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## HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

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Landmark/District:	<b>Capitol Hill Historic District</b>	(x) Agenda
Address:	<b>1013 &amp; 1015 E Street SE</b>	( ) Consent
		(x) Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>December 18, 2014</b>	(x) Alteration
Case Number:	<b>14-720, 14-721</b>	(x) New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Sarah VanLandingham</b>	( ) Demolition
		(x) Subdivision

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Applicant Congressional Capital, LLC, with plans prepared by Workshop t10, seeks concept review for rear additions to 1013 and 1015 E Street SE, a subdivision to combine the properties, and construction of an accessory building in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

### Property Description

Neighboring properties 1013 and 1015 E St SE were built as single family houses. The larger of the two, 1013 is a two-story Italianate style frame rowhouse with a stucco front; while no permit exists to document its date of construction, it likely predates 1877. The house includes two additions: a two-story rear ell and a one-story room on the east side of the building. A public alley borders the rear of the property. Separated by a narrow gap, 1015 is a brick two-story porch-front with a rear ell addition constructed in 1880. There are no contributing alley buildings on either lot, but there is an assortment of small site features including a pergola and masonry wall at the alley. The neighboring buildings are a mix of commercial buildings occupying up to 100% of their lots and rowhouses with rear yards.

### Proposal

The plans call for combining the lots, removing the existing rear additions of both houses and building two-story plus basement rear additions that would extend 18' beyond the main blocks of the houses. The additions will be clad in fiber cement siding and feature glass doors with Juliet balconies on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors. Areaways behind the houses would be excavated to allow full-sized sliding doors at the basement level. New front basement entrances would be added to both houses.

A new accessory building in the general form of a two-story carriage house would be constructed in the rear of the properties; for zoning purposes, it would be connected to 1015 by an open trellis. The new building would be 30' deep by almost 39' wide—the full width of the two parcels—and 25' tall with a 4' railing on half to accommodate a private roof deck located on one side. The building would be clad in brick with large inoperable garage-like doors on the alley side and a smaller centered areaway facing the alley. The courtyard-facing elevation would feature five sets of full-light doors with Juliet balconies, a centered main entrance door, and a

pedestrian door. Large areaways would allow for full-sized doors at the basement level opening to a below-grade space measuring approximately 15' by 5' and 5'10" deep.

A garbage enclosure and two parking spaces would be located on the alley creating a 12' setback to the rear elevation of the accessory building.

### **Evaluation**

The applicant has revised the plan multiple times to reach the current configuration and many aspects of the proposal have been improved through this process. Despite this there are still some elements that raise preservation concerns.

The existing rear additions on the houses are not architecturally or historically significant and their removal does not raise preservation concerns. In 2013, the Board approved a proposal by a different applicant to remove the existing rear additions on 1013 and replace them with a new rear addition (HPA#13-259). However, there appears to be a significant amount of interior demolition, possibly including some load-bearing walls in 1013. The applicant should develop more precise demolition plans, including sections that specify the proposed treatment of floor and roof assemblies, so that they can be evaluated for consistency with the Board's regulations regarding demolition (DCMR 10-C, Section 305).

In height, mass, overall size and materials, the proposed additions to the houses are subordinate to the historic buildings and will not be visible from public space.

Additional information is necessary to evaluate the compatibility of the front basement entrances at both properties. The proposal to reorient the entrance to 1013 toward the street is compatible with the historic district but a detailed elevation identifying the projection and clearances is required. The proposal to add a basement entrance to 1015 results in a large area of excavation that does not allow the building to appear grounded and as drawn is incompatible with the subject property. The proposal should be further developed to conform to the principles cited in the Board's guidelines for basement areaways.

The new alley building is compatible with the historic district in its overall form, materials and general detailing. An accessory building would not be incompatible with the alleyscape, but typically an accessory structure is subordinate to the main building. The staff seeks the Board's guidance on whether a building of this size and height is appropriate for this location. The proposed roof deck contributes to the perceived height of the building and its elimination would help lower the building's height and reduce its size. This project employs multiple areaways to provide light to the basement units. While many of these openings would not be visible to public view, areaways are not appropriate for the alley side.

As the accessory building will not be substantially visible from E Street, the appearance of its courtyard elevation will not impact the historic district. There are some discrepancies between the plans and elevations regarding the size and location of windows, especially on the alley side, which should be reconciled.

Although there are many examples of rear carriage houses in Capitol Hill, the location of this accessory building 12' off of an alley does not follow standard development patterns. Alley buildings are an important resource in Capitol Hill; part of their contribution to the sense of place is that they help to maintain the edge and shape of alleys. In this case, the alley in square 973 is I-shaped and these properties are located at the top end of the I. Although this particular alley-scape has changed over time, it retains its general shape. Historic maps show alley buildings located on the subject properties that have since been removed and replaced by some smaller non-contributing construction including a wall that helps to hold the edge of the alley. By setting back the accessory building and allowing for parking, the sense of the alley shape will be diluted and the edge eroded. The applicants should be encouraged to study whether the new alley building can be sited closer to the rear property line to reinforce the alley edge.

## **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends the Board find the general concept and subdivision (lot combination) to be compatible with the Capitol Hill historic district, with the following conditions:*

- *The extent of demolition of the main blocks of the houses should be clarified to ensure it is in conformance with the Board's regulations regarding demolition;*
- *The plans for the basement entrances should be further developed to comply with the principles and standards in the Board's guidelines for basement entrances;*
- *The alley building's siting should be reevaluated to better reinforce the edge of the alley; its height and mass should be reduced by eliminating the rooftop terrace and its areaway facing the alley should be eliminated.*

*The project should return to the Board for further review when revised.*