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## HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

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Property Address:	<b>920 Rear N Street NW</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic District</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
ANC:	<b>2F</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>March 26, 2015</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>#15-243</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Brendan Meyer</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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The applicant, Douglas Development, seeks conceptual design review for a new, brick, two-story commercial building on a vacant site in the Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic. Plans were prepared by Core.



### Property Description and Context

Blagden Alley and Naylor Court Historic District was designated in 1990 as a significant example of 19<sup>th</sup> century working class housing and for its association with the early 20<sup>th</sup> century social reform movement. Blagden Alley and Naylor Court share the same architectural characteristics. When originally platted, both squares were abnormally large and laid out with large lots, each with access to a street and an H-shaped alley at the interior of the square. Almost

from the start, large lots were subdivided into smaller lots, many with frontage not on a street but on the alleys. On these lots, small and simple dwellings—generally unornamented brick, two-stories tall and two bays wide-- were built for Washington's working class. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century warehouses and commercial stables were built on larger lots.

### **Proposal**

The applicant proposes a two-story brick building to fill nearly 100% of the vacant building lot. Thirty feet tall, a regular arrangement of vehicle sized openings on the ground floor and ganged windows on the second floor pace the rhythm of the long east façade. A single bay of the same arrangement fills the south elevation and hosts the entrance to the building. The large ground floor openings are configured with paired fixed windows, transoms above, and a single panel below. A mechanical equipment room on the roof at the north end of the building will be setback 4'-6" from all parapets and rise 4'-0" above those. The subdivision to combine lots with 922 Rear N Street will allow the new second floor to give access to a new roof deck on top of 922. No demolition or other alteration is proposed to 922.

### **Evaluation and Recommendation**

The straight forward and distinctly proportioned brick facades designed for 920 Rear N Street successfully blend into the larger historic buildings of Blagden Alley. Especially successful are the quadruple-coursed soldier lintels that span the large ground floor openings. These types of trabeated openings are a common trait of the historic district whether the lintel material is concrete, timber, steel channel or brick. Limiting ornament to the bare expression of pier and openings is also consistent with the utilitarian scale and purpose of the warehouses in this square. The design has been wavering on one minor detail when it comes to the presence of blind openings, but this issue does not impact compatibility. Bricked-in openings are a common feature of the alley's commercial buildings and reflect their history of frequent and matter-of-fact change of use. Whether all openings are fenestrated or some are blind makes no matter. The mechanical equipment room on the roof will not have substantial visibility because of its setback and the narrow width of the adjacent alleys.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for a 2-story brick building at 920 Rear N Street NW to be compatible with the character of the historic district, consistent with the purpose of the preservation act, and that final approval be delegated to Staff.*