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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Capitol Hill Historic District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>720 L Street, SE</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>March 24, 2011</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>11-145</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Amanda Molson</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Owners Mark Brody and Alan Gaunoux, with drawings prepared by Matthew Battin, seek conceptual approval for new construction on a vacant lot located at 720 L Street, SE in the Capitol Hill Historic District. The Board reviewed the project in February, approving the general site plan and proposed subdivision to combine two lots but asked the applicants to return with revisions to the design. ANC 6B did not conduct a follow-up review of the current plans, having voted to support the initial concept with comments.

**Property Description**

720 L Street, SE is a vacant parcel located at the corner of 8<sup>th</sup> and L Streets, SE. It is presently occupied by several storage sheds and is enclosed by wood and chain link fences. On L Street, the site is abutted by a private driveway providing access to the former “Miles Glass” store fronting on the corner of 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Virginia Avenue, followed by two brick apartment buildings located at 716 and 718 L. On 8<sup>th</sup> Street, a small walkway separates the vacant lot from two nineteenth century buildings. The vacant parcel is located directly across the street from the Navy Yard Car Barn, a local landmark, while smaller rowhouses front the remainder of L Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Street in the square.

**Proposal and Evaluation**

The staff report from February addressed the cohesiveness of design elements, proportion and scale, and streetscape presence. The applicants have worked on addressing comments from the Board, the HPO, and the community, and the revised design is sufficiently compatible with the character of the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Above all, the design has been substantially simplified by removing rain screens and vertical projections in the roof deck area, by streamlining the corner element, and by carrying the low, horizontal vocabulary of the building throughout the design. The rain screens now break up massing on the ground floor of the 8<sup>th</sup> Street elevation and serve as a contemporary privacy fence along the L Street elevation rather than projecting above the roofline as a stand-alone vertical element. The building’s corner presence is highlighted by a taller parapet wall in this area and by the steel “hoist” beams that express the whimsy of beer gardens, are reminiscent of a corner turret, and represent the industrial flavor of the building.

The first floor (as noted in elevation drawings but not shown in perspective renderings) is now proposed as brick veneer, which is consistent with the material of Capitol Hill's alley warehouses and light industrial buildings. This change in material adds weight and mass where it would be expected on the ground story, extending into a lighter application of hardiplank along the parapet that serves as a roof deck railing. The parapet has been capped by a simple cornice that more effectively terminates the roof's edge.

The overall proportions of the building have been improved by reducing the size of the sign over the entry door, by restudying door proportions, by adding a transom over the 8<sup>th</sup> Street door, and by removing the interspersed punched openings in the rain screen application along L Street. One proportion issue, which can be easily corrected, is the width of the extended parapet wall at the corner. Although the 8<sup>th</sup> Street expanse is the longest wall of the building, the extended parapet above this street frontage is shorter than that along the abbreviated L Street side of the building. This could be adjusted by simply extending the taller parapet wall to the end of the first window along 8<sup>th</sup> Street and by removing a portion of the taller parapet wall along L Street. Additionally, a slight readjustment of the multi-light window on L Street and the addition on one more vertical beam to the right of the window would allow this bay of the building to closely match the width of window bays along 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The steel frame at the roof ridge on L Street does not appear necessary and could be removed to further simplify and unify the façade.

The applicants have added a pergola to the roof deck, which will be understandably needed on sunny days and will serve as a permanent feature of the building rather than as an afterthought. The pergola is low and simple in its design. The revisions also show plantings along the green space on L Street, which will further soften the massing of the ground floor and which will be consistent with the lush landscape typical of beer gardens. Additionally, a sidewalk café is shown along 8<sup>th</sup> Street, surrounded by planters. The applicants should work with DDOT as part of the public space permit process to ensure that pedestrians and bus stop patrons have ample access along the sidewalk.

Final construction drawings should: address the proportion of the extended parapet over the corner and the window bay on L Street, should consistently show the material of the ground floor as brick (if that is the intention), should include detailed specifications for the sign, windows, and doors, and should provide details (color, width and length of panels) on the hardipanel used as the roof deck parapet. The elevation drawings should also indicate various heights and widths of major features such as the building itself, door and window openings, signage, the parapet, and the pergola. Not included in the revised drawings was any plan for illumination of the roof deck area or outdoor garden, and that element of the proposal should be further discussed with the HPO and submitted in the final plans.

### **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.