

U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

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NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM
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10 February 2005

Dear Dr. Pace:

During its meeting of 25 January 2005, the Commission reviewed the concept design for the new Ward One Senior Wellness Center that will retain the street facades of the four existing townhouses on the corner of Georgia Avenue and Newton Street, NW. The members again expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Office of Aging to provide a welcome amenity for the senior members of the Ward One community and to bring life back into these structures. However, the Commission was concerned with the appropriateness of several aspects of the proposed design. In the scheme presented, the corner treatment where the juncture of the front and side walls of the existing townhouse is cut-a-way and a tall three-story glass tower is inserted was felt to be too much of an intervention in the historic facades. The members suggested the existing corner of the building be retained and the new entrance be relocated to the existing arched doorways of the first two houses.

A more generous one-story lobby could then occupy the first floor at the corner of the structure and an additional room could be reclaimed at the second floor level. This would also permit a reallocation of some of the building's square footage from the new third floor to the second, which would allow the new third floor to have a more generous setback from the existing historic street facades of the townhouses. In addition, the members recommended that the new third floor addition be clad in brick and not the stucco-like material shown in the renderings and that the cornice and overall height of this addition be minimized as much as possible to reduce its visual weight and prominence.

The Commission looks forward to further review of this project and recommends submission of a revised concept that responds to the concerns expressed above. Our next meeting is scheduled for the 17th of March, with a submission deadline on the 3rd of March. As always, the staff is available should you require additional guidance.

Sincerely,



Frederick J. Lindstrom
Acting Secretary

Dr. E. Veronica Pace
Executive Director, Office of Aging
Government of the District of Columbia
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cc: Louis Fry III, AIA, Lance Bailey & Associates