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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	520 Groff Ct, NE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
ANC:	6C	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Meeting Date:	June 27, 2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Case Number:	19-311	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Applicant Kara Benson, with plans prepared by architect Jennifer Fowler, seeks concept review for a two-story side addition with rear bay on a two-story alley dwelling located in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

The subject property was built in 1890 for Diller B. Groff as part of a matching row of nine. Of the original row, five remain and are largely unaltered at the exterior. Signs of the missing additional buildings can be seen in the uneven brick edges at both 520 and 512. These two-story, two-bay flat front brick rowhouses are a little over 12 feet wide and 28 feet deep. The properties have simple raised brick detailing at the arched window and door openings and a stepped brick corbel cornice. All houses in the row have flat elevations at the rear that are also visible from the court and look to be similarly intact.





Contextual views of the property and row from the front



Contextual views of the property and row from the rear

Proposal

The side addition would replicate the size and massing of the other houses in the row and would be connected at the interior to 520. The addition would share a party wall with 520 and be brick on three sides, measure 23 feet 6 eight inches tall, and be in line with the roofline at 520. On the first story front elevation the rhythm of the row's doors and windows would be replicated albeit with a taller window; on the second floor a shorter pair of paired casement windows are proposed. An Azek cornice would include corbels to emulate the stepped brick cornices of the rowhomes. The side elevation along the alley includes four window styles. The proposed rear elevation at the addition would be largely comprised of a two-story rear bay with large divided

lite windows and Azek panels. The only proposed alteration to 520 would be replacement of the front door in a style matching the addition, while sealing and infilling it from behind.

Evaluation

There is clear evidence that a matching row home existed at 522 Groff Court, and this project would undertake a reconstruction of sorts. The question is whether to draw directly from the adjacent buildings to more accurately replicate what was once there or to depart from that and clearly distinguish this building as new. The proposal does a bit of both. Finishing off the row with a new two-story brick building of this general character would certainly be compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District, but the design elements of the new construction might benefit from some additional thought and fine-tuning.

The variety of windows and the large rear bay add stylistic differences that were not found, nor later added, to these small and simply ornamented buildings. It will be important to make clear visually that this is not a historic house that has been added on to and altered over time. This could be achieved through simplifying the design elements and making them more consistent, especially in the variety of window styles and sizes. The interior layout should not dictate the significant architectural features visible from the outside at the expense of achieving a harmonious relationship with the row. Reducing the scale of the rear bay either in height, to one story, or in width would allow for more of the building to read from the rear, which is unusually visible in this alley context. At one story, the rear bay would not be visible behind the existing brick garden walls. If narrower, the bay would no longer overwhelm the rear elevation. The scale of these buildings means that a difference of even two feet in width makes a significant difference in the proportions across the elevation. Simplifying the design of this rear bay overall would also be more appropriate to the style and history of these alley dwellings. Additionally, the use of Azek at the cornice should be re-explored as it is emulating a wooden cornice which we know would not have existed on the building that once stood in this location.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends the Board find the project to be compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District, conditioned on (1) the window styles and sizes being made more consistent, (2) removal of the Azek cornice, and (3) reducing the size of the rear bay. It is recommended that final approval be delegated to staff. Approval by the HPRB should not be construed as support for any necessary zoning relief.

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