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

Property Address:	1251 4th Street NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Mount Vernon Square Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
ANC:	6E	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	February 23, 2017	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	#17-075	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Brendan Meyer	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Owner Abbas Fahti seeks continuing concept review for construction of two new multi-unit residential buildings on 4th Street NW in conjunction with a subdivision to create new lots off of 1251 4th Street NW. In January the Board approved the concept for the subdivision, but requested the applicant revise details of the concept and return for further review. Plans have been prepared by Running Dog Architects which is part of the development team contracted to purchase the site.

Property Description and Context

1251 4th Street is a three-story brick building located at the corner of 4th and N Street constructed as a grocery and flats building in 1885. Fourth Street features an eclectic variety of wood frame and brick rowhouses from 1850 through 1900, with several instances of modern construction built since the designation of the historic district in 1999.

Revisions

The concept drawings have been updated with elevation drawings for the sides and rear of the new buildings. Other new drawings include three new perspective views from 4th Street. The unattached south elevation is brick at the front where it is most visible, and is cementitious panel beyond that. The street facing windows have been narrowed slightly to offset them from the other windows on the primary façade. The perspectives, sections and roof plans delineate that the proposed roof top structures and decks at the rear of the buildings will not be visible from 4th Street. The basement areaways across the front façade of the buildings have not been revised, but rather a more robust screen of landscape has been rendered.

Evaluation

The renderings show that the roof top elements will not be prominently visible from 4th Street, and HPO can assure this result with flag tests during construction.

The south end of the building, which has rightly been designed to stand apart from the rhythm of three 18-foot facades established by the primary elevations, could be offset more if the narrow setback section of brick facing 4th Street was made windowless. The windows could be relocated around the corner and onto the south facing wall. Relocated windows would provide light to the same rooms and, since there are no other windows on the south elevation, the glazing area would be well below 25% of the wall area, which is the code requirement for fire separation.

The basement areaways, which serve as egress windows for the basement rooms, are still much larger than what is required by code or is typical within the historic district. Shown, they are 36” deep front to back and 32 square feet in area. Code requires a minimum of 36” deep and 9 feet square. Because the arrangement of entrances is ganged there is a wide distance between steps, unlike across the street where that new construction was spaced by a regular rhythm of separate steps which is much more compatible treatment. While the revised drawings show increased landscape screening, this should not be the sole device relied on for compatibility. Compatibility would benefit from narrowing the wells further by pulling them tighter to the windows rather than the steps and widening and landscaping the space between residences. A step further would be to keep the egress dimensions for only one window per room and revise the others to simple at-grade basement windows two feet high.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the revised concept contingent on revision of the window condition on the south end of the building and reduction of the size of the areaways, as described above, and that final approval be delegated to staff.