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

Property Address:	57 N Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Chapman Coal Company Stable and Garage		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	May 28, 2015	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	15-306		Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Kim Williams	X	New Construction
		X	Demolition

Contract purchaser John Sunter, with the architecture firm, Studio 27 Architecture, seeks conceptual design review for the renovation of and addition to the Chapman Stable and Garage building for conversion into a 110-unit apartment building. The project calls for combining two lots, one of which holds the landmark building, the other one of which is vacant and not part of the designated site. The proposal includes a roof addition to the landmark and new construction at the rear. The new construction—technically an addition connected to the historic building by a stair hyphen—is a five-story structure significantly larger than the landmark, but appropriately separated from it by a sizeable courtyard.

Background History

The Chapman Coal Company Stable and Garage is an important surviving building in what was a bustling light industrial complex established in the early 20th century. The site evolved over the decades from a coal office and coal yard with stables at the rear to a public garage at the front and manufacturing facilities at the rear. The surviving building at 57 N Street, built in 1912 and incorporating a 1908 stable building into it, was constructed as a garage with parking for 75 cars on the ground level and service repair facilities at the second story. The long, two-story brick garage, located mid-block on N Street with rowhouses to either side, is characterized by its round-arched windows on the second floor, its broad projecting cornice, and its elevator tower rising above the roofline. Although not visible from the exterior, the building features three monitor roofs set back 35 feet from the façade that historically flooded the auto repair space with necessary natural light. The former garage/stable building retains good overall integrity, although many of its historic window and door openings have been filled in and, and in the case of the horse stall openings, parged over.

Proposed Project

Renovation: The proposed renovation of the existing stable and garage building involves a significant level of alteration, both to return the building to its historic appearance, and to introduce new and larger openings. The work includes removing the paint and re-pointing the brickwork, repairing the tin cornice, and replacing windows. The project proposes to replace all of the existing 2/2 windows at the second story with windows of similar profile and material, and to remove masonry infills and re-introduce openings on the first story that are appropriate to the 1912 building façade. The project also proposes the introduction of all new

openings at the rear (courtyard) side. As proposed, these new openings will enlarge existing openings on the second floor, and will create large openings on the first floor by combining what had been smaller horse stall windows.

The project will restore lost elements of the 1908 stable façade, including the carriage entry and hayloft door with block and tackle, and will re-build the stable roof. The proposal also calls for removal of the iron stair and an iron door canopy and stoop on the N Street façade due to their deteriorated condition.

Roof Addition: The project proposes a one-story + loft addition on the roof of the landmark building. The addition is set back 15-feet from the façade and extends essentially the full length of the building, with a setback on the east alley end. The addition is one-story high at the front and rear elevations, but rises a full two stories at the location of the present monitor roofs for an interior loft. Although it is not noted in the drawings, it appears that this roof top addition will have walls of cement plaster finish (Dryvit).

New Construction: The new construction is an L-shaped, five-story building set back 40-feet from the historic landmark and creating a spacious courtyard between. The east wing of the L-shaped building, set back 17' 4" from the landmark, is connected to the historic building by a five-story stair tower. The new construction is cast in place concrete up to the first floor, with wood platform framing up to the roof. The walls, like those of the roof-top addition, appear to be of cement plaster finish.

Evaluation

The concept of constructing an addition that is larger than the historic building but that appears as a separate building is an approach that is recognized in the Board's Guidelines for Additions to Historic Property:

"While an addition generally should be subordinate to the historic building to which it is being attached, an exception to this principle may be made if the addition can be convincingly designed to appear as a separate building, behind, to the side, or adjacent to the historic property. In these cases, the addition should appear as separate and the appropriate new construction standards applied. As with any new construction, this approach requires that the "new building" be compatible with its context."

In this case, the new construction is architecturally distinct from the historic landmark, is set well back from it, and provides a sizeable and appropriate courtyard between. This courtyard recalls the historic use of the site where an interior courtyard framed by buildings was used for coal storage, horse enclosure, and, later, vehicular parking. Although the proposed new building is significantly larger than other buildings in its physical context (mainly row houses and low-scale industrial buildings), its alley presence and opportunity to enliven the former bustling alleyway, are appropriate to the historic industrial/commercial character of the site.

Similarly, the concept of renovating an historic garage and stable building and converting it to new use is consistent with the preservation law. However, while the proposed renovation will

return the N Street façade to a more historic appearance, the level of demolition and alteration to the building is not consistent with the Guidelines. In particular, the proposed roof addition alters the original massing of the historic building, rises well above the general roofline of the street, is not appropriately recessed, is prominently visible from the street, and alters the appearance of the character-defining elevator tower and removes the historic roof monitors.

In addition, the removal of the iron stair and canopy is not consistent with the Guidelines which call for minimizing the removal of historic features and fabric. In order for the removal of historic features to be approved, the applicants will need to provide proof of irreparable condition. There is some evidence that the entrance canopy may not be original in which case an argument could be made for its removal or replacement.

In the case of new window and door openings, the proposed new openings on the first floor of the N Street façade are being introduced at the location of historic ones, and are consistent with the industrial character of the building.

In terms of window replacement, it is always preferable to repair rather than replace historic windows. However, based on a window survey conducted by the applicants, there is only one historic window still in place and fully intact on the building, and it is beyond repair. It would therefore be appropriate to replace the windows with new windows designed to match the historic ones in appearance. The applicants should develop new window specifications based on the measurements of the existing openings and remaining window and trim.

Although the introduction of new openings on the courtyard elevation involves significant removal of the historic wall, this wall is in poor condition and the historic windows no longer apparent. Most of the historic horse stall windows have been infilled and the wall and former openings are parged over with concrete. The introduction of new openings retains a symmetrical rhythm of windows within the brick buttresses, and is not out of character with the building. Given the secondary nature of the elevation and its existing condition, the opportunity to alter openings should be given flexibility.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve the project in concept with the following conditions:

- *The roof addition should be removed entirely, or be set back no less than 35 feet to the point of the current roof monitors, rise no more than one-story in height, and not extend the full length of the building. Any new roof addition proposal should use the footprint of the existing roof monitors as a point of reference and should not be prominently visible from N Street;*
- *The hyphen connecting the landmark and the new construction should be reduced in height to no higher than the cornice line of the historic landmark;*
- *The iron stair and canopy should be repaired and retained;*
- *Specifications for window replacement should be prepared based on existing conditions.*