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

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Property Address:	<b>1208 3<sup>rd</sup> Street NW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Mount Vernon Square Historic District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
ANC:	<b>6C</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	<b>September 24, 2009 (revised)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>#09-314</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Brendan Meyer</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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The applicant, Third Street Church of God represented by Ted Daniels, presents a revised design and preservation plan based on actions taken by the Board at their July 23, 2009 meeting. The applicant seeks concept approval for a three-story side addition to a three-story apartment building at 1208 3<sup>rd</sup> Street NW and subdivision of lots. Plans were prepared by Pearson & Associates.

### **Property Description and Context**

The applicant owns a series of historic structures located on three separate lots<sup>1</sup> (See Figure 1). All of these structures, and what effect the proposal will have on them, are subject to Board consideration at this time. For convenience the structures will be referred to as follows:

Lot 867 includes 1202 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, a partially demolished c. 1880 rowhouse whose oldest section was once part of 301 M Street NW; and 1204 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, the sanctuary of Third Street Church of God designed by H.D. Woodson in 1926

Lot 860 consists solely of 1208 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, a three-story apartment building designed by George T. Santmyers in 1940.

Lot 861 is the site of the proposed addition and also includes the church parking lot and three vacant, two-story rowhouses from c. 1870 originally known as 1232-1236 New Jersey Avenue.

Over the last ten years, the applicant has brought several applications to the Board concerning the development of their properties. Most recently, in July 2009, the applicant presented concept plans for a three-story brick side addition to the apartment building and a one-story brick hyphen to connect the apartment building to the sanctuary. This brought into question what would become of the partially demolished structure at 1202. In 2002, the applicant had won approval from the Board to restore 1202, but their current proposal would eliminate their programmatic need to restore 1202. Having considered the concept plans for the side addition and the current condition of 1202, the Board adopted a motion instructing the applicant to restudy the design for the addition and develop a preservation plan for all structures within lots 860, 861, and 867.

### **Revised Proposal**

At the July 2009 meeting, the Board adopted the Staff report which recommended restudying the orientation, massing, setback and scale of the addition. The revised proposal now calls for the building move forward and in line with the apartment building, the stair wall formerly planned for

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<sup>1</sup> The applicant claims that all subject structures have been joined onto a single lot, the necessary documents having been submitted to the Office of Tax & Revenue. However, District records available to HPO indicate the existence of three separate lots as described. The applicant and Staff are working jointly to clarify this matter. In either case, all properties are subject to Board review at this time.

the front now moved to the rear of the addition. The flat, tan brick façade features a monumental entryway, is minimally articulated by simple brick and cast stone courses, and displays paired 9/9 double hung sash windows. The large arched stained glass window above the door has already been constructed, having originally been meant for the church's 2002 expansion plans. It will be a false window backed by a solid panel and lighting sufficient to illuminate the window to the street at night.

The side addition has been simplified to a series of pedestrian-scaled windows and an entryway on a flat, tan brick façade. The site plan shows that the parking lot will be reduced in size by pulling the current paving and fences back off of public space and aligning the edge of the parking lot with the building line evidenced by the common alignment of the New Jersey Avenue rowhouses.

The applicant has also submitted an 18-page document as their Preservation Plan for all the relevant structures. Their specific preservation intentions are described on pages 16-18 and call for the sale of 1202 and a series of steps to evaluate the feasibility of restoring 1232-1236 New Jersey Avenue NW. For the latter, the applicant proposes to remove all debris and stored flammable materials (gasoline, fertilizer, paint, etc.), secure and close all openings, remove all trees and vegetation that have taken root in the structure, and secure a contract for structural evaluation of the rowhouses.

### **Evaluation and Recommendation**

The applicant has successfully revised their design on all counts (orientation, setback, massing and scale) and now present a design compatible with the apartment building and historic district. The addition now unambiguously orients towards the street. Having been brought forward and in line with the apartment building, the addition now reinforces the common pattern on the block. Massing has been simplified by relocating the stairwell to the rear of the property. The scale of the front façade strikes an agreeable balance with the church by using a monumental entryway to echo that of the church.

Taking these revisions together, and judging them as part of an entire ensemble—sanctuary, apartment building and addition—the new addition is nearly compatible with the historic structures. The lone characteristic still outstanding is the tan color of the brick. This issue has remained mostly unaddressed as Staff and the applicant have consulted on larger considerations. But with the most important design criteria pleasingly resolved, it is clear that tan, as inherent color of the material, would not be compatible with the historic red color of the church and apartment building. A tan brick addition would unduly compete with the historic structures when the intent should be to complement the historic structures. Staff recommends that the front and north elevation of the addition be faced in a red brick that reasonably matches the color, texture and coursing dimensions of the church and apartment building.

The applicant has submitted a Preservation Plan for all subject buildings. The Plan calls for the structure at 1202 to be secured and stabilized from further deterioration as the applicant actively pursues sale of the lot (Page 16). In addition to the applicant's plan to close openings and repair the roof, Staff points out that the existing wood braces at the front of the structure have rotted and need to be replaced to ensure structural stability of the structure.

Staff has only recently gained access to the rowhouses at 1232-1236 New Jersey Avenue. Access was limited due to the amount of stored goods in 1232 and that 1234 and 1236 are boarded up. Upon close inspection the front facades, although generally haggard and not maintained, retain their character defining features and they can be restored. Cracks in masonry joints are small and localized

without evidence of recent spreading indicative of structural distress. Openings hold most their original windows, with some broken panes. Metal window hoods and wood cornices are intact in very good condition, only needing new paint and the smallest amount of patching to be restored, (Figures 2 and 3). Roof conditions can be assumed poor which would be the cause of the rot and moisture above and below the interior stairs of 1232.

Conditions rapidly deteriorate towards the rear of the structures. The south wall of 1232 was originally an interior party wall, but it is now exposed. Its soft brick has been eroded by the weather and needs immediate attention to arrest deterioration, (Figure 4). Some bricks need to be replaced immediately and the entire surface coated sufficiently to protect the bricks from moisture. The rear of the structures are in the worst state. Large trees (juvenile and mature) have taken root in the masonry, (Figure 5).<sup>2</sup> Their root structure is progressively growing through the structure, dislocating face brick, windows, and other features.

While some of the rowhouse conditions are shocking, there is no evidence that their most important features—their structure and front facades—cannot be restored. A report from a structural engineer, qualified to work with historic structure, might ultimately reveal that evidence, but it does not exist at this time.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept design for the addition as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act. HPO further recommends that final approval of the addition be delegated to staff on the following conditions:*

- 1. The brick of the front and north side of the addition shall reasonably match the color, texture and dimension of the brick of the sanctuary and apartment building, and*
- 2. A condition report for 1232-1236 New Jersey Avenue NW, suitable for evaluation, from a structural engineer with professional experience evaluating 19<sup>th</sup> century masonry structures, be delivered to HPO prior to final approval of the addition.*

*No portion of this recommendation shall be construed as approval for any necessary zoning relief.*

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<sup>2</sup> The trees are Princess trees (*Paulownia tomentosa*), also known as royal paulownia or empress. They are an especially aggressive and stubborn invasive species native to China. Known for their ability to take root in rocky cliff faces and abandoned urban lots, they can grow 15 feet a year and release 20 million seeds a season.

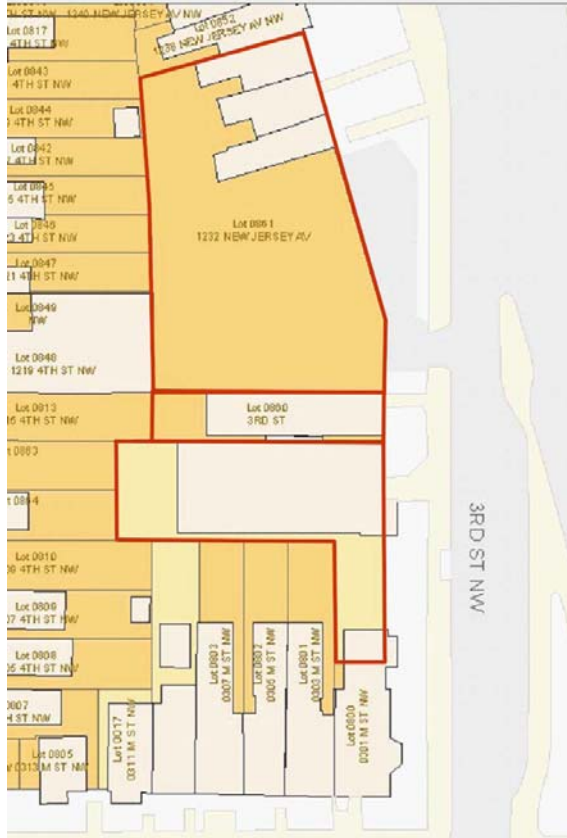


Figure 1 Lots 860, 861, and 867



Figure 2 Windows and cornice, 1232 New Jersey Avenue



**Figure 3** Window and cornice, 1236 New Jersey Avenue



**Figure 4** Exposed party wall and deteriorating bricks



Figure 5 Rear of 1236 New Jersey Avenue