
**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
		<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	December 27, 2022	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	#21-557	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Mark Morgensen, on behalf of owner Delta Rhino Company, seeks concept review for construction of two three-story rowhouses at Lots 34 and 35, Square 523. For the previous owner, the lots were approved by the Board in 2017 to be subdivided off of the lot of 1251 4th Street NW.¹ Plans were prepared by Valerion Consulting. The Board last heard this application in October 2021.

Property Description and Context

This block of 4th 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 1999.² Heights, materials, and styles vary accordingly. The tallest historic building on the block is a three-story flat front brick rowhouse with wood cornice at 1215 4th Street. The largest group of houses consists of two-story mid-19th century brick houses from 1233-1225 4th Street. As a whole, the block displays a variety of rowhouse sizes, styles and forms, with no single type predominating. Under a separate application this applicant seeks to add a third story addition to the rear wing of the corner building.

Proposal and Revisions

The overall dimensions of the facades, projecting bays and building heights remain essentially the same but the materials, fenestration and rooflines have all been revised. The elevations are clad in a uniform brick with flat lintels and arches alternating as window and door headers. The window type has been reduced to one type of 2-over-2 double-hung window with the first-floor units augmented by transom windows. Facades are terminated with large dentil cornices. The one prominent variation in the row is the middle façade which shortens the projecting bay to two-stories and caps it with a frame porch structure consisting of two-posts and a gable roof.

Evaluation

The revisions are a positive response to the Board's previous comments and present a composition which would be compatible with the building types, massing, rhythm, materials, and heights of the buildings of this historic district. The porch on top of the middle bay is a commendable use of a historic form which, while not ubiquitous, is found in the historic districts between Downtown and U Street.

There is room for some evaluation of the remaining details. The cornice design does not designate a material. "Dentils" of the scale drawn create a pattern more familiar as a cornice of corbelled brick; while a cornice with a material different than brick is typically a built-up cornice of bands and curved profiles, but not large dentils. Either correctly proportioned historic form—corbelled brick or a cornice of flat and

¹ HPA #17-075. Concept and subdivision approved by HPRB. Subdivision was executed. Resulting lots subsequently sold to current applicant. Staff anticipates a new address assignment by the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs when the building permit applications are filed.

² 1211-1213 4th Street NW (2011) built to evoke the historic house at 1215; 1220-1228 and 1232-1234 4th Street NW (2012) built as contemporary versions of the Victorian bay-front rowhouse at 1230; 1235 4th Street NW (2014) built to emphasize the two-story character of the row of frame houses but with a mansard.

curved profiles—would be compatible here. The two-over-two windows are not incompatible, but one-over-one windows would also be appropriate. In either configuration the transoms should be undivided. The front basement areaways tip towards the large end of the scale but are comparable to the new construction across the street and can be adequately screened with a purposeful landscaping plan; the applicant should continue to study whether they can be reduced further to increase the extent of landscaped area.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept design for two new rowhouse form buildings at 1251 4th Street NW (Lot 34 and 35) as consistent with the preservation act and delegate final review to staff.

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