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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	620 C Street, SE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
ANC:	6B	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Meeting Date:	March 28, 2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Case Number:	19-222	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Applicant 620 C St SE LLC seeks concept review for a proposed second story rear addition, a third story roof addition, and modifications to window and door openings on the primary elevation. The property is a contributing building in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

The subject property was built in 1882 for Richard Rothwell as a brick one-story flat-front blacksmith shop measuring 20 feet wide and 36 feet deep. The second story was added between 1904 and 1928. The building was used as home of the East Washington Ornamental Ironworks for at least 50 years by three generations of blacksmiths from the Speiden family. It is flanked on either side by matching rows constructed in the 1880s. To the west there is a larger 1890 townhouse with the primary entrance located on 6th Street and the secondary elevation on C Street. To the east is the large 1970s modern William H. Rumsey Aquatic Center. Across the street is a large 1975 commercial building set back on the lot at a diagonal.



Across the street view of the property



Adjacent properties and block context for the property

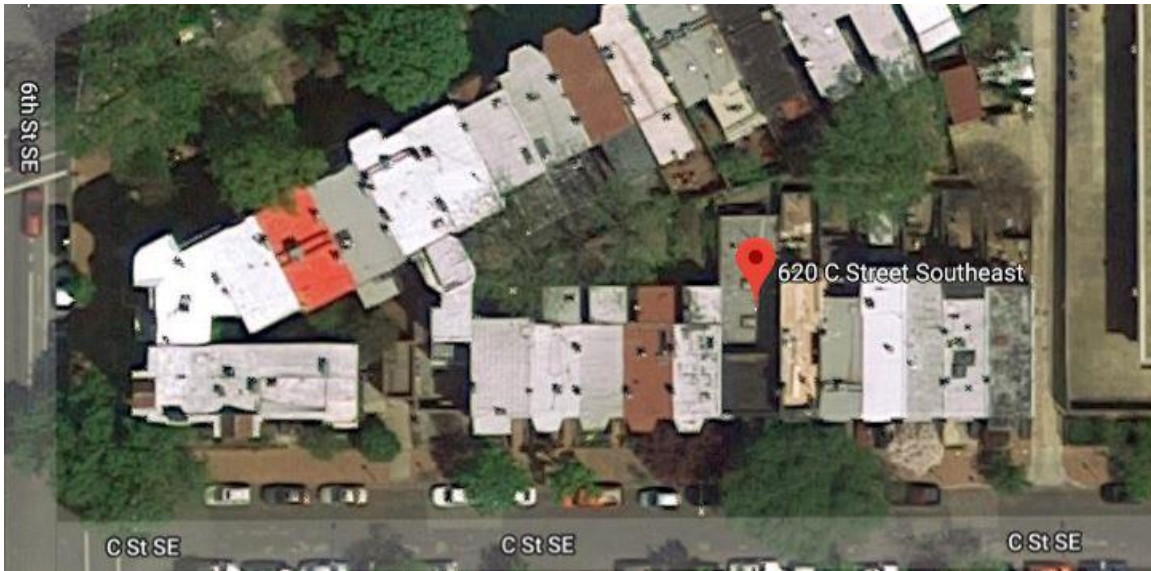
Proposal

The plans call for modifying the openings on the primary elevation to recreate the central carriage door opening of the blacksmith shop. The new central double door is based on an existing curb cut and some seams visible on the elevation that indicate that the opening may have been previously altered, although the precise extent and configuration of the openings are not clearly discernable from the brick seams. The window sill of the opening to the left of the central door would also be dropped to create a second door opening.



The existing curb cut and an example of alteration to the brick on the facade

A second story rear addition is proposed over a portion of the existing one-story rear, and a third story mansard-style addition is been proposed on the roof. Zoning lot occupancy restrictions preclude the second floor and third story addition from being pushed further back on the existing one-story wing. As proposed, the second story and third story rear additions would extend just past the adjoining neighbor at 622 C Street SE (to the maximum allowable 60% coverage) and the existing first story would continue to be the deepest on the block. The third story addition would bring the roofline of 620 to be taller than the adjacent buildings on either side.



Google aerial view with 620 C Street SE marked by red dot

Evaluation

While the precise width of the central first floor opening is not entirely evident, it is clear that this portion of the façade has been altered and the proposed recreated opening is consistent in size with a late 19th century carriage house opening. The proposed window and door replacements are compatible in design, material and overall character with the building and the historic district. Expanding the second floor with an addition is also compatible in form, height and size with the character of the building and surrounding context.

The proposed third floor addition raises the more difficult compatibility question. As stated in the Board's guidelines, adding vertically to a historic building is generally discouraged as such additions typically alter significant features, such as its roof line, height, relationship with surrounding buildings, and overall form and mass. Accordingly, the Board has typically required that additions on top of a building be not visible from street view, not result in the removal or alteration of important character-defining features of the building or streetscape, and approved only if compatible with their context. Under most circumstances, roof additions that are visible from a public street are discouraged, as they would alter an historic building's height, mass, design composition, cornice line, roof, and its relationship to surrounding buildings and streetscape – all of which are important character-defining features that are protected for historic property.

In rare cases, a visible roof addition may be found acceptable if it does not fundamentally alter the character of the building and is sufficiently designed to be compatible with the building. The Board has most typically approved these exceptions when the building is not part of a consistent row or is in some way anomalous. Industrial buildings, service and alley buildings, and buildings of a minimal architectural or historic character have been the types of resources where the Board has sometimes found visible roof additions to be compatible.

As a modest commercial building that has been substantively altered and expanded over time, the subject building could be found to fall into the category of historic property that might lend itself to a visible roof addition. However, if the Board is inclined to support this approach, several refinements to the concept would improve its compatibility with the building and the street. Currently, the building is the smallest and shortest in the block; its diminutive size is part of what identifies it as something other than a rowhouse. The proposed roof addition would result in it becoming the tallest of the historic buildings fronting this section of C Street. Lowering the height of the third floor and reducing the number of windows to two rather than three would reduce the size and scale of the proposed third floor to be more in character with the existing building. The detailing of the dormers should also be developed in a manner that makes it clear that this is a contemporary rather than an historic feature.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the alterations to the first-floor openings and the proposed second floor to be compatible with the character of the building, and seeks the Board's direction on the compatibility of the proposed third floor. If the third floor is found compatible in concept, it is recommended that the height and number of windows reduced, and the detailing further developed, with final approval delegated to staff.

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