</sup> Street NW, consistent with the purpose of the preservation act, and that final approval be delegated to staff.*

*Staff contact: Brendan Meyer*

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<sup>1</sup> DCMR 10C, 305.1 "Work considered demolition under the Act shall include, but is not limited to, any of the following, as determined by the Mayor's Agent:..."

<sup>2</sup> DCMR 10C, 305.1(d): "The removal or destruction of all or substantially all of an entire wing or appendage of the building, such as a rear ell, unless the wing lacks physical or historic integrity, or is not a character-defining feature"