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

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Property Address:	<b>1253 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
ANC:	<b>6E</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	<b>March 29, 2018</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>#18-205</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Brendan Meyer</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Owner, Hoagie House LLC, seeks concept review for construction of a three-story, four-unit rowhouse in the Mount Vernon Square Historic District. The site is currently vacant and consists of two lots (lots 31 and 32) which were recently subdivided off of the building at the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and N Streets. Plans have been prepared by architect Patrick Brian Jones. In January 2017 the Board approved a similar concept for this site for the previous owner.<sup>1</sup>

### **Property Description and Context**

This block of 4<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The largest group of houses consists of two-story mid-19th century brick houses from 1233-1225 4<sup>th</sup> Street. As a whole, the block displays a variety of rowhouse sizes, styles and forms, with no single type predominating.

### **Proposal**

The project calls for a three-story, four-unit building that would take the form of a row of three houses attached to the existing non-contributing house at 1235 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The 58-foot wide front elevation would be punctuated by three 10-foot wide projecting bays with a double entrance at the south end of the row. A 6-foot wide side yard would be left between the north elevation and north property line.

The front elevation uses a palette of contemporary materials and detailing consisting of brick veneer with punched openings for single sash windows, projecting bays that include metal panel, corner window systems and short metal railings at third floor walk out balconies, and a simple cornice of brick coursing offset from the coursing of the rest of the façade. Basement entrances and areaways are interspersed between the metal steps and railings up to the main ground floor entrances for each unit. The north elevation would continue the brick veneer of the front façade

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<sup>1</sup> HPA #17-075. Concept and subdivision approved by HPRB. Subdivision was executed. Resulting lots subsequently sold to current applicant. The current application was filed as 1253 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW in accord with the current assigned street number, but staff anticipates a new address assignment by the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs when the building permit application is filed.

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

and have irregularly-spaced fenestration reflective of the interior plan. Two penthouse stairs (set back 15 and 21 feet from the front elevation) would provide access to separate roof decks at the rear.

### **Evaluation**

The concept shares much in common with the concept plan approved for the previous owner, and is generally compatible with the character of the historic district. The differences between the two deserve some consideration from the Board.

The concept produces a contemporary row of houses that matches the materials, height and rhythm of the street. This is largely accomplished by regular spacing of the projecting bays, windows and entrances. Whereas the previous concept chose to not attach to the existing house to the south—and forced a quirky design challenge—this concept chooses the simpler challenge of attaching to the existing house. This is an approach more typical of historic conditions and is easily accommodated by inserting paired entrances and windows into this wider section at the end of the elevation. By not emphasizing the wide section, the projecting bays are free to be the primary features of the elevation and set the rhythm for the entire row.

The common brick watertable and modest railings—which strike an ornamental note—give the projecting bays a compatible proportion. The rest of the façade however lacks ornament and detailing typical of the historic district that help give buildings their scale and sense of craftsmanship. For instance details like transoms over doors, window sills and lintels that are differentiated from the wall surface, and meeting rails or window pane configurations found in double-hung sashes. Some lack of these types of details is not unusual for a contemporary design in historic districts, but the complete lack of such details result in the design falling a bit short of achieving a satisfactorily compatible concept.

Secondary aspects of the concept are also mostly sufficient. The random spacing of the fenestration of the north elevation is not atypical of historic end-unit rowhouses. Traditionally, front fenestration was regularly arranged to address the street in a formal manner while fenestration on alleys and side elevations were irregularly arranged to best suit the daylighting needs of the interior layout. The penthouse stairs and roof decks are set back from the façade a substantial amount but result in a very slight visibility from parts of the 4<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way. While this is minor and does not have a substantial effect on the compatibility of the concept, the penthouses could be hidden completely by setting them back further or by raising the front parapet slightly.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board find the general concept for new construction to be not incompatible with the character of the historic district contingent on further development of the detailing of the façade and adjustments made to the penthouse location or parapet height to eliminate the visibility of the penthouses. It is recommended that final approval be delegated to staff.*

*Staff contact: Brendan Meyer*