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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Capitol Hill Historic District</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>418-420 7<sup>th</sup> Street, SE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>September 28, 2017</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>17-487</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Gabriela Gutowski</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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WFA Endowment Fund, with plans prepared by Square 134 Architects, seeks concept review for lot consolidation to combine two rowhouses on a single lot, construction of rear and rooftop additions, and a new building in the rear yard of a property in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

**Property Description**

418 and 420 7<sup>th</sup> Street, NE are two of a row of six brick rowhouses built by Weller and Repetti in 1889. Each building has a half-hexagon projecting bay, one of which is topped by a slate turret roof. Both rowhouses retain their historic cast-iron stairs and decorative brick detailing. At the rear, both buildings retain their “dog-leg” ell wings, and 418’s rear elevation retains its historic fenestration with arched brick-lintels and two-over-two double-hung windows.

The buildings are located mid-block between D and E Street one block south of the Eastern Market Metro. The block has no alley. All the buildings on the block were historically constructed as residences, however today they contain a mix of residential and commercial occupants, as the block is zoned as Mixed -Use (MU-4). The eastern half of the square, along 8<sup>th</sup> and parts of D and E, is characterized by commercial buildings.

**Proposal**

The case was reviewed by the Board at the July 27, 2017 meeting. At that time, the proposal consisted of combining lots 809 and 810 into one lot for a project that would provide eight residential condominiums. The plans showed interior and exterior demolition and the construction of a one-story rooftop addition. Both dog-legs were proposed to be infilled and the infill set back from the newly constructed rear elevations approximately 12 inches. A new three-story building at the rear of the lot measuring 28 feet tall and extending the full width of the lots was also proposed.

The Board found the concept incompatible, and recommended the applicant to modify their plans to accomplish the following:

- 1) Significantly reduce the amount of demolition;
- 2) Retain the rear elevation walls;

- 3) Pull the rooftop addition in several feet from the rear elevations, eliminate the deck at the front of the roof, and relocate the HVAC equipment off the roof of the roof addition, and prepare a roof mock up of the proposed roof addition to test for visibility;
- 4) Inset any infill next to the dog-leg additions from the rear elevations to retain a memory of the original massing and rhythm of the rear elevations;
- 5) Limit the height of the new rear building to 20 feet and explore the possibility of pushing it further back on the lot.

The revised proposal reduces the amount of interior demolition. The applicant would retain the floor joists except for 93 square feet necessary to accommodate a new stair. New floor joist would be inserted where the existing stairs would be removed. The party wall separating 418 and 420 would remain except for three door openings. The plans still show the removal of the rear elevations and rear ell wings. The revised proposal eliminates the deck from the front of the roof. The HVAC units would be located at the front of the roof instead of at the roof of the roof addition. The proposed one-story addition would be set back 14' 0" from the front elevation and will extend to align with the buildings original rear elevation. The proposal has been revised to include new rear additions at both buildings extending 10' 0" into the rear yard. The rear additions would be clad in brick and have a 12" inset bay at the location of the original dog-legs. The new building at the rear of the lot would be limited to two-stories and reduced in height to a total of 20' 0". Instead of extending across the full width of the two lots, the new building would extend only the width of the lot at 418.

When the applicant shared their revisions with the neighbors and ANC there were still significant concerns expressed regarding the new rear building. In response, the applicant has drawn up a second option (option B) that eliminates the new rear building and proposes larger rear additions to the houses. The additions would extend 20'0" into the rear yards and be clad in brick with brick lintels and four-over-four double-hung windows. The additions would be visible from E Street through a space between two buildings.

### **Evaluation**

The proposal has five components for the Board's consideration: subdivision, demolition, the roof addition, the rear additions, and the new rear building. The revised proposal attempts to respond to the Board's comments while also achieving the applicant's development goals.

#### *Subdivision*

418 and 420 have a history of shared occupants and use with small openings existing between the two buildings. Other pairs of rowhouses on the block are similarly combined and occupied by a single tenant, such as the SMYAL Youth Center at 408 and 410. Combining two rowhouses into one building on a single lot has been found to be compatible by the Board as long as interior demolition and removal of party walls between the buildings is minimal, and that exterior features that identify each property are retained (e.g. retaining both sets of exterior stairs and front doors).

#### *Demolition*

The amount of demolition has been substantially reduced. The loss of floor joists will be limited to the location of the new stairs. The interior layouts were rearranged in order to limit the number

of new openings in the party wall and as a result the majority of the wall will be retained. The rear elevations and wing ell ways will still be demolished to accommodate the proposed new rear additions.

#### *Roof additions*

The HVAC units have been removed from the top of the roof addition and placed on the front roof of the main blocks of the building. A roof-deck will be located at the rear of the roof and not at the front. Before construction a mock-up of the addition will be needed and any modifications made to ensure that the addition will not be visible. There is one other building within the row that has a rooftop addition (414), which is pulled away from both the front and rear elevations.

#### *Rear additions*

There are ten rowhouses that front 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Three were designed by Hornblower & Marshall in 1883, six by Weller and Repetti in 1889, and one by an unknown architect c.1874. All ten have dog-leg extensions of various lengths and heights. The rest of the square consists of a mix of rowhouses, free-standing wood and brick houses, a 20<sup>th</sup> century garage building, and 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> century commercial buildings.

In the case of 316 G Street NE – where the Board cited the consistency of the dog-legs as an important feature to preserve -- the house was one of sixteen rowhouse facing G Street, and the perpendicular streets in the square -- 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets -- had a total of seventeen similar styled rowhouses that had identical dog legs. The result was an unusually intact series of identical rear wings, resulting in a distinct alley context.

The rowhouses facing 7<sup>th</sup> Street are not comparable to G Street in their cohesion. Infilling the dog-legs at 418 and 420 will not disrupt a shared residential rhythm of similar built dog-legs within the block and the square. Unlike G Street, the square has no alley, therefore the changes to the rears would not erode an intact alley-scape. The proposed 10'0" deep rear additions would align with and not extend farther than the adjacent neighbor's two-story open porches.

#### *Rear building/Scheme B rear addition*

The reduction in height and footprint results in the rear building that is more subordinate to the rowhouses, and more consistent with the height and form of carriage houses in the Capitol Hill Historic District. By limiting the width of the new building to the 418 lot, the large trees within the yards could be maintained and the construction will have less impact on the shared greenspace within the row. The changes to the building result in a structure more like historic carriages houses, barns, and garages, however, the discerning difference is that these buildings would have historically been located at the rear of the lot. The proposed new building is placed 15 feet from the rear property line, while aligning the building with the property line would require permission from the Board of Zoning Adjustment. The location of the building as proposed at the within in the middle of the rear yard rather than at the rear of the lot, remains awkward and unprecedented.

#### *Scheme "B"*

The proposed 20' 0" rear additions would extend farther than other rear elevations within the row. However, given the depth of the lots, lack of an alley-scape, and the variety of building

sizes within the square, a deeper rear addition is compatible. The proposed 20' 0" rear addition would maintain the mature trees in the yard and only be visible from a limited vantage point on E Street. Of the two options, a larger rear addition will have less of an impact on the green-scape and result in a built condition more consistent with the historic district.

**Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the revised concept with "Scheme B" compatible with the character of the historic district and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act, and delegate final approval to staff.*