

---

---

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

---

---

Landmark/District:	<b>Capitol Hill Historic District</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>203 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, N.E.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
ANC:	<b>6B</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Meeting Date:	<b>July 28, 2022</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Case Number:	<b>22-322</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

---

---

Applicants Eammon Atkinson and John Ashton, with plans by Ricardo Hendi, seek concept review for a partial fourth floor and roof deck, and new basement entry, on a contributing building in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

**Property Description**

203 3<sup>rd</sup> Street NE was built for Emmons and King as one of seven in 1889. The three-story brick rowhouse has a raised basement. There is a narrow existing basement stair that runs parallel to the main stair, and a door in the projecting bay at the basement level. The front yard is currently mostly paved, although HPO and DDOT's Public Space Committee generally require that about half of public space (forward of the flat face of the building) be plantable area. The adjacent corner property has a visible roof deck of unknown age but dating to before August 2007.



*203 3<sup>rd</sup> St NE and the front yard*

**Proposal**

***Basement Entrance***

The existing run of stairs parallel to the main entry stairs would be replaced by stairs running parallel across the face of the projecting bay. These stairs would go down a story and then an areaway would allow for a switchback leading to a large areaway below the main stairs. There is also a door shown under

the new basement stairs, but it isn't clear what it would lead to. The areaway would house utility meters. The basement door would be relocated to below the main entry. Handrails would run on the inside of the stair, and an above-ground railing would surround the stair and areaway in front of the bay.

### ***Rooftop Addition***

The addition is set back about twenty feet from the flat face of the building and would have a height of about nine feet. There would be skylights and condensers on top of the addition. The front area of the roof would be a roof deck with planters and other appurtenances. Labels indicate that the existing roof parapet would be extended upward, but it isn't clear if that would include the front elevation's parapet.

### **Evaluation**

The applicant's drawings are cluttered and difficult to read. While highly detailed in some areas, they don't include important information necessary for concept review.

### ***Basement Entrance***

The proposed basement entrance does not conform with several principles in the Historic Preservation Review Board's *Preservation and Design Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows*. The first principle in the *Guidelines* says that "[n]ew basement entrances should be visually discreet and subordinate to the main entrance." Other principles that are not met by this design include:

*1.4 Stairs to basement entrances should typically run parallel to and not project substantially further than the main entrance stair.*

*3.3 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.*

*3.4 Basement areaways should be kept to a minimum size, typically projecting no more than 36" from the face of the building. The creation of large sunken patios or outdoor living areas in front of a primary elevation of historic property is not appropriate.*

*3.6 Fences around areaways are discouraged because they are obtrusive and out of character with historic site conditions. Decreasing the depth of an areaway or providing an alternative means of protection can eliminate the need for fences around areaways and window wells.*

The current proposal severs the relationship of the bay to the ground, dominates the shallow front yard with a significant topographical change, likely exceeds public space requirements for projection and plantable area, and requires above-ground railings that visually obstruct the front of the house. In sum, it is not a compatible proposal for this property or historic district.

The orientation of the existing stair is compatible and options should be explored that utilize that stair, extend it down to below the main stair and perhaps recess the basement entrance to allow for a longer run of stairs.

### ***Rooftop Addition***

A flag test showed that the addition would be visible from multiple points along several surrounding streets. While not highly visible from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street or from the west, it was quite visible along Constitution Avenue from the east. The condensers would add height from this view towards the rear and likely also be visible.

The drawings also show additional rooftop appurtenances like an outdoor shower and hot tub that are not proposed at this time and have not been mocked up but would be further forward of the proposed addition and would likely increase visibility from the West.



*510 9<sup>th</sup> Street viewed from the West; flag test visible over the roof*



*Lumber mockup visible along Constitution Avenue from the East*

The addition is visible from the field test lumber mock up, and that impact will be much more apparent were those areas to be solid walls instead of tape stretch between lumber pieces. The additional appurtenances and raised parapet will also add to the visibility of the addition and alterations at the roof. This exceeds the minimal visibility generally supported by the Board.

**Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends the Board find the project incompatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.*

*Staff contact: Moira Nadal*