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

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Property Address:	<b>523 Cedar Street, NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Takoma Park Historic District</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>June 30, 2022</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>22-242</b>		Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Steve Callcott</b>	<b>X</b>	New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

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Applicants Rachel and Angeloe Wilson, with plans prepared by MWB Architects, seek concept review for construction of a three-story frame house on a vacant lot in the Takoma Park Historic District.

**Property History and Description**

This property is one of three lots historically associated with the house at 517 Cedar. 517 Cedar is a large Queen Anne styled house that was constructed in 1893 by H.A. Curtis, a government clerk, and was noted in a newspaper article at the time as being the first house constructed in the Grammer's Addition to the Takoma Park subdivision. The subject lot and the lot to the east of 517 (515 Cedar) were never developed or sold separately from the house lot until recently. 517 Cedar has recently been renovated and in June the HPRB gave final concept approval for construction of a two-story house at 515.

**Proposal**

The project calls for construction of a three-story brick and frame house with a full-width front porch. The house would be capped by a tall gable roof with the second-floor windows punctuating the roofline and a third-floor dormer window above. The house would have overhanging eaves and supporting brackets for the roof and porch influenced by the Arts and Crafts style. A one-story, two-car garage capped by a hipped roof would be constructed at the rear of the lot behind the house; the garage would be accessed by an existing angled drive that served 517 that would be extended to the rear of the subject property.

**Evaluation**

The general idea of the proposed house is compatible with this block and the historic district, and the façade is set roughly in the same plane as the flanking houses. The use of brick and clapboard siding, wood-trimmed openings, multi-light upper sash windows, and wood porch and bracket detailing are all compatible with the character of houses in Takoma Park.

However, additional design work is needed for the house to achieve compatibility. As the design continues to be developed, HPO recommends the following revisions:

- 1) Particularly as illustrated in the elevation drawing, the house is too tall, with the top floor reading more as a full third floor than as an attic, as is more typical of the proportion of third floors on houses in the historic district. The roof ridge should be lowered by several feet to lower the building height and reduce the overly large size of the roof.

- 2) The house also appears to sit too high on the lot, with too much of the basement level exposed and the front stairs leading up to the porch that are too long. This problem is exacerbated by the grading of the front yard and the retention of the curved driveway that formerly served 517. The house should be lowered a few feet on its site, a new drive should be cut at the eastern edge of the property, and the elevated grade restored. The new grade would allow the stairs to the front porch to be redesigned with a small series of steps at the sidewalk leading to a lead walk and a shorter and wider set of stairs to the porch.
- 3) The design could benefit from some simplification and redesign of the detailing to reduce its busy complexity. Converting the double entry door to a single door with sidelights, using a wood railing rather than metal for the front porch, thinning up or providing greater spacing for the piers supporting the porch portico, eliminating the transom windows over the second-floor windows, removing the vertical trim boards on the second floor except at the corners, and converting the third-floor dormer to a more horizontal shed dormer should all be considered.

**Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board find the concept in need of further revision as outlined above in order for it to be determined compatible with the historic district. The project should be revised and return to the Board for further review when ready.*



*Interior of outbuilding at 515 Cedar showing older wall framing and newer roof framing. The older framing elements are of different sizes, possibly indicating that they were reclaimed and reused.*



*Modern concrete floor and foundation of 515 Cedar outbuilding*



*Modern roof framing and plexiglass windows at 515 Cedar outbuilding*