

- The 12th Street townhouses have been revised to include a canted fourth floor clad in cementitious shingles to read more as an attic story. The fenestration pattern has also been adjusted.
- The stacked townhouse designs have been redesigned to also include a canted fourth floor to read as an attic story. Elder Street elevations have been enhanced to improve their presence on the street.
- The stacked townhouses facing Georgia Avenue have been further developed to navigate the change in grade. In addition, these designs have been revised to increase the amount of brick reducing the spandrel panels.

Site plan

The Board's recommendation for more openings between buildings was directed principally at Fern Street, where a single break has been introduced within a stick of ten houses, an improvement. The major change in the site plan is the introduction of a community green space facing Elder Street in the middle of the central parcel. While another community space may not strictly be needed on campus, it does relieve somewhat the crowdedness for the townhouse residents. For those who are not residents, it offers the advantage of more openness at the portion of the project most prominently viewed from within the historic campus, and it turns fewer rows end on to Elder Street, relieving a previously unrelenting rhythm of tall buildings. Provision of the space results in the reduction in the number of buildings by three, but those facing 12th and 13th streets have been deepened.

The mews within the center of the easternmost square is increased in width as is the yard in front of the westernmost and western-facing stick of houses, the latter of which may be least in need of a front-yard setback. These moves narrow some of the north-south alleys—which may seem contrary to the notion of permeability, but visibility of the rears of the townhouses is not particularly desirable, and removing the promise of inadequate parking from behind the buildings is a more practical move.

The most important change is an increase to the depth of the yards fronting Fern Street, 12th and 13th. The Fern Street yards are said to be eight feet from the inside of the sidewalk to the front edge of the porch. The 12th and 13th street front yards are said to be nine and a half feet. There is no similar increase on Elder, except that the central, communal space provides a much greater setback.

The question for the Board is whether these changes have satisfied the request for more openness and permeability.

Buildings

Georgia Avenue (pages 18-19)

The Georgia Avenue-facing construction has been revised as a single-building composition with a central pavilion and subordinate wings, by sinking the northern wing a bit and continuing a belt course across the building at the base of the attic. Building identification signage should be

proportional and not particularly large (see page 43), because residences are principally destinations for their residents, and their signs are not to attract auto-borne passersby.

Fern Street (pages 20-25)

The end elevations have improved in the sense that they are completed by carrying the side parapet rearward (not depicted in the rear elevation), for a not-quite-symmetrical elevation (which would be improved by a single attic window). The porch details have improved. The roof beams still look a bit high relative to the openings. The columns are being refined in the detail drawings, even if not in the elevations. The brick-faced piers still look too thick, if their approximately eighteen-inch width is to be carried up higher than the rail height.

13th Street (pages 26-29)

Removing the spandrels is arguably good, but the triple-ganged windows have been widened. It would be preferable to have some hierarchy and variation—and more solid wall, especially at the corners—by retaining narrower flanker windows. The windows over the door may be slightly wider than they are now, more similar to the initial concept and equal in width to the center of the triple-ganged windows. The additional space beneath the cornice makes for better proportions, but the cornice needs to be detailed. The almost floor-height sills at the first floor look oddly low; it seems that the transoms could be eliminated and the window units simply shifted upward.

12th Street (pages 30-32)

The same issue of the equal-width triple-ganged bay windows appears on these houses, and the resulting size of the openings emphasizes how unusually wide the bays are. Going to a mansard-like roof and a roofing material in front is probably an improvement upon a sided, vertical wall, but they are tall for mansards, and asphalt shingles are a bit informal. Perhaps a more durable roofing material should be explored, such as standing-seam metal or metal or even fiber-cement shingles, something with more depth and texture. The brick cornice is rather flat as a lower termination to a mansard, too. The dormers need to be developed; in elevations, the shadows suggest they project prominently, but they are not depicted in the side elevations. The fiber-cement panels set into the bays on the end units (detail on page 32) should be reduced in area; there is little visual benefit to extending the openings beyond the windows themselves and introducing more flat panels.

Stacked townhouses (pages 33-37)

The above comments about the mansard and the triple-ganged windows apply here. The dormers should be differentiated from the openings below, and not as wide. A firewall should rise between the individual units to relieve the large roof areas. It would divide the double-wide buildings into parts equivalent in width to that of the central building on the row, making the latter not stand out so much. The blind openings on the south elevations are still an unsatisfying wall to confront a street. The Fern Street porches remain essentially at the sidewalk.

General comments

There has been some difficulty with the HPRB-approved townhouse project at the south end of the campus, in that the garages are so close to each other that there is little space to bring in all the utilities between them. Pepco is insisting that the electric meters go on the facades, something that was not proposed in the concept drawings.

The front windows will be Andersen E Series aluminum-clad wood. On the Fern Street houses, the ganged windows have mullions between them, which is traditional. The drawings suggest they would just be mulled together elsewhere, with a cap over the joint. This is not as good and raises the question of how the detail would be handled, especially where the mullion cap profile would be carried up into a transom.

All of the entry canopies should be light in appearance. They need not, for instance, match the thickness or details of a belt course (see 44), which itself need not be so thick.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the subdivision in concept; weigh in on whether the site plan changes are sufficient to open up the project; and approve in concept the architecture with the applicant to address adequately the points raised above.