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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	423 4th Street, SE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	November 15, 2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	18-671	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Owners Ben Whitcomb and Laura Thoms, with plans prepared by architect Jennifer Fowler, seek concept review for a three-story rear addition at the building located within the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

423 4th Street, SE is a semi-detached three-story brick rowhouse built c.1874¹. Currently the rear features a two-story and a one-story rear extension. It is not part of a matching row, but instead is located in a block with diverse rowhouse types ranging in height from two to three stories. The two rowhouses to the south are two-stories tall and a portion of the south secondary elevation can be seen from 4th and E Street, SE and from Marion Park.

Proposal

The plans call for removal of the existing one-story extension. A third-floor addition would be constructed above the existing two-story rear wing, and a new three-story addition would be added at the rear extending 9' 7" towards the rear property line. The height of the existing brick parapet walls at the side elevations would be raised.

The second and third floors at the rear would feature three banked one-over-one, double-hung windows, and the first floor would feature sliding doors with a transom. The roof of the rear addition would be topped by a composite (Azek) cornice. The rear addition would be seen from the intersection of 4th and E Street and from Marion Park. There is potential visibility from E Street looking north, however an existing fence, mature vegetation and grade change obscures the view.

Additionally, the plans show the creation of two new window openings at the primary elevation basement level and two new window light-wells. The proposed window openings would align with the existing fenestration and feature soldier course brick headers. The existing grade at the front areaway would be reduced by 18" and a new brick retaining wall constructed matching the height of the retaining wall at 425.

¹ Date of construction based on first appearance in Faetz & Pratt 1874 Real Estate Directory.



Figure 1: view looking north from corner of Marion Park

Evaluation

This block in the historic district features buildings of various heights, depths, and massing. The proposed addition would result in a slight increase in foot-print and extend a few feet beyond the adjacent neighbor at 421 4th Street, however, there are other deeper rear extensions present within the block. The height of the proposed rear addition would not extend beyond the height of the existing building. Currently a substantial portion of the secondary south elevation can be seen from the street and park. The small portion of the addition that will be seen will be compatible in height and mass, and the proposed use of siding will differentiate the addition from the historic house.

The building currently has a raised basement. The proposed new basement windows will result in the removal of plain masonry and align with the existing upper floor windows and create a harmonious fenestration pattern at the primary elevation. The existing brick retaining wall is not historic and lowering the wall would be consistent with other properties within the row.

The proposed grade change would be more compatible to the district if it featured a natural slope much like the neighbor at 419 4th Street. SE. A natural slope would better approximate the original historic topography and would screen the new windows and window wells from the street. The proposal for the basement windows and front yard are consistent with the Board's *Preservation and Design Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows*, which encourage that new basement windows align with upper floor windows, and that changes should retain original topography and grades of the front yard and retain and enhance the landscaped nature of the front yard to screen basement areaways and window wells.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept to be compatible with the historic district and to delegate further review to staff with the stipulation that topography within public space be sloped and not level.

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