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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>518 6th Street NE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>May 5, 2016</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>16-199</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Paul Weishar</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Applicant BenchMark Design Group, with plans prepared by architect Carter Jones, requests concept review for a three-story rear addition and interior alterations at 518 Sixth Street, NE, a contributing building in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

**Property Description**

This three-story rowhouse was constructed in 1889 as one of a set of five identical buildings. Initially owned by architect Edward Woltz, these brick structures feature full-height projecting bays, window and door openings surmounted by soldier-brick segmental arches, and heavily corbeled brick cornices leading up to flat roofs. Concrete sills in conjunction with brick sill courses lend the vertical buildings horizontality. Set slightly above grade, none of the rowhouses has lower-level access along the façades (east elevation).

This property has been the subject of ongoing enforcement action due to incorrect and incomplete plans. A version of this project was originally reviewed at the staff level but those permits have since been surrendered to DCRA. Currently, the building is a shell, with only the façade, party walls, limited framing, and roof extant. The west (rear) exterior wall has been partially removed. This condition was observed by staff on April 21, 2016.

**Proposal**

The plans call for the removal of most of the interior framing, including floor joists, and the replacement of all windows and doors. All window openings, both existing and proposed, will hold two-over-two, double-hung wood sash. The second and third story exterior brick walls of the west (rear) elevation will also be removed. Furthermore, an existing (non-historic) one-story rear addition will be demolished and replaced with a three-story, full-width addition with a third-story deck. The new addition will extend west approximately 15'-3" from the rear wall of the main block to a point equal with the one-story addition of the adjacent property to the south (516 6<sup>th</sup> Street NE).

Clad in Hardieplank, the proposed addition will be capped by a flat roof extending off the plane of the main block. Skylights are proposed for both the addition and the main block. The basement grade of the original block will be lowered, and extended west as part of the proposed rear addition. Concrete stairs will lead from the backyard down to a basement door opening while new wood stairs will provide access up to a first-story rear stoop.

The first story of the west elevation of the addition will be fenestrated with a double-leaf, wood-frame, six-light glass door with sidelights. The second story will be pierced by two window openings while the third story will have a window opening and a single-leaf, wood-frame glass door. The basement will have a single-leaf, paneled wood door with half-light. There will be no openings on the north and south (side) elevations.

The third-story deck, which will occupy the rear half of the addition footprint, will have a 3'-6" tall enclosed balustrade clad in Hardieplank.

### **Evaluation**

The proposed three-story rear addition is compatible with the historic house and with the Capitol Hill Historic District in overall massing, height, fenestration, and materials. The Board has generally cited the principle that additions to historic buildings should not exceed the size of the original structure, establishing a deferential or subordinate relationship between new and old which this proposed addition does. In the context of the subject property, a three-story rear addition would not be out of context or incompatible with its surroundings. Furthermore, the addition would not be visible from the street.

The replacement of the façade windows and door is needed, however, the replacement windows should be one-over-one to accurately reflect their historic appearance.

Much of the structural demolition identified in the plans has already occurred. Unfortunately, there is no way to know for sure whether that framing was original or part of a later renovation. Based on the unusual floorplan which included a spiral staircase, the removed framing may not have been original to the house. The interior had compromised integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Furthermore, the interior of the building was unlikely to have the potential to yield additional information (Criterion D). As the project progresses, the applicants should work with staff to ensure that the remaining original framing is retained.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff with the condition the applicant work with staff on the final selection of materials, main entry door, and the design of the rear addition balustrade.*