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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>716-718 L Street SE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
ANC:	<b>6B</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Meeting Date:	<b>December 5, 2019</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Case Number:	<b>20-037</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Applicant 716 L St SE LLC, with plans prepared by architect Charles Warren of Teass Warren Architects, seeks concept review for rear and roof additions to two three-story buildings in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

**Property Description**

716 and 718 were built in 1925 as two semi-detached three-story buildings. The brick coursing at the front elevations is continuous, but the window and door openings as well as the roofline are stepped up from 716 to 718 in response to the site's topography. A 1949 photograph shows angled projecting glass storefronts on brick bulkheads and flat roofs at the ground floor. The storefronts have since been removed, the openings enlarged, and the openings infilled with modern metal storefronts. The original ground floor fenestration pattern of single-leaf door, storefront, and 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 and four-over-one double-hung wood windows.



*Front elevations of 716-718 L Street SE*



*L Street SE between 7th and 8th Streets. September 18, 1949, John P. Wymer Photograph Collection*

The north (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. The west elevation is brick. The east elevation is parged and unfenestrated.



*East elevation and rear of buildings from Virginia Avenue*

### **Previous Review**

In 2017, the Board reviewed a project for this property, proposed by a different owner and architect, that called for a fourth floor and rear addition. While the plans were very preliminary, the Board found that a fourth floor set back 20 feet from the front façade of the building could be compatible but asked that the plans be further developed. The project did not progress much further and the property was subsequently sold.

## **Proposal**

On the front elevation, projecting storefronts would be installed at the first floor and replacement doors and six-over-one windows would be installed in the existing openings. A canopy would be over the easternmost door, designating the main entry.

The rear addition would extend about 30.5 feet back from the rear doglegs. The proposed fourth story roof addition would be set back 12.5 feet from the face of the buildings and be 56.5 feet deep with a green roof installed in the setback area. The fourth story would be almost eleven feet tall with additional railings and parapet walls to enclose roof decks and green roofs. A penthouse addition atop the fourth floor would be set back 15 feet from the front of the fourth story and measure 30 feet wide and 34.5 feet deep with a height of about 10.5 feet. On top of the penthouse would be an additional three-foot-tall mechanical penthouse set back nine feet from the front of the penthouse.

The rear addition would be clad in metal panels approximating the color of the existing brick buildings. There would be two-over-two lite single and paired windows on the west and north elevations. The fourth story would be clad in gray metal panels. On the front elevation would be two large 16-lite windows in addition to another vertical band of four lites next to a door and transom for roof deck access. The west elevation would have another large 16-lite window and two-over-two single and paired windows on the west and north elevations. A four-story vertical band of large 12-lite windows would be the second bay back on the west elevation and the easternmost bay on the north elevation. The penthouse additions would be clad in dark gray metal panels. On the western side of the front elevation would be a large 16-lite window. On the eastern side of the front elevation would be a door and transom as well as a one-over-one window. On the west elevation there would be two large 8-lite windows and a vertical band of 4 lites. The north elevation is angled back and has a large 16-lite window as well as a large 8-lite window. There is also a 4-lite window and door with transom proposed for the east elevation. A green roof is proposed for the penthouse roof. The mechanical penthouse is clad in the same dark gray metal panels.

## **Evaluation**

The proposed additions overwhelm the historic buildings. The three rooftop additions will be highly visible on all sides. The rear and rooftop additions are in excess of the massing previously conceptually approved with numerous conditions under HPA 17-658. While this proposal meets most of the conditions of that concept approval, it does not meet the required minimum 20-foot setback from the front elevation. In the previous concept, the penthouse was less than half the size currently proposed and did not additionally include another mechanical penthouse on top. This proposal has brought the fourth story forward, increased the size of the penthouse, and added another mechanical penthouse- all in contradiction to the visibility concerns raised by the Board in the previous review.

Additionally, railings are not shown around the perimeter of the existing building's roofline, but a door is depicted leading out to the green roof. Presumably, code will require that 42" railings be installed if this area is to be accessed. It is not known if some type of railing will also be required for all green roof areas. The additions may have their heights visually increased with these additional railings if required. This impact is already seen at the railings on top of the fourth story.

While glazing can sometimes help to lighten the perceived mass of rooftop additions, in this case, the scale of the large multi-lite windows dwarfs the windows of the historic buildings and create such large openings that the additions sit heavy on top of the historic buildings. Their design draws from the industrial history of the nearby Navy Yard, but would benefit from additional refinement, including decreasing the size of individual panes and lightening the color of the window trim and mullions. Lightening and warming the color(s) of the rooftop additions may also help them to feel less stark.

Of less concern, but still of note, is the front yard. The fencing clearly obstructs what would have historically been operable doors with sidewalk access and does not reflect these as previously individual buildings nor as symmetrical ones. There are not residential buildings with full front yard fencing along this streetscape nor do they have the extent of greenspace shown in the renderings submitted. Adding greenspace to this front yard is in keeping with previous projects where a commercial building is adapted to residential use, but projecting storefronts should not sit directly on planting areas. Reconfiguring the planting and fencing would be more appropriate for the buildings and their context.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends the Board find the project to be incompatible with the Capitol Hill historic district; and that the applicant revises the drawings to meet the massing and conditions of the previous concept approval, in addition to the staff recommendations above; and return to the Board for further review.*

*Staff contact: Moira Nadal*