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

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Property Address:	<b>2144 California Street, NW</b>		Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District</b>	<b>X</b>	Consent Calendar
		<b>X</b>	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	<b>March 24, 2016</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>16-257</b>		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Steve Callcott</b>		Demolition
			Subdivision

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Federal City Property Investors LLC, with plans prepared by Bonstra Haresign Architects, seeks conceptual design review for exterior and roof alterations to an apartment building in the Sheridan Kalorama Historic District.

**Property History and Description**

2144 California Street is a nine-story apartment building inspired by the International Style. Its façade is composed of alternating horizontal bands of metal casement windows and blond brick, punctuated with projecting bays with windows wrapping the corner at each end. The lobby entrance is located slightly below grade; a garage entrance is located under the western bay.

The building was constructed in 1959 by the firm of Corning & Moore.<sup>1</sup> Due to its date of construction outside the period of significance (1890-1945), the building is non-contributing to the Sheridan Kalorama Historic District.

**Proposal**

The exterior work is part of a comprehensive renovation of the building that will also include replacement of interior systems. The exterior work will include replacement of windows with double-insulated units to replicate the appearance, pane configuration and general profiles of the existing single-glazed units (similar to that done recently at 1500 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, which was reviewed and approved by HPO); additional fenestration on side and rear elevations; removing through-wall vents on the façade (patched using the salvaged brick from the side and rear elevations where the new

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<sup>1</sup> A short summary of the firm is provided in *DC Modern: A Context for Modernism in the District of Columbia, 1945-1976* (Robinson & Associates, 2009), a portion of which is excerpted here: Corning & Moore was founded in 1942 by architects E. Burton Corning and Raymond G. Moore. Throughout the 1950s, the firm had a very active practice designing garden-type rental properties and large, multistory luxury apartment buildings both in Washington and its rapidly growing suburbs. Examples include the 632-unit Brandywine Apartments on Connecticut Avenue (mid-1950s), 4000 Massachusetts Avenue (1956), and the Envoy (1959) at 2144 California Street, NW. Other building types included office buildings, retail stores, and banks. In 1957, Corning & Moore designed the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission headquarters at 8787 Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring – which featured a modern interior design, streamlined for efficiency – and an office building for the B’nai B’rith service organization at 1640 Rhode Island Avenue, NW.

windows are being inserted); and adding a small amenities room and a second stair on the roof for access to an expanded roof terrace.

The proposal also seeks to improve the pedestrian entrance and ground-level appearance. As currently configured, the entrance is located a half-flight below sidewalk grade and the first floor base of the building is clad in a darker brown brick of a different size than the blond brick; it is unclear whether this brick is original or a later replacement. The proposal seeks to create a more generous garden terrace at the entry level with a wider stair and a ramp to allow universal access approaching from the east. The lobby wall would be opened up with a higher proportion of glazing opening to an expanded interior lobby and lounge area, and the entrance capped with a streamlined metal canopy. The expanded lobby entrance and glass wall would include a combination of clear, fritted and spandrel glass; the small remaining portion of retained brown brick would be covered with panels of terra cotta or an equivalent material that would be in a larger scale but closer in coloration to the original blond brick above.

### **Evaluation**

Despite not being a contributing building to the historic district, the proposal has been developed to be respectful to its mid-century modern design, and would result in a substantial improvement to its underwhelming entrance. The alterations to the secondary elevations and the roof are compatible with the character of the historic district and would have minimal public impact or visibility. On the front elevation, opening the building's first floor up with a higher proportion of glass is compatible with the building's design and the modern prototypes on which it is modeled, while remaining in scale with the character of other apartment buildings on the street. The specific material selections and construction detailing should continue to be coordinated with staff as they are further developed.

### **Recommendation**

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