

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

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Property Address:	<b>2010 13<sup>th</sup> Street N.W.</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>U Street Historic District</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>December 17, 2022</b>		Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>HP 23-092</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration

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Property owner Simon Kashi seeks concept review for construction of a basement entrance stair and areaway in the public space front yard.



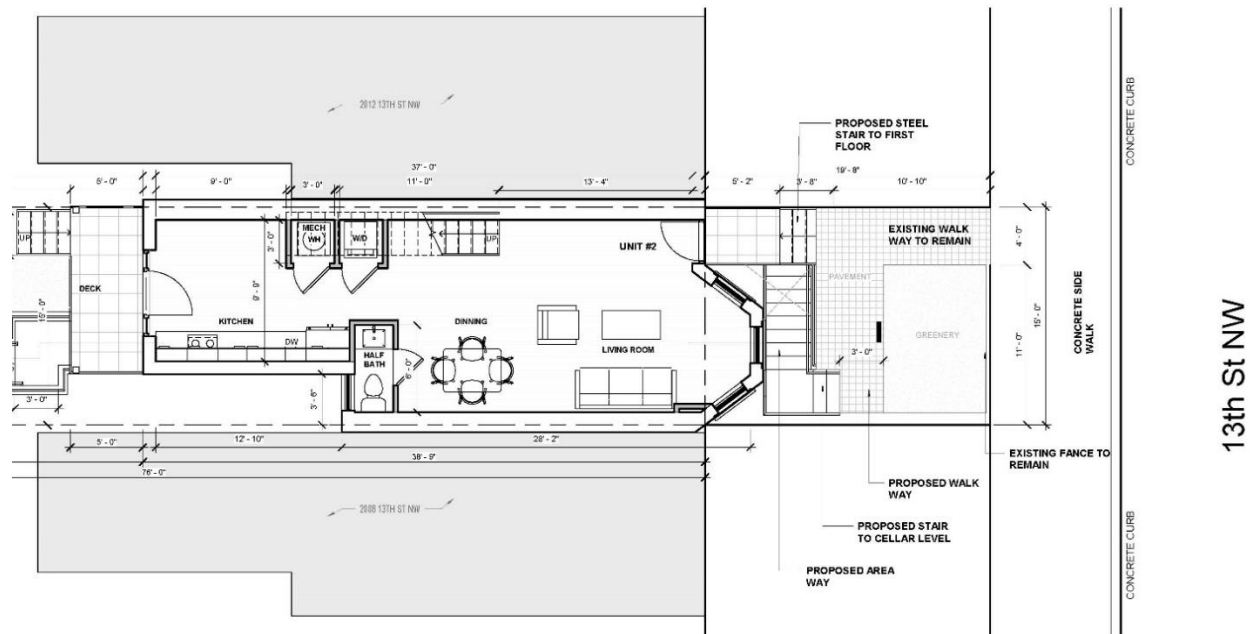
### Proposal

The property is a two-story, bay-fronted contributing brick rowhouse built in 1880 as one in a row of four identical houses. The shallow front yard is enclosed by a low fence with a low brick wall. The proposal calls for the removal of the non-original brick entry stair and installation of a new metal front stair. The areaway would require a 6' deep excavation that will project 7' the front façade and the full width of the property. Access to the basement stair would be on the other side of the projecting bay from the front door, with the stair the basement running across the front of the bay. Due to the depth of the areaway, a guardrail would be required along the length of the areaway and down the stair.

### Evaluation

Basement areaways are not uncharacteristic of the U Street Historic District. On bay-front rowhouses, basement stairs almost uniformly run parallel and under the primary stairs and share the primary walkway rather than have a separate walk. Basement stairs that are accessed from the opposite side of the house as the front door and run across the front of the bay are neither

common nor compatible. In this instance, it would result in a majority of the front yard becoming paved and the house would visually appear set within a moat rather than on the ground. While this row features a basement entrance at the end unit, it was installed prior to the historic district and looks significantly different from its neighboring contributing properties.



The applicant previously proposed an areaway stair that ran parallel to the existing walk and front stair, as is more typical in form and orientation for the historic district. However, the stair projected further out (8 feet) than is permitted by the public space regulations (7 feet) and also resulted in the need for continuous guard railings on each side of the stair due to its depth.

The Board's *Preservation and Design Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows* states "it may not be possible to provide an exterior stair on properties where the first floor is close to grade, where the building is close to the sidewalk, or where the basement stair would be exposed at eye level from the sidewalk. In such instances, the extent of excavation may alter the relationship of the building to grade, overwhelm the site, or become such a prominent element that it detracts from the property's character." Given the small size of the front yard and the first floor of this house set so close to grade, it appears that this property may not be able to compatibly achieve a front areaway stair. As an alternative, HPO would recommend consideration of a window well which would have minimal visual impact and allow emergency egress while a code-compliant entrance could be provided in the rear.

## Recommendation

*HPO recommends that the Board not approve the concept as proposed as it is not compatible with areaways in the U Street Historic District.*