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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	609-611 Maryland Avenue, NE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	November 20, 2014	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	15-153	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Sarah VanLandingham	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Applicant Morningstar Community Development requests concept review for exterior alterations to a church at 609 Maryland Avenue NE in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

This prominently sited church, fronting on Stanton Square, was built in 1891 for a Presbyterian congregation. It is clad in Potomac Bluestone and features an array of stained glass windows in various sizes and designs. It is unknown whether the existing windows are original to the building or were added later. The building has been most recently the home of the Imani Temple congregation.

Proposal

The project involves the conversion of the church into a multi-unit condominium; an adjacent rowhouse at 611 Maryland Avenue would also be renovated for residential use. Before developing the project further with more complete architectural plans, the applicant seeks the Board's opinion on whether some of the stained glass within the existing windows can be replaced with clear vision glass. The applicant has been in contact with Cumberland Stained Glass, a restoration company familiar with these types of conversions, about undertaking the project. The submission includes a window schedule that shows the proposed before and after images of each window type.

Evaluation

The windows meet the historic preservation regulations' definition of "special windows" and are an important character-defining feature of the building (Section 2301.3).¹ In reviewing the proposal the Board must consider whether any alteration to special windows is appropriate and, if so, whether it can be carried out in a manner that is consistent with the preservation guidelines and allows the windows to retain their historic character.

Two recent cases regarding stained glass windows, both involving churches on Capitol Hill, are relevant to the Board's consideration. In 2012, the Board considered a proposal by the World Mission Society Church of God (700 A Street NE, HPA #12-263) to remove all of the church's 28 stained glass windows and replace them with wood windows with clear glass. The Board

determined the proposal to be inconsistent with the preservation act and with its window standards; following the Board's determination, the case went to the Mayor's Agent, who denied the permit. In May 2014, the Board approved window restoration and selective removal of stained glass at the Way of the Cross Church of Christ (819 D Street NE, #14-180). In contrast to the World Mission case, the Way of the Cross proposal called for the retention of the windows' design and pane configuration and called for only selective removal and replacement of glass. The Board determined that the proposal would largely preserve the historic appearance of the windows and the building overall while adapting it to residential use.

The applicant's proposal has been developed with knowledge of these cases, and seeks to follow the direction of the Way of the Cross project. However, unlike that case, the extent of replacement proposed in the applicant's submission is much greater and will result in the loss of substantial portions of the original glass. In the Way of the Cross project, the replacement glass was secondary and allowed the colored glass to remain the dominant feature. In the present proposal, the majority of stained glass is proposed for removal and the clear glass becomes the primary focus. While there is likely some room for selective replacement, it should be substantially less than is currently proposed. The applicant should reexamine the windows and reduce the total amount of glass to be converted.

Without knowing how the units will be oriented and where any new floors will be, it is difficult to know where vision glass will be most useful. The size of the larger windows makes it unlikely that vision glass will be at eye-level in both the upper and lower portions but floor plans will help to make this clearer.

This is an initial review and is intended as a guide for further developing the project. The applicant has been made aware that further review of the project will likely be necessary.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept of some selective replacement of stained glass with vision glass to be consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and direct the applicant to restudy the extent of removal to reduce the total amount of glass to be replaced.

Should the board find that some specific selective replacement is appropriate, a sample of a restored window with retained stained glass and new clear glass should be undertaken to determine that the overall visual effect is compatible in retaining the original design qualities. The project should return to the Board for further review when ready.

¹ Special windows are defined as "a special architectural effect, or is a custom design, not typically found in a manufacturer's catalogue. These windows may or may not be repetitive, and usually involved one or more of the following attributes:

- (a) Non-rectilinear frame or sash;
- (b) Transom or side light configuration;
- (c) Multi-pane configuration with twelve or more panes in a single sash;
- (d) Curved glass
- (e) Stained, leaded, or artistically crafted glazing;
- (f) Decorated, carved, or embellished sash, frame, or surround; or
- (g) Projecting bay or oriel."