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

Property Address:	1216-1226 9th Street NW	(<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) Agenda
Landmark/District:	Shaw Historic District, Blagden Alley/Naylor Court Historic District	(<input type="checkbox"/>) Consent Calendar
ANC:	2F	(<input type="checkbox"/>) Denial Calendar
Meeting Date:	April 25, 2013	(<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	#13-215	(<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Brendan Meyer	(<input type="checkbox"/>) New Construction
		(<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) Demolition
		(<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) Subdivision

The applicant, owner Douglas Development Corporation, seeks concept approval for a three-story rear addition to three adjoining rowhouses at 1216, 1218 and 1226 9th Street NW which are contributing properties in both the Shaw and Blagden Alley/Naylor Court Historic Districts. The addition would require a subdivision to join the three lots into a single lot. Plans were prepared by Antunovich Associates.



Figure 1 Rear addition viewed from southwest

Property Description and Context

This part of 9th Street NW is representative of more than 150 years of development along a major commercial corridor. Victorian rowhouses dating from 1870 to 1890, survived as commercial uses after 1920. Interspersed among the two and three-story rowhouses are some smaller one and two story commercial structures and an early automotive showroom. Taken together, the immediate blocks are a diverse collection of heights and materials reflective of the accretion of generations of development.

Opposite the site is the Walter E. Washington Convention Center which spans between 7th and 9th Streets from Mount Vernon Square to N Street.

The three rowhouses each date approximately to the 1870s based on their construction method, ornamentation, and lack of original building permit records.¹ Each of the three buildings is slightly different in form, but all exhibit particular characteristics of early Victorian buildings. 1216 9th is two stories with a two story projecting bay, 1218 is a three-story flat-front building, and 1226 is two stories with a one story projecting bay. Windows are aligned horizontally across all three building and have narrow and tall proportions. Windows are segmentally arched and ornamented with a variety of metal hoods and skewbacks. Cornices are wood with arched friezes between brackets.

1216 and 1218 9th Street are both in good to very good condition despite having been vacant for approximately 10 years, however, this is not true of 1226 9th. A Paulownia tree has taken root at the rear roof parapet, grown roots down through the masonry to the basement, and as the roots have expanded, the tree has displaced enough bricks to cause a collapse of all framing from roof through basement at the rear of the building.²

The Blagden Alley – Naylor Court Historic District was designated as a historic district because of its notable collection of alley buildings including alley dwellings, stables, garages, warehouses, and other light industrial buildings. The only alley structure on the project site is at the rear of 1226 9th Street NW. It is two-story garage with a bricked-in opening above a vehicle door that is adjacent to a row of one-story garages. All of the garage structures are contributing buildings in the historic district in various degrees of condition. The garage at 1226 is exhibiting serious structural deficiencies where the west façade is no longer connected to the north façade and is bowing towards the alley at this corner.

The vacant lot to the south of the project site was given concept approval by the Board in May 2012 for a new 5-story building (1212 9th Street NW, HPA #12-504).

Proposal

The applicant proposes to restore all faces of the historic buildings including the straightening and reattaching the alley façade of the garage. All three lots will be joined into a single lot and connect the structures both internally with selective penetrations through party walls and with a rear addition. To make space for the rear addition, the rear wing ells of 1218 and 1226 would be demolished. The maximum height of the addition will align with the rear of the historic three-story building in the center of the group and enclose an interior combination of one-, two- and three-story spaces. The portion of the rear addition extending back from 1216 will only be one story in height and include a series of enclosed rooms and open courts.

On the 9th Street end, the rear addition will abut, and substantially retain, the rear walls of the main blocks of the rowhouses. On the Blagden Alley end, the addition will rest on top of the back six feet of the existing garage, but the garage wall will be preserved as a feature inside the addition. The

¹ DC building permit records only become a reliable dating tool starting about 1878 when building permits became a requirement for new construction.

² Paulownia trees are a very real menace to historic masonry buildings. These trees are invasive and almost literally eat buildings. They are particularly rampant in Blagden Alley, Mount Vernon Square and LeDroit Park. Trees grow ten feet a year. When pruned they sprout multiple new trunks and branches. In their native habitat they take root in cliff faces. In urban environments they take root in brick walls.

moderately pitched roof of the garage will be removed and replaced with a flat deck hidden behind the retained side walls of the garage.

The addition will show an exterior wall of large masonry units in a stacked pattern. Fenestration will be concentrated at the alley end of the addition on both the west and south walls and feature large banks of ganged casement windows with wood plank spandrels and headers between floors of windows. The same arrangement of windows and wood plank spandrels would be used at the two vehicle sized openings where the addition meets the alley.

Evaluation

The existing conditions of the building and a flag test of the height of the addition have been inspected by staff. The flag test exhibited that the portion of the three story addition that is behind 1226 is set far enough back and screened sufficiently by adjacent properties that the front of the addition will not be visible along 9th Street. The amount of demolition required is not substantial. The structural components of the building including load bearing walls, roofs, and floor systems, with the exception of the collapsed floors at the rear of 1226, are intact and will be mostly retained. The rear wings to be demolished are not significant character defining features, or will be retained as is the case for 1216.

The height and massing of the rear addition is compatible with the forms commonly associated with the rears of rowhouses and the arrangement of garages along Blagden Alley. This is achieved by arranging the taller part of the addition against the rowhouses and lowering the height of the addition to one story along the alley.

The simplicity of materials and scale of components matches the characteristics of the commercial and industrial building types of the alley. The use of robust sections of raw wood planks in the openings of the addition is particularly evocative of the heavy trabeated beam forms found throughout Blagden Alley.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept for a three-story rear addition at 1216, 1218 and 1226 9th Street NW, including the joining of the lots in to a single lot, and delegate final approval to staff.



Figure 2 Addition (grey) at alley next to existing garage (red).