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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	118 3rd Street, SE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	July 28, 2011	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	11-403	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Amanda Molson	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

St. Mark's Episcopal Church of Capitol Hill, with drawings prepared by William J. Bonstra, FAIA, requests concept approval for additions and alterations to the church building at 118 3rd Street, SE, which is located in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

Designed by T. Buckler Ghequier of Baltimore and constructed in phases between 1882 and 1894, the main block of St. Mark's Church is sited at the corner of 3rd and A Streets, SE. Designed predominantly in the Romanesque Revival style, the current church building replaced earlier frame chapels sited in this location and across the street where the John Adams Building (Library of Congress) now resides. In 1926-1927, a parish hall wing was added to the east side of the church. Designed by Delos H. Smith, the one-story masonry wing with a steeply pitched slate roof features an impressive wood truss system in the parish hall, with a ground-floor ceiling height that extends to the roof ridge and dormer windows along the A Street elevation. Library Court, an inhabited alley, cuts through the block north-south, with early alley dwellings and a carriage house sited directly behind the church.

Proposal

To provide additional office space and better utilize social areas within the one-story wing, the applicants plan to reconfigure several rooms and the internal staircase, insert a floor structure to divide the parish hall into two usable stories, and construct fairly modest additions. On the front elevation, facing A Street, the entry to the east wing would be slightly altered by completing the truncated gable roof form around the entry door as a full gable and by adjusting the location of the entry door and several windows in this area in response.

On the rear elevation, facing Library Court, the gable-roof of the kitchen appendix would be raised approximately 8' to construct two new office spaces illuminated via shed dormers. A second-story addition would be inserted into the rear slope of the wing's roof, maintaining the existing footprint but adding mass. Other exterior work would include installing solar panels on the rear slope of the wing's roof, in-kind window replacement, and slate repair.

Evaluation

The east wing has certainly achieved its own significance by virtue of its age and overall design, and any alterations should respect the existing architecture. Changes to the entrance on the A Street elevation are in keeping with the design cues of the building, and the expansive setback and garden area separating the east wing from the sidewalk will minimize visibility of this modification. Because the rear elevation of the church opens into a historic alley and overlooks early alley structures, massing changes to this elevation should be minimal and new features careful not to distract. The applicants have succeeded by retaining the existing footprint and adding office space in the form of two modest additions that continue the design vocabulary of the east wing.

Three aspects of the plan merit further study as construction plans are prepared.

- The only overtly contemporary feature being proposed is the extensive solar panel system, which will be visible at various points from the alley. Most readily visible from Library Court will be the panels installed just below the roof ridge (referred to as “Location A” in the plans), though pitch of the roof provides the opportunity to utilize a flush mount installation and their location well above grade should prove less obtrusive. The panels shown in “Location B” on the lower roof will become most visible from a generous distance of 92’ back in the alley, though the sight line drawing and perspective renderings do suggest that the edge of panels will sit quite close to the eaves. It would be helpful for the panels to be setback from the eaves more generously (likely by only a few more inches), which would minimize visibility at this point rather close to the ground and assure that an awkward sense of bulk at the eaves does not occur.
- The masonry treatment of the raised portion of the gable-roofed kitchen appendix will be important so that the end result does not read as an afterthought. This could be achieved in several ways: by repointing the walls of the appendix in their entirety and using a brick that closely matches the original, by utilizing an altogether different material for the raised portion, or by using a trim piece that more elegantly separates the line where old meets new and clearly distinguishes the original roof form. Any of these options would be appropriate.
- The raised roof of the kitchen appendix is noted as “new slate or slate-look.” Even if a faux slate product can reasonably match the existing slate shingles in color, neither the sheen today nor the rate of wear over time will provide a convincing match. Because there will be some visibility of this portion of the building when entering the alley from A Street, and certainly from within Library Court, a real slate application should be used for this comparatively small area of coverage.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff, on the condition that the solar panel setback, masonry treatment, and roofing material are restudied as mentioned above.