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

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|--------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Property Address:  | <b>1212-1218 4<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>July 25, 2019</b>                         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration       |
| H.P.A. Number:     | <b>#19-464</b>                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction |
|                    |                                              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition       |
|                    |                                              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision      |

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Owner Sahr Bockai seeks concept review for construction of a new three-story building at the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Ridge Streets in the Mount Vernon Square Historic District in conjunction with adding a partial third floor to the two-story buildings at 1212-1216 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The project calls for the two separate building lots to be combined into a single lot. The Board approved concept designs for this owner and combined site in 2010 and 2012.

### **Property Description and Context**

Ridge Street was originally platted in 1796 and was substantially developed prior to the Civil War. The houses of Ridge Street are characterized by modest, two-story, flat-fronted frame and brick facades. The houses are consistently simple with double-hung windows and spare detailing. Turning the corner, 4<sup>th</sup> Street includes houses similar in form and date of construction as Ridge, but also includes a number of Victorian brick rowhouses with projecting bays and ornate brick cornices. Across Ridge Street from the project site is a row of contemporary projecting bay rowhouses built in 2010.

On the Ridge Street side of the site is a rock-face, concrete-block garage that is the remnant of a larger coal yard operation dating to 1930 and built for the Amato Coal Company. The Board has previously determined the structure as non-contributing.

### **Proposal**

The two-story apartment building at 1212-1216 4<sup>th</sup> Street is actually composed of two very similar buildings erected about 1940. Here, the applicant proposes to add a third-story addition running the full width of the existing buildings set back 16 feet from the front. The existing front facades would be restored without alteration.

A new three-story brick building is proposed for the corner site. The front façade and entrance would face 4<sup>th</sup> Street and a seventy-foot long side elevation would run most of the length of Ridge. A curb-cut leading to surface parking for six vehicles would separate the new side elevation from the existing row of houses starting at 408 Ridge Street. The most prominent massing component of the flat-roofed building would be a corner tower projecting four feet into public space with faces 15 feet wide. A smaller two-foot projection is shown towards the end of the Ridge Street elevation. The brickwork of both elevations is the same abundant detailing including a rusticated brick base for the first floor, multiple string courses, a cornice band of soldier courses and window surrounds of brick headers.

## **Evaluation**

The partial third floor addition proposed for 1212-1216 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW is the same (dimensions, materials, setback, fenestration and visibility) as what the Board approved in 2010 and 2012 and does not require further study. Evaluation should focus on the design for the new building because it is significantly different than the previously approved concepts.

The Board's guidelines for new construction stipulate several design review criteria.<sup>1</sup> For setback the guidelines recommend that new construction should respect the setbacks established by the buildings on a street and align with them, even if current code allows otherwise (2.1). For massing, which is derived through the articulation of the building's façade with towers, projections and steps, new construction should respect the massing of neighboring buildings (7.1).

The corner site straddles two blocks of different architectural character. Ridge Street is dominated by short flat-front houses while 4<sup>th</sup> Street is lined with tall, projecting-bay Victorian houses. Whereas the previous concepts approved by the Board for this site have respected the distinction between these two streets by treating them differently, this concept treats both faces equally with minimal hierarchy. The corner tower is the hinge between both and would simultaneously be compatible with Victorian 4<sup>th</sup> Street but incompatible with ante-bellum Ridge Street.

To solve this, the proposed corner tower could be shifted entirely onto the front façade of 4<sup>th</sup> Street. This adjustment can be understood by looking at the front facades for new construction approved by the Board for 1220 4<sup>th</sup> Street and 1223 5<sup>th</sup> Street at the other end of Ridge (Figs. 1 and 2). Interior layouts would not be significantly impacted by this adjustment.

The much smaller projecting bay at the west end of the Ridge Street elevation does not require the same sort of revision because it is more akin to a minor ornament than a projection. Its height aligns with the adjacent cornice line rather than projecting through it, and its projection into public space is two feet rather than the four feet for the corner tower. Its proportions echo the those of the Ridge Street houses and help relieve an otherwise long elevation.

## **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept to combine lots, add a partial third floor to 1212-1216 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW, and build a new three-story brick building at 1218 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW as revised above, to be compatible with the character of the historic district, consistent with the purpose of the preservation act, and that final approval be delegated to staff.*

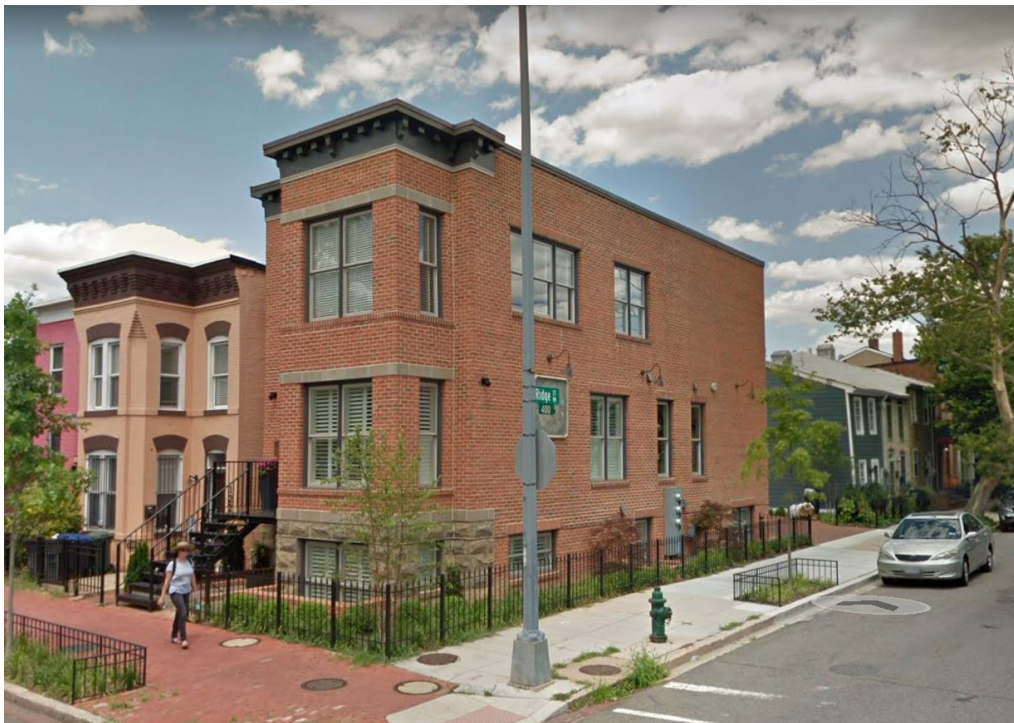
*Staff contact: Brendan Meyer*

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<sup>1</sup> *New Construction in Historic Districts* (1997)



*Figure 1. 1220 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW (2010)*



*Figure 2. 1223 5<sup>th</sup> Street NW (2012)*