

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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Mount Vernon Triangle Historic District</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>923-925 5th Street NW</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>March 22, 2018</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>18-212</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Kim Elliott</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Kline Operations, working with Architect Peter Fillat III, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a 10-story hotel building that incorporates the historic facade of 925 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Property Description**

Architect W. Ellis Groben designed 925-929 5<sup>th</sup> Street as a 2-story store in 1946 for the Union Provision and Distribution Company. It was designed as a Jewish meat market and distribution center with a refrigeration plant, and it changed its name to Director Company after the owner's surname. The front façade is all that remains of the original building which still has the original polychrome panels designed by concrete specialist John J. Early. The panels once read "Director's Deli – Deliciously Different Corned Beef", some of which is still faintly visible today under a later coat of paint. The façade dates from the period of significance for the Mount Vernon Triangle Historic District (1869-1946), and HPO worked with the owner several years ago to ensure that the façade was properly braced so that it could be retained as part of this streetscape and incorporated into a new construction project.

In September 2016, the Board approved a conceptual design by another development/design team for a 10-story residential building that retrained and restored the historic façade.

**Proposal**

The proposed massing is for a 11-story + penthouse hotel that can be read as 3 main blocks above and set apart from the 1-story historic element. The historic façade would remain and be restored and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors would be set back several feet, while the remaining levels will be in the same plane as the first floor. A penthouse level is set back 20' from the front. The majority of the new façade will be clad in several tones of a terracotta colored composite fiber cement panel that will wrap around to the side elevations and continue at the rear. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor front elevations will be primarily glass that continues to the first floor on the right between the 2 historic structures. Angled columns aligned with the original structure of the storefront create the framework for the support of the new construction above the historic façade. The design team has begun cleaning the original J. J. Early polychrome panels and plans to restore these panels to their original color and highlight the original embossed signage.

**Evaluation**

The Mount Vernon Triangle Historic District is small and has a limited collection of historic buildings—many of which are sitting on sites zoned for much larger buildings—as is dramatically illustrated in this immediate context. The south corners of 5<sup>th</sup> and K Streets are the heart of the historic district, with the greatest concentration of early buildings. Retaining this collection relatively intact, and including in this case a singular façade, is important in giving the neighborhood scale and context.

Restoring and celebrating the façade of 925 5<sup>th</sup> Street is the main preservation goal – which will include cleaning the polychrome panels and revealing the original signage script. The storefront openings have been altered and added to over the years. While historic photos of the original façade have not been found, the proposed façade design frames out the storefront openings in a manner that is compatible in scale and proportion for the commercial building and which will help animate the building’s frontage for pedestrians.

The overall parti made up of three components of this deep lot helps break down the massing – creating a central core block in a dark stucco finish, wrapped by two shorter more colorful and articulated forms. Having a setback for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors allows the historic 1-story façade to retain its own presence while also becoming an integral part of the new building’s composition. However, rather than having different setbacks for the two floors (the second-floor setback is 3’7” and the 3<sup>rd</sup> setback is 1’10”), giving the same or a more significant setback to both floors would be a cleaner and less complicated approach. This may also provide an opportunity for balconies or operable windows to activate this zone. The size and profile of the columns should also be considered in order to find a visually comfortable form in relation to the proportion of the tall mass it is supporting.

The design team has already begun to investigate the underlying color of the original “Director’s Corned Beef” panels; ideally, they can be restored to their original color and highlight the original embossed signage as suggested in the rendering. The proposed entrances are confusing and lack hierarchy. As the design team continues to refine the details of the storefront façade, it will help to create a well-defined main entrance while remaining true to the scale and character of the historic store-front typology.

The façade design of the tower successfully transcends the often-monotonous elevations presented by the hotel building type through an animated composition of variegated panel colors and shifting solid and void openings from floor to floor. This playful façade, along with the curious corned beef signage of the original building, has the promise of activating 5<sup>th</sup> Street with an unusual and creative building unlike any other in the District. All four elevations are highly visible, surrounded by shorter historic buildings, and therefore the quality of the cladding materials is critical. The architect studied many color variations for the façade panels—but it may be favorable to let the original color of the polychrome panels inform the final color selection for the new cladding so that there is a compatibility between the old and new construction.

While the penthouse is set back 20’ from the façade, this level appears top-heavy in the renderings, creating a top floor that is proportionally much taller than the others. While some revisions have been made to address this, further adjustments could be studied to reduce the perceived scale of the top floor.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept generally consistent with the preservation act and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act, and for the design team to continue to refine the design with the recommendations outlined in the staff report, and delegate final approval to staff.*