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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1216 D Street, SE (rear)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	December 16, 2010	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	11-074	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Amanda Molson	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Owners Carl and Undine Nash, with drawings prepared by Jane Nelson of Nelson Architects, request conceptual approval for alterations to an alley warehouse structure at the rear of 1216 D Street, SE in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

The alley structure behind 1216 D Street, SE was constructed in 1920 by owners L.P. and G.T. Stewart, who also served as the architects and builders for the project. The footprint of the building appears on the 1927-1928 Sanborn insurance map, showing the center pavilion's peaked roof and the flanking garages extending along the east and west walls. The garages to the west have since been demolished, with an open yard surrounded by a chain link fence remaining. The remaining garage bays to the east are set back from the alley slightly.

The building has suffered considerably over the years. A portion of the roof collapsed in the snowstorm earlier this year, and a previous fire caused visible damage to the roof structure of the northern-most garage bays. Various maintenance attempts have added cinderblock, corrugated metal, and plywood to the face of the building, and an awkward junction of the garage roof and the center pavilion's roof has created drainage problems. The rear, south-facing wall has suffered structural weakening.

Despite the damage that the building has sustained and years of haphazard attempts to protect the building from the elements, it retains key character-defining features that merit preservation. The basic mass of the building remains unchanged, other than the loss of the garage bays to the west. Most notable is the center arcade roofline, which features clerestory windows behind the north-facing parapet walls. The unpretentious, "industrial" style of the building stands in contrast to the surrounding, refined residential structures and still evidences the simplicity of form common to alley warehouses from this period.

Proposal

The new owners of the building wish to convert it to residential use, and they have obtained the needed relief from the Board of Zoning Adjustment. They plan to use the renovated building as their residence and to include an additional living unit and garage parking within the space.

The work would be mostly restorative in nature, including reconstruction of the damaged south wall with salvaged bricks, gutter replacement, roof replacement, and interior work to include repair of the concrete slab, insulation, and the build-out of new interior rooms. Corrugated metal panels would be used on the north elevation, continuing the existing material.

Proposed exterior changes include the addition of new windows along the west wall, facing into the open yard, moving the brick piers of the garage bays towards the alley to absorb the unused space alongside this elevation, the replacement of one garage door with a new metal gate to serve as the building's entrance, and the installation of inoperable panels in place of operable garage doors. Because the interior space will rely heavily on the clerestory windows for light infiltration, and because the roof must be insulated and the drainage issues solved, a modest alteration to the roofline is proposed. The slope of the garage bays, which currently drain from east to west, would be changed to follow the slope of the center pavilion's roofline in order to avoid pooling water. The lower ridge of the center pavilion's roof includes a parapet wall along the north elevation, and the roof behind the parapet would be raised slightly to allow these two points to meet and a gutter to be installed. Maintaining the existing slope and general proportions, the center pavilion's roofline would be raised by approximately 12" to accommodate replacement clerestory windows and to provide additional room for insulation in the roof.

Evaluation

Just as the historic preservation law seeks to retain and enhance buildings that contribute to the character of historic districts, it also encourages their adaptation for current use. This structure has suffered substantially from neglect and nature over the years, and the rehabilitation needs are many. The applicants should be commended for embarking on the needed renovation and for returning the building to service.

The proposed exterior changes are compatible with the existing building's form, overall design, and materials. The plan includes minor changes to the roofline in order for the building to be occupied as a residence rather than used for storage, and the proposed fenestration of new panels that replicate garage doors and simple, punched window openings is consistent with the historic character of the building. Absorbing the small setback between the alley and the garage bays on the east wall is a negligible change and one that is logical if the space is no longer to be used for parking cars that require a turning radius in the alley.

The applicants should work with the staff on two as-yet unaddressed aspects of the plan: fencing around the open side yard and their interest in installing a solar array on the roof of the building. A "residential" pressure-treated wood fence would seem out-of-place abutting an industrial alley structure. This may be an opportunity for a brick wall, which would suggest the height and materials of the missing garage bays but without the internal volume. Alternatively, an open metal fence, or metal interspersed with brick sections, may be appropriate. If solar panels are to be used, they should be as unobtrusive as possible and should be flush-mounted to the roof. The building's peaked roof form is a key character-defining feature, and it should not be interrupted by a vertical display of solar panels.

If the applicants wish to bring in additional light and airflow, particularly to the separate unit that does not benefit from the new wall of windows on the west elevation, they may wish to consider the use of several flush-mounted skylights in the roof of the garage bays. The skylights could be operable to allow fresh air to circulate. They may also want to explore the use of glass block, in moderation, at points along the east and south walls, which would allow light into the space while still providing security and privacy. Glass block's industrial character and popularity during the early years of this building's existence would make it an appropriate material choice. These are merely possibilities and within their discretion to implement if desired.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff.