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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>January 28, 2016</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. Landscape architect and historian Charles Birnbaum has prepared an evaluation and provided recommendations that have resulted in revisions to the landscape plan; preservation consultant EHT Tracerics has also provided an updated analysis of the project's consistency with a preservation plan that they prepared.

### **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 Reviews**

The project was first reviewed in July 2015. The Board accepted the general height, mass and location of a tower on the north edge of the site but made a number of recommendations for improving the preservation scope of work and the compatibility of the building and landscape.

In its last review in October, the Board found the revised concept design improved, but cited the need for further evaluation of the landscape plan and plant materials to ensure consistency with the Kiley plans, and the need to rethink the façade composition of the new building and its relationship with the landscape, the incorporation of the garage canopies, and the design and location of the perimeter fence. The Board also found the location of the enclosed corridor connector within the center of the rear garden to be incompatible, and that further development and clarity was needed for the design of the penthouse of the building.

### **Revised Proposal**

Building and landscape design changes include:

- revising the façade organization of the new tower into a six-part scheme to respond to the organization of both the existing building and the landscape;
- reusing seven of the arched canopy structures into the base of the new building;

- substantially reducing the size of the penthouse and centering it on the new tower;
- converting the enclosed corridor between the existing and new towers into an open covered walkway inspired by pergola-covered walks elsewhere in Capitol Park;
- refinements to the orientation and placement of the pool and pool enclosure walls to improve this area's spatial qualities;
- simplifying the design of the landscape on the G Street frontage with a more passive landscape;
- more accurately replicating the original plant species used by Kiley in the planting beds and tree bosques.

### **Evaluation**

The revisions substantively address the concerns raised by the Board and improve the compatibility of the proposal. Despite its longer elevations, the façade organization of the new tower aligns and relates compatibly to the geometries of the existing building and the organization of the landscape. The revised composition places the reused canopies centered within the center section of the landscape and are now offset and framed by glass hyphens on either side.

The conversion of the enclosed corridor to a covered garden walk is a substantial improvement; as pointed out by the Board, the previous location and enclosed design, regardless of how glassy it might be, would have severed the rear garden in two. However, as an open covered walk, it becomes a garden feature rather than an architectural extension of the buildings. The applicant's preferred solution is to locate the walk on axis with the original open breezeway under the existing building; this is the most logical location for circulation and is a compatible one now that it is treated as an open pergola element. Another scheme has been developed which locates the walkway at the east edge of the rear garden adjacent to the swimming pool terrace; while not incompatible, it seems less desirable as it would cast the pool's distinctive terra cotta perimeter wall into shadow. The use of glass for the roof of the connector, even if fritted, should be given additional thought as such a choice isn't going to project the clean sleek image shown in the renderings after the first rain.

The revisions to the landscape planting plan will more accurately replicate Kiley's original design intent. With some adjustment to the original spacing of the trees, new London Planes would be replanted to replicate the geometric bosques and a simplified palate that relies heavily on white blooming azaleas would recreate the massed planting beds that characterized the plan.

While only lightly rendered, the non-original perimeter fence appears to remain on the plans and there is no note indicating that it is to be removed. As has been outlined in previous reports, this fence is an incompatible visual barrier severing 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.

### **Recommendations**

*The HPO recommends that the Board approve the revised concept, contingent on the removal or relocation of the perimeter fencing, as compatible with the landmark and delegate final approval to staff.*