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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	716-718 L Street, SE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
Meeting Date:	November 16, 2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Case Number:	17-658	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
		<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Owner, Calle Ocho LLC and Alain Gaunouz, with plans prepared by architect Jay Jamshasb, seeks concept review to construct rear and rooftop additions and replace storefronts in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

716 and 718 are two semi-detached three-story buildings built in 1925. The buildings have been combined into one lot. The brick coursing at the exteriors is continuous across the two facades, However, originally the floor heights did not align and their height difference is reflected in the jogged roofline. A photograph from 1949 shows projecting glass storefronts at the ground floor. The storefronts have since been removed, the openings enlarged, and filled with modern metal storefronts. The original ground floor fenestration pattern of single-leaf door, storefront window, single-leaf door, remains. Currently the front elevation has a mixture of one-over-one and six-over-six double-hung replacement windows. Historically, the building had six-over-one double-hung wood windows.



Figure 1: L Street SE between 7th and 8th Streets. September 18, 1949, John P. Wymer Photograph Collection (provided by the Capitol Hill Restoration Society)

The rear elevations can be seen from Virginia Avenue. The original window and door openings remain intact, although most of the windows have been removed. Each building features a dog-leg extension.



Figure 2 view of rear facade from Virginia Avenue SE from Google Earth



Figure 3: HPO staff photo October 2017

The east elevation is parged with cement and is unfenestrated. Directly west of the buildings is a row of bay-fronted brick rowhouses. East of the buildings is a driveway and a one-story beer garden with outside seating. Across from the buildings is the Navy Yard Car Barn, commonly known as the “Blue Castle”.

Proposal

The plans call for construction of an addition at the rear and side. At the rear, the addition would extend 44' 8" from the existing back of the building toward the rear property line. At the side, the addition would extend west 5' 6" beyond the existing footprint; it would be set back 27' 8" from the front façade and visible from L Street. The rear addition would be clad in brick and feature paired six-over-six double-hung windows at the second and third floors on the rear elevation. No fenestration is proposed at the first floor.

The plans also show construction of a one-story rooftop addition set back 10 feet from the front elevation and aligning with the rear elevation of the proposed rear addition. A mechanical penthouse would be constructed on top of the roof addition set back approximately 38' from the front of the building and 32' from the rear. Both the rooftop addition and the penthouse would be clad in metal siding. The east elevation at the rooftop addition would be clad in brick.

The proposal also includes altering the existing storefront to create one large storefront window opening and one single-leaf door at the base of each building. The storefront display windows would project and feature hipped roofs and brick clad bases. The upper floor windows would be six-over-six double-hung windows flanked by one-over-one double-hung windows. It is unclear if the applicant intends to replace the windows or maintain the existing.

Evaluation

For additions, proposed work should be evaluated both for compatibility with the affected building and for its effect on the historic district. Historic properties may merit different levels of treatment or attention depending on their relative historic and architectural significance, as well as their respective building types. In this case, the simple, unadorned nature of 716-718 L Street, along with its massing, scale, and width, may lend itself to more significant contemporary treatments than compared to that of a row house. The original mixed-use of 716 and 718 as retail and residential buildings is reflective of this area of Capitol Hill, which historically balanced the needs of the Navy Yard to the south and residential rowhouse community to the north.

716 and 718 are free-standing, making it challenging to add on to them in a way that would not be seen from a public thoroughfare. The proposed additions will be seen from a substantial distance, and the simply designed brick elevation with regular spaced rectangular double-hung windows will be similar to the existing rear elevation and will have minimal visual impact. The proposed rooftop additions will be prominently visible over the secondary east elevation, however cladding the additions in metal in lieu of brick will help differentiate the new additions from the historic structure and leave a visual memory of the building's historic height. As drawn, the rooftop addition would be visible from L Street.

HPO recommends that the rooftop addition be set back more from the primary elevation on L Street so that it cannot be seen over the primary facade. The buildings, although simplistic in design, do have a quirky symmetry. Setting the side addition back from the primary façade helps to maintain this symmetry. However, HPO recommends that it be set back farther to align with the point of the new construction at the rear. Setting the side addition farther back will help maintain the sense of the building's historic width.

Less of a concern are the alterations to the storefront, as the existing storefronts and their openings have already been altered. However, the design needs refinement and revision in order to be compatible with character of the historic district. The height of the storefronts should be lowered and include transoms above, the relationship of the storefronts to the doors, directly abutting without any masonry between, is awkward, and the roofs should be made essentially flat.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the general concept for rear and roof additions to be compatible with the character of the historic district, with the following conditions:

- 1. The rooftop addition should be pulled back from the front elevation a minimum of 20 feet to ensure that it is not visible from directly in front of the building on L Street;*
- 2. The roof top addition's east elevation should be clad in metal to better differentiate the addition from the volume of the historic building;*
- 3. The west side addition should be pulled back so that it aligns with the back of the existing building;*
- 4. The design of the new storefront should be revised as described above;*
- 5. The replacement windows at the primary elevation should replicate the historic six-over-one window configuration; and*
- 6. Final approval delegated to staff.*

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