



## Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1C

PO Box 21009, NW, Washington, DC 20009

[www.anc1c.org](http://www.anc1c.org)

*Representing Adams Morgan*

April 8, 2016

**Commissioners:**

**Julie Seiwell** (1C01)

**Hector Huevo** (1C02)

**Ted Guthrie** (1C03)

**Gabriela Mossi** (1C04)

**Alan Gambrell** (1C05)

**Billy Simpson** (1C06)

**Wilson Reynolds** (1C07)

**JonMarc Buffa** (1C08)

Kim Williams

DC Office of Planning/Historic Preservation Office

1100 4th Street, SW, Suite E650

Washington, DC 20024

**RE: HPRB Concept Review of the Scottish Rite Temple Project  
Case #: 16-309**

Dear Ms. Williams and Mr. LeGrant

We are writing to you on behalf of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1C ("ANC1C"). At a duly noticed public meeting on April 6, 2016, with a quorum present (6 of 8 members present), ANC1C voted to approve the attached resolution regarding Case #: 16-309. This case addresses EastBanc's design plans for a new residential apartment building adjacent to the Scottish Rite Temple. We ask that HPRB give great weight to our concerns as it undertakes a Concept Review of the Scottish Rite Temple Project. The resolution includes the vote totals for each portion of the resolution in the headers.

We would be happy to discuss this resolution and answer any questions that you may have at your convenience.

Sincerely,

JonMarc P. Buffa, Esq.

ANC1C-08 Commissioner

**ANC1C Resolution Regarding the Scottish Right Project**  
**HPRB Case #: 16-309**

**[ANC1C adopted this preamble by a vote of 6-0.]**

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1C (“ANC1C”) adopts the following resolution, votes to send it to the Historic Preservation Review Board (“HPRB”), and authorizes any Commissioner of ANC1C to represent ANC1C before HPRB in connection with this matter:

Whereas, EastBanc has submitted design plans to HPRB for review of a new residential apartment building adjacent to the Scottish Rite Temple, HPRB Case #: 16-309 (hereinafter “The Project”);

Whereas, the Project is to be located within the Meridian Hill Historic District and must be reviewed in context of this historic district;

Whereas, the historic district designation recognizes, and HPRB is legally required to preserve, the special architectural and landscape characteristics of the area;

Whereas, District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines call for compatibility of new construction, with particular attention to setback, alignment with front facades of neighboring buildings, height, width, proportions, rhythm of doors and windows, roof shape, ornamentation, projections, and landscaping;

Whereas, the Meridian Hill Historic District Design Guidelines require that “particular attention should be paid to siting, massing, size, scale and materials.”

Whereas, it is the view of ANC1C that certain elements of the Project, as currently proposed, are incompatible with the historic nature and character of the Meridian Hill Historic District;

Therefore, ANC1C calls on HPRB to:

**[ANC1C adopted this Part I by a vote of 6-0.]**

I. Require that the height be reduced. The Project, as proposed, is significantly taller than the two adjacent buildings that define acceptable height for this portion of the Meridian Hill Historic District: (i) The Il Palazzo project at the old Italian Embassy site at 2700 16th Street, NW (hereinafter “Il Palazzo”) which is immediately adjacent to the Project, and (ii) the Argonne Apartment Building at 1629 Columbia Road, NW (hereinafter the “Argonne”) which is located directly across the street from the Project.

For context, (i) Il Palazzo (under construction) will finish at 291 feet above sea level, and (ii) the Argonne finishes at 293 feet above sea level. Il Palazzo’s measurement is to the top of

its penthouse, which is a predominantly residential penthouse that occupies a significant portion of its roof and reads as a full story. The Argonne's measurement is to the top of its roofline because, although it has a penthouse, it is a true mechanical penthouse and is so small and set back from the street that it can't be seen.

In contrast, EastBanc is proposing a building that is 302 feet above sea level when measured to the top of the Project. This is effectively a story taller than the two other buildings. As with Il Palazzo, the Project's measurement is to the top of its penthouse which is also a predominantly residential penthouse that occupies a significant portion of its roof and reads as a full story. Although the Project's penthouse is somewhat set back, it will be clearly visible from Mozart Place, Columbia Road, and most critically from the broad intersection where Columbia Road, Harvard Street, and 16th Street come together.

In addition to popping-up a story above Il Palazzo and the Argonne, the overall height of the Project unduly overshadows the beautiful historic spires of the three churches that are located at the 16th Street intersection. In particular, the height of the Project burdens the spires of the unique and exquisite old Mormon ordinance house (now the Unification church) to which it will now form the backstop for views down Columbia Road from the east.

This conflicts with Meridian Hill Historic District Historic Guideline 4.1 which states: "The scale of a new building should usually respect the prevailing scale of the neighbors"; and Historic Guideline 8.1 which states: "While a new building does not necessarily need to be exactly the same height as its neighbors to be compatible, it should be designed to respect existing building heights."

The Il Palazzo apartment building is the most recently approved large apartment building in the Meridian Hill Historic District, and is the touchstone for the appropriate height for the Project. It is notable that Il Palazzo's height was limited by the Historic Preservation Review Board at just below the height of the Argonne even before the Meridian Hill Historic District was established. With the historic district now also acting as a formal legal constraint on the Project, reduction in the height of the Project of a story is clearly warranted.

**[ANC1C adopted this Part II by a vote of 4-2.]**

II. Require alternative approaches to massing. Architectural approaches should be introduced to reduce the massing and apparent height of the Project, for example, introducing tiering of the building rather than having a single heighted box, and reducing the height of the building as one moves towards the periphery of the structure. These might help bring the Project's height and massing into better conformity with the Meridian Hill Historic District. Further, the current design includes a massive penthouse structure with significant rooftop amenities space with only minimal setbacks. This negatively amplifies the apparent height and mass of the building. As such, a reduction in the mass of the penthouse should be considered, including but not limited to further setting back of the penthouse.

**[ANC1C adopted this Part III by a vote of 5-1.]**

III. Require that the exterior design and materials be revised and enhanced. The Project's current exterior design makes the building profoundly visually incongruous with its neighbors. While new construction in a historic district is not generally required to mimic the design of the historic buildings in the district, it should nevertheless be compatible and complementary. Instead, the current design is visually jarring because of its undulating façade system with fenestration; and poor choice of materials. The Meridian Hill Historic District Design Guidelines note that "[t]he buildings of Meridian Hill survive largely intact and exhibit a high quality and integrity of design, materials, workmanship, setting and place. The district's buildings should be preserved, and alterations and new construction designed with extreme sensitivity."

**[ANC1C adopted this Part IV by a vote of 6-0.]**

IV. Require that the relationship to Columbia Road be improved and enhanced. While we applaud the interesting entrance on Mozart Place that creates a visual east-west axis across the property, we note that the Project effectively "turns its back" on Columbia Road which is a prominent avenue in the Meridian Hill Historic District. This creates a walling effect that is incompatible with the neighboring structures on Columbia Road such as the welcoming façade of the Argonne. Efforts should be made to find ways to ensure that the Columbia Road façade of the building will read in a more activated way for the many pedestrians who will pass by it on a daily basis.