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

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Property Address: **1217 12<sup>th</sup> Street NW**  
Landmark/District: **Shaw Historic District**  
ANC: **2F**

Meeting Date: **March 1, 2018**  
H.P.A. Number: **#18-139**

Agenda  
 Consent Calendar  
 Denial Calendar  
 Concept Review  
 Permit Review  
 Alteration  
 New Construction  
 Demolition  
 Subdivision

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The applicant, owner Nelson Marr, seeks concept review for a three-story rear addition to a two-story rowhouse at 1217 11<sup>th</sup> Street NW in the Shaw Historic District. Plans were prepared by Jonathan Kuhn Architect.

### **Property Description and Context**

This block of 12<sup>th</sup> Street, and the whole square in general, is a mix of rowhouses and apartment buildings from a variety of time periods. Houses are two and three stories and were built individually and in small groups. The tallest building on the square is a designated landmark on 11<sup>th</sup> Street (The Plymouth) that stands seven stories tall. The interior of the square is dominated by this tall landmark and a collection of four-story modern in-fill buildings and rear wing additions approved since the historic district was designated in 1999.

1217 12<sup>th</sup> was built in 1887 in conjunction with 1215 to the south. The brick house exhibits modest Victorian features in its simple brick cornice and ornamental millwork at the windows. The rear wing is a small one-story kitchen. The garage at the rear of the lot is the full width of the lot but does not contribute to the character of the historic district. The rear of 1217 is distantly visible through the open landscape and parking lot associated with the Frontier Condominiums (built c. 1970) at the corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and M Streets.

### **Proposal**

The applicant proposes to demolish the one-story rear wing and garage and add a three-story rear wing spanning the width of the lot. The addition would be 40 feet tall and stand 12 feet above the rear roof of the historic house. The top floor of the addition would provide access to a roof deck 13 feet deep. The addition is rendered with a vertical cladding of unlabeled material. Fenestration on the rear façade includes spandrel panels and balconies. The addition is the full width of the lot which does not allow for windows in either side elevation.

### **Evaluation**

The existing rear wing and garage are not character defining features and their removal is raises no preservation concerns. Rear wings of historic rowhouses were typically the same height of the house or one-story shorter. To add a rear wing that is taller than the main block of the house is contrary to the principle described in the Board's guidelines for

additions that encourages additions to be subordinate. However, this principle is always applied by the Board against the context and prominence of the change.<sup>1</sup> In this case, the proposed addition and deck will not be visible from along 12<sup>th</sup> Street which contain the most important views to consider. Also several large rear additions have been built on this square that are one story larger than their historic building.<sup>2</sup> The size of the rear addition proposed for 1217 is not incompatible with the tall historic buildings and modern additions that already exist in the immediate context.

The materials of the addition should be reconsidered, particularly given the prominence of the unfenestrated side walls on the interior of the square. Historic materials for rear additions were generally masonry to match the house, wood clapboards, or stucco. Revising the rear materials to one or two of these historic materials (composite is an appropriate substitute material for wood on rear elevations) would provide a better balance for the large massing with the character of the building and improve its compatibility.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept for a three-story rear addition to be compatible with the character of the historic district, consistent with the purpose of the preservation act, and that final approval be delegated to staff on the condition that the vertical cladding materials be revised to masonry, stucco or clapboards.*

*HPO Staff Contact: Brendan Meyer*

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<sup>1</sup> Additions to Historic Buildings (1997), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> 1223-1229 12<sup>th</sup> Street NW HPA #99-500, 1109 M Street NW HPA #11-284, 1220 and 1224 11<sup>th</sup> Street NW HPA #11-464, 1222 11<sup>th</sup> Street NW HPA #15-060.