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

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Landmark/District: **Walter Reed Army Medical Center Historic District**      (x) Agenda  
Address: **6900 Georgia Avenue NW**

Meeting Date: **July 26, 2018**      (x) New construction  
Case Numbers: **18-512**      (x) Concept

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The applicant, EHT Traceries, agent for the long-term lessee and developer TPWR Developer LLC (a joint venture of Hines-Urban Atlantic-Triden), requests the Board’s review of a concept to construct 58 townhouses at the southern end of the Walter Reed campus, between Aspen Street, Main Drive, Building 17 (contributing) and Building 14 (non-contributing).

The houses would be three stories tall, on average, and sixteen or twenty feet wide, arranged in rows of four to nine. They would have garages on rear alleys and lofts giving access onto roof decks. The fronts and exposed sides of the buildings will be faced with brick, and the rears will be sided with fiber-cement lapped board. A green “mews” and storm-water pond would be located near the center of the project.

Two non-contributing buildings have already been demolished to clear the site, and one non-contributing roadway next to Building 17 would be altered. The topography drops from north to south, and the parcel would be re-graded in a more terraced fashion. This southern margin of the campus is something of a jumble, a place where utility uses and later support buildings were placed irrespective of the main axes through the campus.

The small-area plan and master plan for the campus had called for a large, single building in this location, but the zoning allows single-family dwellings, and that is a use compatible with the homes that lay on the opposite side of Aspen. The layout of the project responds properly to its frontages on Aspen and Main Drive. The orientations of the rows minimize views of the wide alleys and the rears of houses from important vantage points. It should be noted that the design of the multi-use trail along Aspen Street, upon which eighteen houses would front, has not been finalized and submitted to the Board.

The drawings must be further developed in order to understand many of the details, including the cornices, door surrounds, brick details, etc. (And the cover renderings are out of date.)

1. Scarcely perceptible from the drawings are the basement areaways the houses would generally have in front. It is difficult to comment on these, as there is little information provided.
2. At three stories tall, the proportions of the sixteen-foot houses are quite narrow. What is more problematic, but not as noticeable in the renderings as it will be in life, is that facades of several of these are divided by bay projections, into which double-ganged

windows will be fit on each floor. This is likely to look cramped, with unusual proportions and narrow windows and masonry corners. The bays should be eliminated from the sixteen-foot-wide houses.

3. Roof decks are generally not objectionable when integrated into new construction as these are, bounded by a parapet. The rows' irregular side/end elevations created by the loft might be resolved by placing the stair pop-ups more in the center of the roofs, over the party walls so that one structure can cover the stairs in two adjoining homes. This could also help visually screen the decks from each other, avoiding owners seeking fences atop their houses. It may also help separate the decks from rooftop mechanical.
4. The side/end elevations show the buildings' front masonry corners going straight up. But the elevations depict mostly mansard roofs, which would be canted rearward. This suggests that the mansards would be sandwiched by firewalls that do not appear in the elevations.
5. It is recommended that the ganged-window-and-panel arrangements that appear in the upper elevation on page 18 and the lower elevation on page 20 be eliminated in favor of punched openings. The inspiration for this arrangement is a larger historic building on campus, one of a different type and use. The impression given by the brick piers framing the windows and panels on three abutting houses is one of a single, monumental building. Although it is conceivable to design what appears to be a single building and divide it vertically between multiple units, that approach is less successful within an otherwise plainly townhouse row.
6. Fencing should be kept to a minimum and should be of solid steel or iron, not tubular steel or aluminum.
7. Any venting should be through the rear of the units.
8. Vinyl or vinyl-clad windows should be limited to the rear elevations. The aluminum-clad windows proposed (page 29) could be improved upon because they have odd profiles—flat but for a quarter-round projection that is presumably used for stabilizing against wracking, and perhaps serves as a screen track.
9. The applicant should bring brick samples to the hearing for the Board's review.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board approve the project in concept, with it to be developed to address the comments and recommendations above, including the further depiction of the basement windows and areaways.*