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

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Property Address:	<b>512 10<sup>th</sup> Street, NW</b>	<b>X</b> Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site</b>	Consent Denial
Meeting Date:	<b>December 20, 2018</b>	<b>X</b> Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>19-100</b>	<b>X</b> Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Steve Callcott</b>	New Construction
		Demolition
		Subdivision

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Architect Gary Martinez (OTJ Architects), representing the Ford’s Theater Society, seeks conceptual design review for alterations and a two-story roof addition to a three-story building across the street from Ford’s Theater. The building would have retail, rehearsal studios, a function room with an outdoor terrace, and support spaces for the theater.

**Property Description**

512 10<sup>th</sup> Street was originally constructed in 1920 as a Pepco substation but its current appearance dates from 1963 when the building’s facade was replaced and its interior reconstructed to serve as Pepco office space. The 1963 façade features painted metal panels in a streamlined, Art Deco-inspired style, with a central entrance and aluminum casement windows. At the request of the owner, the building was determined contributing to the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site by the HPRB in 1990 for the purposes of transferring development air rights from the property. As a result of that transfer, the façade was restored and a covenant recorded limiting development to 4.5 FAR.

Immediately to the north is a 9-story office building (510 10<sup>th</sup> Street) renovated by the Society in 2009 which serves as an education and learning center dedicated to the study and exhibition of information on Lincoln’s life, death and legacy. Internal connections would be provided on the ground level and an upper level between 512 and 514.

**Proposal**

The plans call for retention of 512’s distinctive metal façade, with modifications to provide an accessible at-grade entrance and to elongate the window openings on either side of the entrance into additional doors. A metal marquee would be added over the first floor to provide shelter and signage.

An addition would be added atop the building to house a function room with a terrace and studio space. While only two-stories, the uses would result in taller ceiling heights than is typical of an office or residential building; the addition would measure approximately 34 feet in height and would be capped by a mechanical penthouse. The massing of the addition would be canted at an angle to the underlying building, and the cladding composed of a skin of glass surmounted by a screen of perforated metal panels.

## **Evaluation**

The proposed alterations to the existing façade retain the width and spacing of its openings and its symmetrical composition, provide needed accessibility, and are compatible with the building's character.

While the Board most typically requires that roof additions be designed so that they are not visible from street view, the Board's guidelines acknowledge that there are cases in which a visible roof addition may be found acceptable if it does not fundamentally alter the character of the building and is sufficiently designed to be compatible with the building and/or historic district." The proposal represents one of those instances in which a visible roof addition is not incompatible, given the highly urbanized context of downtown and the particular character of the building.

As described in the National Register nominations for both the Pennsylvania Avenue and Downtown historic districts, the area contains a wide variety of building types with an interspersed mix of small 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, large commercial buildings from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, new office buildings, and monumental government buildings. This heterogenous mix of buildings types and sizes is illustrated on this block, where three-story historic and new buildings coexist with historic nine-story buildings (514 10<sup>th</sup> and 999 E Street) and mid-rise and high-rise new construction. The two additional floors would be well below the tallest buildings and within the established range of heights on the block.

The particular character of this building also lends itself to a visible addition in a way that other smaller-scaled buildings might not. Unlike a more finely-scaled 19<sup>th</sup> century structure, the industrial muscularity of the building can comfortably support the added mass of additional floors. The slight cant of the mass and the use of materials -- a lightweight skin of glass and perforated metal panels -- results in the addition being differentiated from and subordinate to the original base building.

## **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Review Board approve the conceptual design for building alterations and additions as compatible with the character of the historic district, and delegate final approval to staff.*