

---

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

---

Property Address:	<b>1245 5<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
Meeting Date:	<b>March 23, 2022</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>#23-109</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
		<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

---

The applicant, owner Mohammed Seid, seeks concept review to add two projection bays and other alterations to the north elevation of 1245 5<sup>th</sup> Street NW, a two-story brick commercial building which contributes to the Mount Vernon Square Historic District. Plans were prepared by Architextual.

### **Property Description and Context**

This property sits on the southeast corner of the intersection of 5<sup>th</sup> and N Streets as part of a group of three, two-story brick houses dated to about 1877 based on tax assessment records and architectural surveys conducted by the Historic Preservation Office. The building was built before building permits began to be required regularly in 1878. It was likely built as a residence and converted into a commercial building around 1900. It still has a wood cornice in common with the adjoining house, but it has been significantly altered with a full width flat storefront facing 5<sup>th</sup> street, second floor windows that have been shortened by raising the sills, and along N Street the addition of a long, shed-like projection and several changes to window sizes and locations. The continuous vertical mortar joint about ten feet from the end of the building indicates that this end of the building is a later addition.

### **Proposal**

The plans propose to remove the existing projections from the north elevation and excavate a full basement under the entire building and rear yard. Two 12'-6" projecting bays, made of glass and metal and the same height as the building, would be built on the north elevation. The projecting bays would be connected by a series of egress window wells which would extend ten feet beyond the existing rear wall. The egress well between the two bays would be bridged to give access to a new entrance at grade.

### **Evaluation**

The existing building, due to its small size and simple form, is not a good candidate for any sort of roof addition, and there is no room in the small rear yard for an addition. Adding projecting bays becomes the best option for increasing square footage to the building, but the cumulative effect of the bays and egress wells is out of scale with and overwhelming to the small building. Using non-historic materials of metal and glass exacerbates the disparity between old and new. The effort to add projecting bays is worthwhile though because it would remove the many ad hoc incompatibilities that have accumulated on this side of the building.

The Board should recommend the following revisions to the concept design in order bring the projecting bays and other alterations into compatible balance with the building.

1. The projecting bays should be constructed of masonry and with smaller window openings--if not traditional punched windows—in order to better relate to the materials and scale of fenestration of the historic building,

2. The aggregate width of the bays is slightly over-sized compared to the proportions proposed by the long-standing projection code. Reducing the width of each bay by one foot each, or removing the bay closest to 5<sup>th</sup> Street, would better match the rhythm of bays historically found on a corner building of this type and size.
3. The number and length of egress wells further erodes the way the building meets the ground for nearly the entire length of the N Street façade. The concept calls for so many wells because of the unusual arrangement of the residential unit being proposed which contain ten bedrooms (5 of them in the basement).<sup>1</sup> Reducing the number and size of egress wells would substantially reduce the impact of the addition and alterations and should be considered even at the expense of some of the many planned bedrooms.
4. The site plan renders the entire public space on N Street in brick paving from sidewalk to building. While some paving near the front of building suits the commercial use, a substantial amount of the public space, should remain unpaved in order to transition to the residential landscaped public spaces that extend eastward along N Street.
5. The altered second floor windows on the front façade of the historic building should be restored back to their original height to match the others in the row.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board endorse the concept of adding a projecting bay or bays to the N Street side of 1245 5<sup>th</sup> Street NW as compatible with the character of the historic district, but advise the applicant to revise the concept design and return to the Board for further review.*

*Staff contact: Brendan Meyer*

---

<sup>1</sup>Unit 1 is labeled as retail. Unit 2 is the residential unit which takes up the remainder of the building.