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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1104 C St SE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
ANC:	6B	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Meeting Date:	July 25, 2019	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Case Number:	19-451	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Applicants Catherine and Fernando Maldonado, with plans prepared by architect Laura Ydrobo, seek concept review for a new basement and entrance on a property located in the Capitol Hill Historic District.



The front elevation of 1104 C Street, SE

Property Description

The subject property was built between 1893 and 1903 as a brick two-story flat-front house. The second-story bay with turret is believed to have been added later, and there is evidence in the brick work on the ground floor that the entrance and openings may have been reconfigured over time. The existing entry doors are modern and not appropriate for the property.

Proposal

The existing basement access from the front yard would be infilled and converted to planting area. The existing rear basement stairs would be removed, and the rear entry door replaced with an egress window with window well. The new areaway would begin at grade and descend into an excavated area below the existing at-grade entrance and would be accessed by stepping-stones

off the main entry walk. The new basement stairs would wrap in an L-shape and have guardrails and handrails. The new basement entrance door at the front would be located below the main entry.



Contextual views of the front yard of the property

Evaluation

This design for a basement entrance does not meet The Historic Preservation Review Board's Preservation and Design Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows. The Guidelines clearly state under 3.3 that *"it may not be possible to provide an exterior stair on properties where the first floor is close to grade, where the building is close to the sidewalk, or where the basement stair would be exposed at eye level from the sidewalk. In such instances, the extent of excavation may alter the relationship of the building to grade, overwhelm the site, or become such a prominent element that it detracts from the property's character."* The shallow depth of the front yard results in full public view from the sidewalk.

The goal for a compatible basement entrance and stair would be to have a minimal visual impact on the property. The stairs would project substantially further than the main entrance, projecting at least 67 inches into the front yard, where the guidelines advise against anything more than 36 inches. And, because of the depth of the stair descending a full story below grade, guardrails would be required in addition to handrails, which also run contrary to the goal of the Guidelines to ensure that such installations have a minimal visual impact. This proposed project is a clear example of why an at-grade property cannot generally accommodate an exterior basement stair entrance.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends the Board find the project to be incompatible with the Capitol Hill historic district and inconsistent with the preservation act.

Staff contact: Moira Nadal