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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Greater U Street Historic District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>1317 Wallach Place NW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Meeting Date:	<b>December 16, 2010</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Case Number:	<b>11-070</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Eldra D. Walker</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Property owner Marlene Magrino seeks conceptual approval for new front and rear basement entrances, areaways and stairs at 1317 Wallach Place, NW.

**Property Description**

Before inspiring Washington, DC's "Height Act" with his dizzying twelve-story apartment building, *The Cairo*, the young Thomas Franklin Schneider was known as an inventive architect and clever real estate investor. Schneider skillfully worked the architect/investor model: acquiring prime buildable lots, designing stylish properties which would sell prior to completion, and investing profits from those sales into the next real estate venture. The property in question was a product of one of his first ventures. Constructed in 1886, 1317 Wallach Place NW was one of eighteen speculatively developed two story brick dwellings on the north side of the block. Following Victorian fashion, the facades were embellished with decorative pressed brick, varied with punched window and door openings, and topped with corbelled brick and metal cornices. Full height projecting bays created a continuous massing and rhythm to the street wall, while alternating bay shapes, round, square, or canted, brought a sense of liveliness and energy.

**Proposal**

The proposal calls for creating new front and rear basement entrances, areaways and stairs. The new front stairs will project approximately 1 foot beyond the existing cast iron stair. The new basement stairs will run parallel to the historic stairs and will share the existing walkway with the main entrance. Excavation below the historic stair will create the room for the new areaway. The stairs will lead to the new basement entrance created by removing a portion of the façade below the historic stair. At the rear of the property, the new basement entrance, areaway and stairs will be created in the courtyard beside the rear ell-wing. Similar to the front alterations, below grade excavation will create the areaway and portions of the wall will be removed to accommodate the new rear basement door.

**Evaluation and Recommendation**

Despite challenges with the site and building typology, the applicant worked with the HPO to ensure the design was compatible with the Board's adopted guidelines for "Basement Entrances and Basement Windows on Historic Property." While the Schneider homes of Wallach Place are grand, they have shallow front yards and close-to-grade siting for the first floors. However, the applicant has submitted a proposal which limits the impact to the historic resources and landscaping. The new basement entrance, tucked beneath the primary entrance and stair, will be discreet and visually subordinate to the primary entrance. The proposal calls for minimal loss of historic fabric, retaining the original stair and limiting masonry removal to the area below the stair. With the greatest amount of excavation occurring beneath the existing stair, the existing topography and grade to the front yard is uninterrupted. By keeping the new stair close to the existing walkway and minimizing its projection into the yard, the proposal retains important green space and reduces unnecessary paving.

**The HPO recommends that the Board approve the proposal in concept and delegate final review to staff.**