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

Property Address:	1229 E Street, SE 1230 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE	X	Agenda Consent Calendar
Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	July 28, 2016	X	Alteration/Addition
H.P.A. Number:	16-379	X	New Construction
Staff Reviewers:	Steve Callcott		Demolition Subdivision

1229 E Street LLC, represented by Sassan Gharai of SGA Architects, seeks concept review for two associated projects in the Capitol Hill Historic District. On E Street, the plans include relocation, substantial reconstruction and construction of a rear addition on a one-story “shotgun” house. On Pennsylvania Avenue, the project calls for construction of a five-story apartment building that would incorporate a two-story contributing brick rowhouse at 1234 Pennsylvania. While the lots are separate, their rear lot lines abut each other and the two aspects of the project would be developed together.

Property History and Description

1229 E Street, S.E. is one of only two frame shotgun houses known to exist in the Capitol Hill Historic District. Shotgun houses are a vernacular building type constructed predominately in towns and cities of the American south, generally for working class families, and are distinguished by their long narrow gabled form and floor plan, which is one room wide and two or more rooms deep with no hallway. Due to their simple construction and often unassuming form, shotgun houses have not survived in great numbers, particularly in cities like Washington that have seen continuous development pressures through the late 19th and 20th centuries.

The two-room front section of this 14’ wide, one-story frame dwelling was constructed prior to 1853. Sometime before 1887, the house was extended with the construction of a third room of the same narrow width. A front porch was added in 1925 (replacing an earlier porch), and a brick kitchen addition was added in 1938. In the 1850s portion of the house, the original windows have been replaced and the clapboard siding was covered over with asphalt siding in 1942. At the rear of the property was a two-story brick building that was constructed as a double bay garage in 1917, which has since been demolished.

Map and deed research indicates that 1229 E Street was constructed sometime prior to 1853 by John Biegler who operated a store on the corner of this block. Most development on Capitol Hill at this time was centered further south around the Navy Yard or immediately around the Capitol. The property’s double width lot, and the modest size and construction of the original portion of the house attest to its remote, pre-urban location at that time. The area would have appealed to those of modest means who couldn’t afford a more convenient location, and research on this property supports this. In 1853, the house was sold to German-born Ernst Tungel, a peddler, noted as illiterate in census records, whose family lived in the house for the next 40 years. Several other modest houses were developed in this block in the late 19th century, including two attached one-story brick houses, also for working class families.

By the end of the 19th century, much of Capitol Hill had become more middle class in character, dominated by rows of late-Victorian brick houses. Unlike many modest frame houses that were

demolished in this period for more substantial brick rowhouses, 1229 E Street remained home to working class residents. After being rented for a few years to a German-born cooper and his family, the house was purchased by Daniel Hartley, a Maryland-born bricklayer. The Hartleys added the rear outbuilding in 1917 and the brick kitchen in the 1930s, and lived in the house until the 1940s.

The property illustrates the characteristic expansion of a working-class shotgun house over time, with one-story additions added to the rear that extend the overall form and floor plan of the original house. While simple in appearance and construction, this is part of its character; it is a housing type that was relatively easy and inexpensive to alter and add on to as a family grew or as their economic status improved. In instances where the owners had experience in construction or in working with their hands, these additions could be added by the owners themselves. This certainly seems to be the case with the construction of the brick outbuilding and the kitchen addition, which coincide with the property's ownership by a bricklayer.

1229 E Street has been neglected and poorly maintained for decades. When the HPO staff first toured the property in 1999, windows were broken, the 1938 rear porch had collapsed, the kitchen floor had partially collapsed, and there was evidence of water damage in the kitchen and rear portions of the 1887 addition. Subsequently, the 1887 portion completely collapsed, and the floor assembly, interior walls and chimneys of the original portion of the building were removed without permit approval. While sporadic enforcement efforts by DCRA and HPO to require basic property maintenance have somewhat slowed the building's deterioration, they have failed to address root problems or result in stabilization or repair. On its most recent inspection by DCRA and HPO in 2015, the foundation and sill plates were found to be compromised and requiring significant reconstruction.

The HPRB has a long history with the property as well, and has reviewed two conceptual plans for its rehabilitation and expansion, neither of which came to fruition. In 2002, the Board approved demolition of the two-story garage building (as well as two deteriorated frame houses on the Pennsylvania Avenue lot at 1225 and 1226). On two occasions, the Board has found requests for demolition of the house to be inconsistent with the preservation act, but neither time did the owner pursue review of the demolition permits by the Mayor's Agent.

1234 Pennsylvania Avenue is a two-story brick rowhouse with a full-height projecting bay set atop a raised English basement. It consists of a main block and narrower rear two-story ell wing. While a permit could not be located for its initial construction, its architectural character is illustrative of rowhouses built in the 1880s on Capitol Hill and elsewhere in the city.

Proposal

The plans call for the original pre-1853 portion of 1229 to be documented, dismantled, and reconstructed approximately three feet west of its existing footprint on a new brick foundation using salvageable elements. This will likely include reuse of intact wall and roof framing members, and wood siding and trim, but the precise scope of retention will depend on an assessment of the condition of elements upon the building being dismantled. The missing 1925 front porch would be reconstructed. The brick kitchen wing, now no longer attached since the collapse of the 1887 addition, would be demolished. A three story frame addition would be built to the rear, with the third story expressed as a gabled roof clad in standing seam metal with a centered shed dormer. A second house would be built on the 15' wide lot to the east, set back to align with the rear wall plane of the shotgun house. This three-story house would be clad in brick with a full-width front porch.

The new construction on Pennsylvania Avenue would be traditional in character, and designed to appear as two different buildings flanking the retained historic rowhouse. The primary building would have a series of six angled projecting bays, clad in red brick with precast stone trim, reminiscent of the district's late 19th century Victorian/Queen Anne architecture. As the block contains no alley, a garage entrance would be created below the western-most oriel projection; the entrance and lobby to the building would be located at the opposite eastern end. The new construction behind and east of the rowhouse would be clad in gray brick with multi-light windows set atop a ground-level projecting storefront window. The penthouse would be clad in slate or synthetic slate. The 32' deep main block of the rowhouse would be retained; the rear ell-wing would be removed. The new construction would wrap behind but not be on top of the retained portion of the rowhouse.

Evaluation

Demolishing the shotgun house's kitchen wing, dismantling the original portion of the building, and reconstructing it in a new location using only salvageable elements is obviously not an ideal preservation outcome. However, after 30+ years of abandonment, neglect and deterioration, and after several failed attempts at redeveloping the site, the proposal may be the best and last possibility for retaining any aspect of this rare structure. While the organic evolution of the house and its detached freestanding quality would be compromised, its most important characteristic – its narrow one-story form capped by a front facing gable – will be maintained and would remain a distinctive element that would continue to contribute to the streetscape and the historic district.

The west wall of the shotgun house that would be reconstructed immediately abutting the party wall of 1227 E Street does not contain any window or door openings that would be lost due to the building's re-siting. However, in discussions with the architect about the building's relocation, HPO has emphasized the importance that the overhanging eaves on the west side the house not be cut off, and the precise detailing of how this will be retained should continue to be developed with staff.

The rear addition to the shotgun house has been developed to relate to the building's frame vocabulary and has been kept modest in size and height so as to not overwhelm the reconstructed historic building. The decision to design the new construction in the side yard in a different vocabulary so as to appear as a separate structure was made for the same reason, and the result is more successful than earlier versions that appeared as a single large structure. Both additions are compatible with the scale and architectural character of the streetscape, and have been developed with input from neighbors to ensure that the additions do not intrude substantially beyond the established rear line of construction in this block.

The new construction on Pennsylvania Avenue is compatible with the historic district and this specific location in terms of its general height, massing, the proportions and scale of its elements, materials and general level of detailing and articulation. While two stories taller than the immediately surrounding rowhouses, its residential character is consistent with historic mid-rise apartment buildings found in the historic district on larger lots such as this one. Breaking the building into two different architectural designs provides a more varied streetscape and helps mitigate the impact on the retained 1234 rowhouse. As the design continues to be developed, the following is recommended for further refinement and study:

1. The façade brick (or a secondary brick) should be wrapped further back on each of the east and west side walls; it should continue back to the light court on the east side and ideally all the way to the rear wall on the west.

2. The sills of the first floor windows on the bay-fronted portion of the new construction should be lowered and the blank area between the top of the basement windows and first floor windows reduced in proportion.
3. The penthouse should modeled from vantage points further east and west on Pennsylvania Avenue; it comes particularly close to the west side wall and probably needs to be pulled further in as this will be quite visible over the adjacent shorter historic buildings.
4. The rear yard plan should be evaluated for opportunities to include landscaping and trees.
5. The renovation plans for 1234 Pennsylvania Avenue should be developed to make clear that the floor and roof assemblies will be retained so as to not constitute demolition as defined by the Board's regulations (DCMR 10-C, Section 305)

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board make the following findings:

1. *Given its condition and circumstances, the conceptual approach to document, dismantle, salvage, relocate and reconstruct the original portion of 1229 E Street, SE is consistent with the purposes of the preservation act;*
2. *The proposed additions to 1229 E Street, SE are compatible with the character of the historic district;*
3. *Due to the deteriorated condition of the property, and to allow construction to begin promptly, the development of the plan for salvage and reconstruction and final construction approval for 1229 is delegated to staff;*
4. *The removal of the rear ell-wing of 1234 Pennsylvania Avenue does not constitute substantial demolition and the retention of the main block of the building is consistent with the preservation act as long as the floor and roof assemblies are being retained;*
5. *The new construction on Pennsylvania Avenue is generally compatible with the character of the historic district and should continue to be developed and the specific issues raised above addressed.*