
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Landmark/District: **Walter Reed Army Medical Center Historic District** (x) Agenda
Address: **1000 Main Drive NW¹**

Meeting Date: **April 28, 2022** (x) New construction
Case Number: **21-499** (x) Design development

The applicant, builder Toll Brothers, agent for the long-term leaseholder and master developer TPWR Developer, returns for review of design development on a townhouse and duplex project on Lot 817 in Square 2950 between Fern Street and Elder Street.

At the February 24 hearing, the Board unanimously approved the concept for subdivision and construction of the buildings according to a revised site plan, with the project to return as the design developed. The Board asked the applicant to address the points raised in the staff report and in the Board discussion. The Board added that the rows should be more unified in their masonry; that the applicant consider flipping the stair within the Fern Street houses so that the end walls can be regularized; that the Fern Street porch columns be refined and deeper porches be considered; and that the Georgia Avenue building façade be improved.

The February staff report had recommended that:

- The Georgia Avenue building's signage be reduced in size.
- The Fern Street porch height, columns and piers be adjusted.
- The 13th Street triple-ganged windows have the flankers narrowed; the cornices be detailed; the sills of the first-floor windows be raised and the transoms eliminated.
- The 13th Street houses' triple-ganged windows have their flankers narrowed; a standing-seam or even fiber-cement shingle be used on the mansards, which should be lowered, if possible; the dormers be developed; the fiber-cement panels on the end units be reduced in area; the cornice be developed as more robust.
- The Elder Street stacked townhouses' triple-ganged windows have the flankers narrowed; a standing-seam or even fiber-cement shingle be used on the mansards, which should be lowered, if possible; the dormers should be differentiated by size from the primary windows, principally by being smaller; firewalls should separate the roofs; the blind openings along Fern should be made into windows, if possible.
- The window mulling details be carefully considered, especially where the mullion cap profile would have to be brought up into a mansard.
- The electric meters go on the rear of the buildings.
- The entry canopies should be light in appearance, and not, for instance, match the thickness or details of a belt course which itself need not be so thick.

¹ The project is not near Main Drive and will be the 1100 through 1300 blocks of Fern and Elder Streets and the 7200 blocks of Georgia, 12th and 13th.

The applicant summarizes the revisions on Page 1 of the presentation:

- Georgia Ave: Removed the large building identification sign; and incorporated recessed hyphens to break up the mass and to reinforce the prominence of the central portion of the building.
- Fern Street: Changed attic double window to a single window; and deleted the thick, brick-faced, full-height columns.
- 13th Street: Created more hierarchy and variation in windows; narrowed the flanking windows of the triple-ganged; and deleted the transoms from and raised the first-floor windows.
- 12th Street: Narrowed the flanking windows of the triple-ganged; changed the asphalt shingles to fiber-cement shingles; added detail for mansard roof and dormers; and reduced the width of fiber-cement paneling around the windows on the end units.
- Stacked Towns: Narrowed the flanking windows of the triple-ganged; changed the asphalt shingles to fiber-cement shingles; added firewalls to the roofs between units; and eliminated the blind openings on Elder Street elevation.
- General Items: Reduced the thickness of heavy canopies and reduced the belt course/trim bands behind them; and changed the brick color to be more uniform across sticks of units.

For the purpose of a permit, most of the cornices and masonry details will have to be further specified and detailed.

The porches of the Fern Street houses have been revised somewhat, but they need to be further detailed for permit, including specific proposals for columns and for pier dimensions. The full-height brick piers should be divided similarly to the pier-column combination at the other houses. The dormer windows should be divided more like the upper sash of the primary windows.

The 12th Street mansards do not terminate in a traditional eave/cornice/gutter projection; the front walls extend up into a small parapet behind which is the gutter. The elevations of the top of the parapet does not quite match the section drawings, which read very flat.

The surrounds around the Elder Street windows are still unclear as material and extent of projection. All such trim reads as masonry, and flat fiber-cement board should not be substituted for lintels, belt courses, etc. (as it has been shown to be used for some cornices).

Finally, the firewalls at the stacked townhouses help break up the expanse of the roofs across the sticks and emphasize the verticality of each building, but they also emphasize the roof height, which is extended upward as a parapet around roof decks and has not been lowered since the last review. Although windows typically sit low on mansards, these dormers could stand to be moved upward; they look unusually close to the second-story windows below. That would help mitigate the roof height.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the design development, with the condition that the applicant address adequately the points raised above before permit, and the electric meters be on the rears of the buildings.