

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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Strivers' Section HD</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>1706 V Street NW</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>February 25, 2016</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>16-094</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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1706 V Street NW LLC, with McInturff Architects, seeks conceptual design review for new construction of a multi-family residential building.

**Property Description**

Strivers' Section Historic District, first developed in the 1870s, is a significantly intact residential community, characterized by its late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century simple rowhouses and a variety of apartment houses scattered throughout. The project site is currently a single large lot used for parking, with an alley on the east perimeter. The site is at the end of a row of two-story (plus cellar) rowhouses built in 1890, 1891, and 1907 and designed by different architects. The project site was once three lots and home to three rowhouses, built in 1886 by architect John Sweeny and demolished sometime after 1965.

**Proposal**

The proposed project is a design for a multi-unit three-story (plus cellar) building. The parti is a C-shaped plan with a courtyard on the open side facing the alley. The front elevation is articulated as two elevations—each with a bay and double-hung two-over-two windows—relating to the surrounding rowhouse proportions. There will be a single entrance at V Street with the circulation core connecting the front portion of the building with the rear section. All of the utility meters will be located in an interior vestibule, and parking will be provided at the rear. The building will be brick with standing-seam metal panels, metal spandrel panel in the bay, double-hung two-over-two windows, and a green courtyard facing the alley.

**Evaluation**

The design team has met numerous times with HPO, the ANC, and the community, and they have responded to feedback from these meetings. Significant and positive design changes have taken place over the past several months, successfully developing the design to a compatibility with the site context and the neighborhood. Although it is a large site—once the site of three houses—the architect has created a parti that achieves the perception of a much smaller mass by breaking down the building into a front component and rear component. By creating a courtyard in the middle, the proportion of the front mass is consistent with and mirrors that of 1704 V Street. Similarly, the rear mass is at a scale that is comparable to a rowhouse size in this district. The V Street elevation is broken down into a smaller scale—so as to appear as two rowhouses.

Each side has a modern variation of a projecting bay, similar in dimensions to the bays on both 1704 and 1700 V Street, and the material change for the 3<sup>rd</sup> story also mitigates the overall scale. The open courtyard can contribute a significant green space to the site, and HPO encourages the architect to pursue a design with abundant plantings to soften the space between the two building masses.

An argument could be made for a two-story building here to match the existing row, but the new construction at three stories is sufficiently compatible at the end of the row. The preservation design guidelines, *New Construction in Historic Districts*, note that a new building within a block of more or less of consistent height does not necessarily need to be the same height, but it should not deviate more than one story taller or shorter. The current proposal has been lowered four feet from its original design and is now only eight feet taller than its adjacent neighbor. The height is proportionate to the lot width and is still compatible with the slightly shorter row.

While a majority of the context in Strivers' Section is of the rowhouse typology, this district has many examples of smaller and larger apartment buildings throughout. The proposed project is responsive to the immediate context—with height at 38 feet, similar to nearby buildings—and with a massing and elevation that relates to the rowhouse scale.

The Strivers' Section Historic District is very intact and has seen little new development, so there are few examples of modern architecture in the district, but this does not mean that a contemporary project is inappropriate. As stated in *New Construction in Historic Districts*, "Compatibility does not mean exactly duplicating the existing buildings or environment. A new building should be seen as a product of its own time." The proposed project represents a modern aesthetic, while still referencing important architectural characteristics such as materials, proportions, scale, architectural elements, rhythm, and setbacks that frame its compatibility. This project successfully achieves these goals, being a building of its time while respecting the character-defining elements of the historic district and this particular context.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board find the current concept compatible with the character of the historic district and consistent with the preservation act and delegate further review to staff.*