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

Landmark/District:	Anacostia Historic District	(x) Consent
Address:	2126 15th Street SE	
Meeting Date:	December 15, 2016	(x) New construction
Case Number:	17-080	
Staff Reviewer:	Tim Dennée	(x) Concept

The applicant, property owner and architect Jack Becker, requests the Board's review of a concept to construct a freestanding two-story accessory structure to accommodate an accessory apartment. The outbuilding would stand at the rear corner of the lot, on what is now a concrete slab, behind and beside the 1892 house.

The building would be shed-roofed and sided with wood. The new zoning regulations permit such buildings to rise to a maximum height of 20 feet, which is five feet taller than accessory structures were previously allowed. The roof ridge of this building is at 20 feet.

Evaluation

Today's historic district gives us few historic accessory structures to serve as prototypes for new ones. Yet, the paucity of historic buildings is relatively new. Historic maps indicate that there were not many stables and carriage houses and wagon sheds before the twentieth century, as Anacostia only began to boom during the 1880s, when the streetcars came. And most families probably could not to buy and maintain afford their own conveyances. But the maps show many more accessory structures, especially sheds and garages, after the turn of the century, increasing toward mid century.

Still, before 1903, what appears to be a frame stable stood right on 15th Street where the alley outlet is today (see 1919 Baist map detail on the next page). That building stood at the rear of a house on V Street. An informal, private alley ran through a portion of the center of this square by the 1910s, both the cause and result of additional accessory buildings located at the rear of W Street houses. The alley was not dedicated public until 1922.

Not standing on the alley makes the subject property a context less suited to a carriage-house-type building, yet there are two factors in its favor, aside from the fact that this is a square with some history of garages and stables. First, this lot holds a sizeable Queen-Anne-style home, the kind of building where a stable would not seem out of place. As it stands on a corner lot, there would have been no alley access, so the rear corner would have been the necessary location for a rear carriage house or garage.

Second, the lot is wider than most. This square was initially subdivided into 24-foot-wide lots fronting on V and W Streets. But instead of facing V Street, this house was oriented toward 15th, its

property straddling the southernmost portions of three of the 24-foot lots and measuring 44 feet wide. That leaves a broad side yard—once its own 17.5-foot-wide assessment and taxation lot—that could accommodate a smaller structure set well back. And with the proposed use, we do not get a proposed driveway, which might make the project incompatible.

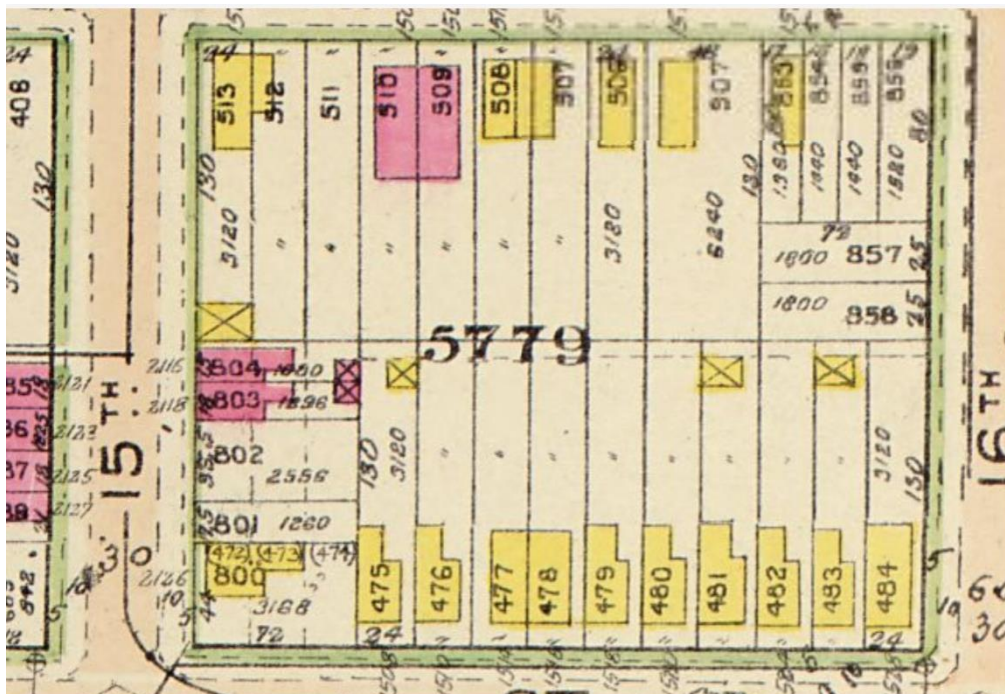
The proposed use of vertical wood siding is appropriate, if we consider the neighborhood's remaining prototype for a two-story frame accessory building, the historic carriage house behind 1330 Valley Place. It is not clear what type of siding—shiplap, tongue-and-groove, etc.

There are two compatibility issues with the proposed building. First, the glass block proposed to light the shower stall is an incongruous element. Glass block is so much associated with masonry construction and with the Art Moderne and Art Deco architectural styles that it is really only compatible with a few 1940s commercial and apartment buildings in Anacostia. And eliminating it and the dormer would quiet a building that is fairly busy for its size.

Second, especially with the paucity of outbuildings in this district and the predominantly freestanding character of homes, it is unusual to see an accessory structure abutting a house, as this one would back into the side of 1508 W Street. Such buildings are typically freestanding unless sandwiched by other similar structures on an alley or very occasionally abutting houses on a streetface, as one might see in Georgetown. It is a condition is not unheard of, as there is a large carriage house in LeDroit Park that abuts a later rowhouse, but that instance is still remarkable, and both of those buildings are of brick masonry. It would seem more appropriate, if not better for fire separation reasons, to move this building forward a few feet on its lot, away from the other house.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept and delegate further review to staff, with the following conditions: 1) that the glass block be eliminated from the building and 2) that the structure not abut the house at 1508 W Street unless it is unavoidable from a zoning perspective.



A detail from a 1919 Baist real estate atlas. W Street is at the bottom of the image.