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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Capitol Park Towers</b>	(X) Agenda
Address:	<b>301 G Street, SW</b>	( ) Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>October 22, 2015</b>	(X) Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>15-368</b>	(X) New Construction
		(X) Subdivision
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Steve Callcott</b>	(X) Conceptual Design

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Urban Investment Partners and Perseus Realty seek on-going conceptual review for construction of an addition, designed to appear as a separate building, on the north edge of the site at Capitol Park Towers in Square 540. Architectural plans have been prepared by WDG Architects and landscape plans prepared by Lee and Associates. EHT Traceries has prepared a revised evaluation of the new construction and landscape plan, assessing the project based on features and design characteristics identified in the landmark application against the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

### **Property Description and History**

Capitol Park Towers is a nine-story, Modernist apartment building that stands on pilotis and integrates masonry screens and brise soleil for texture and sunlight control; its long elevations are punctuated by cantilevered balconies. The site also features a freestanding parking garage with distinctive concrete barrel vaulted roofs, a pool and pool house, and works of art. The property was constructed in 1962, the second of five towers that would be built at Capitol Park, designed by Chloethiel Woodard Smith. The building is set within a Modernist landscape design by Dan Kiley characterized by geometrically arranged plantings.

### **Previous Review**

When reviewed in July, the Board found that a new building addition in the proposed location could be compatible, but that revisions were needed to achieve compatibility with the site and existing building. Among its comments, the Board found that the pool pavilion should be retained, the end wings of the new construction should be eliminated, the design and materials of the new building should be restudied, the landscape plan should be refined to more closely follow Kiley's design, the perimeter fence should ideally be eliminated or relocated and simplified, and that any glazing at the ground level should be much further set back from the building perimeter.

### **Revised Proposal**

The project has been revised as summarized on pages 11 and 13 of the applicants' submission. The first floor of the existing building would not be glazed except for a small area adjacent to the lobby; the existing parking under the building would be retained. The end wings of the new building have been eliminated, with only a small one-story wing on the west to provide an enclosed loading area. In place of the eliminated east wing of the new construction, the pool pavilion would be restored and moved slightly to the south adjacent to the reconstructed pool.

The language of the new construction has been revised to more closely relate to the existing building, with a three-part organization, a skeleton of precast concrete (previously proposed as metal), and red terra cotta and gray metal panels. Seven of the concrete barrel vaults would be reused and set within the base of the building; the vaults are no longer proposed for the south lawn facing G Street. The connection between the existing and new towers has been redesigned as a simple glass enclosure and would no longer employ the reused barrel vaults. Two options have been provided for the end walls of the tower, both of which incorporate terra cotta and metal panels: Option 1 has a dark gray precast skeleton and off white terra cotta panels; Option 2 has the same dark gray skeleton and red terra cotta panels.

The landscape plan has been revised to more closely follow the geometry of the Kiley Plan. Comparison drawings between Kiley's plan and the proposed plan are provided on pages 14, 15 and 17 of the submission.

### **Evaluation**

The revisions substantively address the concerns raised by the Board and improve the compatibility of the proposal. As the Traceries report discusses in detail, the proposal retains, in total or in part, most of the character-defining features identified in the designation application. However, as is well articulated in that evaluation, there are several areas that could be further improved as the project continues to be refined. Areas for continuing development include:

*Façade organization of new construction and relationship to the landscape:* As stated in the EHT evaluation, "Although the tripartite composition of the original building is reflected in the composition of the south façade of the new building, the larger size of the new construction stretches out the composition to the point where it does not adequately relate to the rigid order that is inherent to Kiley's landscape design. A realignment of the vertical expression of the new design, including a careful correlation of the width of the central section of the new building with that of the central section of the original building would go a long way to resolving this disconnect. ....These buildings do not have to be, nor should they be the same size or width or mirror their composition to achieve the desired relationship; they do need to be composed to create a complementary visual rhythm that supports, indeed reinforces, the historic landscape as the connecting component in an enhanced overall site design."

*Garage canopies:* The evaluation rightly concludes that the proposed design does not retain a sufficient number of canopies to evoke their existing scope and impact on the landscape, and their asymmetrical incorporation into the center section of the new building doesn't yet seem fully resolved. As the evaluation points out, "Another way to enhance the alignment [between the two buildings] would be to integrate more or all of the concrete canopies along the ground floor of the new building. The simple rhythm of the canopies' form as part of the new building's ground story would result in the elongation of the base across the site in the same manner that the canopies work as part of the garage, creating an edge to the landscape that worked in rhythm with the piloti at the original building."

*Perimeter fence:* As was discussed in the previous staff report, the front fence provides a visual barrier for the landmark and its site from its neighborhood context. If retaining a fence

is necessary for security reasons, it should be removed from the front and relocated to secure the sides and rear garden areas of the site.

*Landscape plan:* The proposed landscape plan more closely follows the two-dimensional geometry of Kiley's layout of trees. However, it calls for a number of plant substitutions and a greater variety than was originally used. Some of the substitutions have similar visual characteristics to the original species and others reflect a conscientious and entirely justifiable move away from plant species that are invasive, while others would result in a very different appearance. As neither the HPO nor the Board have strong subject expertise in the restoration and rehabilitation of historic landscapes (or of Kiley's work), HPO would like to seek an evaluation of the plans by a specialist in modernist historic landscapes to ensure that the rehabilitated landscape will retain a reasonable level of authenticity.

### **Recommendations**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the revised concept to be consistent with the purposes of the preservation act, contingent on further discussion and refinement of the façade organization of the new construction, the incorporation of the garage canopies, the perimeter fence and the landscape plan, take place in consultation with HPO as outlined above. It is recommended that final approval be delegated to HPO.*