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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	209 C Street, SE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
ANC:	6B	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Meeting Date:	March 28, 2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Case Number:	19-218	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Applicant William Eskridge Jr., with plans prepared by architect Ricardo Hendi, seeks concept review for front building and site alterations, including construction of a basement apartment entrance, modifications to the public space front yard, and an at-grade front entrance. The property is located in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

The subject property was built in 1880 as a free-standing, brick, two-story, bay-front house. A side addition filling in the space between 209 and 207 was built sometime between 1916 and 1928. The house is located between a six-story apartment building to the east and a row of two-story rowhouses to the west.



Google Streetview image, May 2012, showing previous conditions at the property

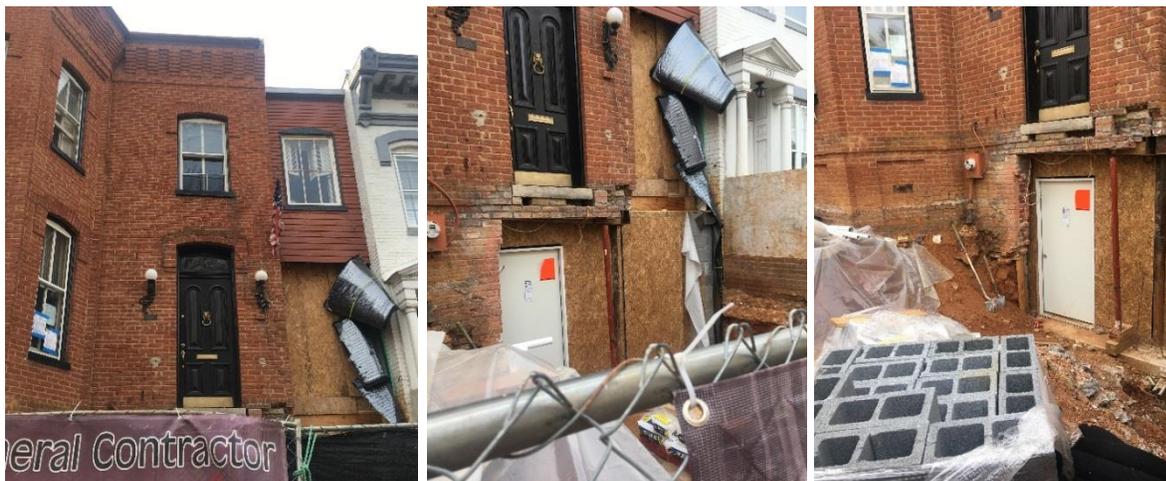


Contextual views of 209 C Street SE

Proposal

The plans are an amendment to a scope of work previously approved under HPA 15-503, which included a rear three-story addition with a one-story wing, a rooftop addition and roof deck, and reconstructing the side addition to be clad in siding. That project was cleared by HPO and issued a building permit by DCRA on November 20, 2017.

The new scope of work calls for interior excavation of the cellar, adding a new basement apartment with an areaway and entrance, new window openings at the bottom of the bay with window wells, an interior elevator, relocated rooftop mechanical equipment, and rooftop solar panels. To provide an accessible entrance, an at-grade walk would be cut to an entrance in the side addition that would serve both the basement apartment and the proposed elevator. The low retaining wall would be reconstructed in brick at the perimeter of the yard to align with the others on the block.



Current conditions at the primary elevation



Current conditions at the rear of the property

Evaluation

Sightline studies undertaken for HPA 15-503 indicated that the addition would not be visible from the street, and that principle of ensuring that roof appurtenances are not visible from street view should be maintained. The curb-mounted condensers on the roof of the rear addition have been moved closer to the outer edge of the roofline to accommodate the new elevator and cab at the top of the addition, and it is not clear how this will impact their potential visibility. The roof deck shown on sheet HPRB- 9 appears almost double the depth shown in the permit plans; the roof deck as approved ended at roughly the dividing wall line between the office and hallway on the top story. Given the Board's concerns over roof decks on front portions of rowhouse roofs, it is recommended that the deck not be expanded.

The proposed basement windows and window wells are consistent with the Board's Preservation and Design Guidelines. The windows are unobtrusive and located within existing blind window outlines and are aligned with the fenestration on the upper stories of the bay. The window wells are subordinate to the site and should not be notable because of the raised topography of the front yard. The largest well planned for emergency egress has been located below the primary entrance stairs and landing to minimize its visibility.

Creating an at-grade walk through a raised berm is typically discouraged by the Board's Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows which states: "Walkways to basement entrances should be shared with the walk serving the main entrance to retain the maximum amount of green space in the front yard. Separate walks for main and basement entrances are generally not appropriate". However, the unique circumstances at this property may be better served by this treatment. The cut is proposed to be in front of the side addition, which is already designed to be distinct from the main building through the use of siding and historically had a separate entrance through a secondary, smaller set of stairs. The cut in the front yard additionally provides for a more discrete location for utility meters and trash storage (the property does not have direct alley access and the trash cans were stored in the front yard). In this instance, these circumstances and benefits collectively outweigh the slight loss of green space and topography.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends the Board find the project to be compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District, with the following conditions:

- 1) The primary entrance stairs will be restored and reinstalled;*
- 2) the roof deck is not expanded in size from that shown in the 2017 approved permit drawings;*
- 3) the relocated mechanical equipment and solar panels are shown through a flag test to be not visible from public street view.*

It is further recommended that final approval be delegated to staff.

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