

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

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Property Address:	<b>2009 Columbia Road, NW</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Kalorama Triangle Historic District</b>	<b>X</b> Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>July 26, 2012</b>	<b>X</b> Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>12-498</b>	<b>X</b> Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Anne Brockett</b>	New Construction

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Brian Papke for Capital City Real Estate, a contract purchaser for the property, seeks the Board's conceptual review of a rear addition, roof deck, and roof access penthouses. The freestanding mansion was built in 1899 by real estate developer Arthur Coswill as one of several he built on spec in the 2000 block of Columbia Road. Coswill paired with leading architects for these projects, including Appleton Clark, Henry I. Cobb, and, at 2009 Columbia, William Conley. Interestingly, these high style houses were very elaborate and quite large for the speculative market.

The first occupant was a secretary of the British Embassy, setting the tone for the settlement of Kalorama by diplomatic residents. It was later occupied by the Greek Legation, the Italian World War Veterans Association, and, most recently, an art gallery.<sup>1</sup> Over the years, the interior, which was undoubtedly as grand as the exterior, has been entirely reworked and all finishes removed.

### **Proposal**

The purchaser seeks to convert the building into nine condominium units and add a three-story rear addition and two roof decks, accessible via two stair penthouses.

On the roof, two stair towers are proposed to provide access to separate roof decks for the top floor units. The penthouses would have canted rooflines that match the slope of the high hipped-roof false front. They would be clad in imitation slate where they spring from the party walls. Each deck would be set back from the side walls – three feet on the south side and four and five feet on the north – and would both feature pergolas.

The rear addition would be lower in height than the existing structure, would be set in on both sides, and would largely retain the original rear wall within the new construction. It would be clad in brick to match the existing rear and sides of the house.

Finally, the applicant proposes minimal changes to the fenestration, infilling several windows and making new window and door openings to fit the unit floorplans.

### **Evaluation**

Because this building is a free-standing, individually designed home, care must be given to retaining its character, which is certainly distinct from the more typical rowhouses of the neighborhood. In addition, the rear of the house is fully visible from Wyoming and Connecticut Avenues.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Hansen. *Kalorama Triangle: History of a Capital Neighborhood*.

In 2010, the Board reviewed an addition at the next-door property at 2007 Columbia Road and found a proposal for a new fourth story and large deck to be incompatible with the character of the property. However, the applicant revised the plans and was subsequently approved for a roof deck and access with the provision that the deck be unenclosed by a roof or walls, have visually open and light railings, be pulled sufficiently back from the edges of the roof, and have only a roof hatch or minimal stair structure for access. Similar requirements should be stipulated here such that the pergolas be eliminated and the stair penthouses be combined or reduced in scale and pulled off the north side wall, where visibility from the front is likely. The railing appears to be sufficiently set back from the walls of the house so as to be minimally visible. In addition, any roof construction must not result in alterations to the distinctive side chimneys on the north side of the house.

The rear addition is respectful of the scale, massing, and materials of the original building and compatible in its architectural detailing.

Changes to the window and door openings are at the subterranean basement level or sufficiently pushed back from the front elevation where they do not detract from the character of the house. On the third floor facade, window opening onto the covered porch will be converted to doors, but will maintain their present appearance from the street. Should a railing be necessary to meet code, all details will be reviewed to ensure the maintenance of the house's historic character.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept to be consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and that final approval be delegated to staff, with the following stipulations:*

- *The rooftop pergolas should be removed;*
- *The size of the roof access structures should be combined, minimized and located on the central portion of the roof;*
- *The north side chimneys should remain unaltered;*
- *A flag test must be conducted prior to application for a building permit to ensure that the alterations will not be visible from Columbia Road;*
- *Written approval of the project from the Capital Historic Trust, which holds an easement on the property, should be provided.*