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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	(x) Agenda
Address:	1220 Potomac Avenue SE	() Consent
		(x) Concept
Meeting Date:	December 17, 2015	() Alteration
Case Number:	13-566	(x) New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Frances McMillen	(x) Demolition
		() Subdivision

Applicant Todd Ragimov with drawings prepared by RAM Design LLC, requests on-going concept review for construction of a multi-unit building at 1220 Potomac Avenue SE in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

The property is a substantial and unusually shaped lot that fronts Potomac Avenue and has a narrow portion that backs up to I Street. Neighboring buildings include a small number of bay and flat front row houses located to the west of the subject property constructed from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-20th century. The lot is currently occupied by a non-contributing two-story frame house, built in 1998, that would be demolished; the existing house is served by a curb cut and driveway located on the west side of the house accessed from Potomac Avenue.

Proposal

The proposal calls for the demolition of the non-contributing house and construction of a three-story multi-unit building. The new building would feature a brick façade with projecting bays and a wood cornice. Brick soldier courses span the width of the building at each floor. The rear and side elevations would be clad in stucco. The driveway would be removed.

Evaluation

In June 2014 the Board found the proposal compatible with the character of the neighboring houses on Potomac Avenue and the historic district in terms of massing, design, materials, and fenestration. The Board recommended further refinement of several aspects of the project, including reducing the size of the areaways, additional fenestration on the bays and front elevation, specifying the location of meters, and the design for the front entrance.

The applicant has addressed several of the Board's recommendations, including adding windows above the front entrance and the bays and specifying the location of the meters inside the building. One of the areaways has been removed and the size of the remaining two areaways reduced. A landscape plan has been provided with shrubs indicated to screen the openings. The floor plans do not show windows on the east side of the east bay, but they are indicated in a section drawing and the applicant has confirmed the plans will be updated to include them. The design of the front entrance has been revised to include full light double doors and the canopy removed. Additional detailed drawings and refinements for the entrance are recommended, such as adding a transom above the door. Further information and detailing is still needed for the

windows, including the method of operation and materials for the windows, headers and sills. When reviewed by the Board in 2014 the proposal called for one-over-one, double-hung sash windows; they now appear to be casements with transom, but this should be clarified.

Two options are proposed for the location of the condenser units. Option A locates the units along the property line with one of the neighboring I Street lots at the rear of the building. Option B shows the condenser units located on the roof, with site-line studies indicating that the units in this location will be visible from several vantage points along Potomac Avenue. To mitigate visibility, the height of the bays and parapet between the bays is proposed to be raised approximately 3' to screen the units. Option B also calls for enlarging the windows on the bays and one of the windows above the front door to fill in the blank expanse of wall created by the additional height.

Option A is the more compatible approach, as the additional height added to the bays and parapet creates an incompatible relationship with the neighboring houses on Potomac Avenue. As shown, the bays and parapet would be several feet taller than the adjacent building and the enlarged window openings are disproportionate to the other windows, resulting in an uncomfortable, top-heavy composition. The applicant is encouraged to either locate the units as shown in Option A or explore other options for locating the units on the roof that don't require changes to the building's height and fenestration while also ensuring that they don't result in being prominently visible from public view. It appears that this could be achieved if the units were organized as shown but simply provided with a 42" screen around them, while leaving the elevation alone.

The site-line drawing also illustrates that the bays are in proportion and will not project further than the bays on neighboring buildings, which wasn't clear when previously reviewed by the Board. No dimensions or further details are provided. The applicant is encouraged to provide more detailed drawings confirming the bays are consistent in their project with the adjacent houses.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the revised concept for the project and delegate final approval to staff, with the condition the applicant work with staff on finalizing the details for the façade, including the fenestration, entrance, materials for window headers and sills, and in selecting the materials for the front walkway, railings and any new fencing.