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

Landmark/District:	The Maples/Capitol Hill Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	619 D Street, SE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	April 28, 2011	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	11-078	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Amanda Molson	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Owner The Maples DC, LLC, with drawings prepared by Cunningham Quill Architects, PLLC, requests final concept approval for the restoration and redevelopment of The Maples at 619 D Street, SE. The site is an individual landmark and is also a contributing structure to the Capitol Hill Historic District.

The Board last reviewed this project in December 2010, at which point the Board approved in concept the siting and general massing of proposed new construction and the excavation of the front lawn for an underground parking garage. The Board directed the applicants to continue design development, returning for final concept review when ready.

Property Description

The original main house and stable (which later acquired the current brick façade) were designed by William Lovering for owner William Mayne Duncanson and were built circa 1795-1796. Designed in the Georgian style, the two-story plus attic main house is five bays wide and rectangular in footprint. The gabled roof of the main house includes chimneys at the east and west ends. The front porch, which had been removed as of photographs taken in the 1940s, spanned three bays of the front façade and featured a pediment.

After a long period of vacancy, the house was used as a hospital for wounded soldiers during the War of 1812 and was purchased by Francis Scott Key in 1815. Key's ownership was followed by that of Major Augustus A. Nicholson, Quarter Master of the Marines, in 1838, and then by Senator John M. Clayton starting in 1856. Clayton, who served as Secretary of State under President Zachary Taylor, added a ballroom addition immediately to the east of the main block (later replaced during the 1930s with a new east wing) and may also have added the north wing behind the main house. Owner Emily Edson Briggs, the first woman admitted to the White House Press Room, expanded the north wing during her ownership of the property beginning in 1871, and the Briggs family subsequently sold the site to the Friendship House Association in 1936.

The Friendship House Association constructed further brick additions to the east and west of the main house during the 1930s. The 1930s expansion was designed by Washington architect

Horace Peaslee and includes the current, two-story addition extending from the main block towards the west and a two-story addition attached to the stable. Landscape alterations in recent decades have included the installation of a fenced basketball court on the east side of the front lawn and the construction of a circular ramp meeting the sidewalk on South Carolina Avenue. The Friendship House Association retained ownership of the property until 2010 and utilized the site for their social services programming.

The new owners plan to convert the property's use to accommodate approximately twenty residential units, which will be dispersed amongst the rehabilitated existing building and four new, connected structures on the site.

Project Description and Evaluation

Having received comments on the preliminary proposal from the Board, the HPO, and the community, the applicants have spent several months further developing the plans. The new construction at the site has been depicted in greater detail, a landscape plan concept has been prepared, and further exploration of the landmark building's condition has helped in planning for the restoration of this landmark structure.

The applicants have been conducting archeological investigations at the site for several months and have been consulting with the City Archeologist. A progress report is attached.

Additionally, the applicants are working with a preservation consultant to compile an updated landmark nomination for the property, a deliverable that the Board required as a condition for final approval of the new construction plans. This research, along with the archeological findings, will lead to a revised landmark nomination that more fully and accurately conveys the significance of the property as compared to the brief, older nomination currently on-file. It is expected that this revised nomination will be presented to HPO, at least in advanced draft form, along with the permit application and final construction drawings for above-grade work.

The applicants have submitted a narrative to the Board outlining their anticipated restoration plan for the landmark structure, which will include masonry repair and repointing, replacement of windows and doors, roof replacement, upgrades to MEP systems, and the reconstruction of the building's front porch. Working closely with the HPO and utilizing the extensive research that has been gathered thus far on the property's history, the applicants will include more detailed specifications for the restoration in their final construction drawings.

New Construction

Three new multi-unit rowhouses are proposed along South Carolina Avenue. Two of the houses will be sited to the west (extending roughly the width of the existing basketball court fenced enclosure), with one to the east. Detailing on the houses has been further developed since the Board's review in December. Revisions have included the addition of a mansard roof form, which will respond to the turreted bays and otherwise articulated rooflines of many houses on the block. The mansards, along with a newly proposed setback from the rear elevation of the western-most house, will provide some relief in massing as viewed from South Carolina Avenue. While the design of the new rowhouses is generally compatible with the character of the historic

district, minor adjustments would make the proportions of these comparably wide houses a bit more graceful. These refinements may include:

- utilizing double doors and a wider transom at the entry rather than a single door, and foregoing the six-panel door that lacks historic precedent
- reducing the height and width of the third-floor dormer over the entry doors of the two houses to the west so that the proportions are more consistent with the hierarchy of historic window patterns
- removing the very narrow side elevation window (facing the lawn) on the third story of the house to the west and continuing to express the angle of the front mansard as viewed from the side
- removing the portion of the cornice band that extends along the side elevation of each lawn-facing rowhouse. This may further contribute to the relative simplicity that is important in showcasing the historic structure beyond and in treating these new houses as end units of the row rather than street-facing facades.
- slightly enlarging the bases of the two lawn-facing chimneys on the east and west rowhouses. The chimneys depicted on these elevations ingeniously hide the exhaust lines coming up from the parking garage underground, which understandably requires a chimney of more substantial proportions than normal. The illusion would be more convincing through the addition of a slightly wider base at the bottom of each chimney, which would hint at the possibility of a fireplace within and also provide visual stability for such a long vertical expanse of masonry.

In the previous plans reviewed by the Board, the multi-unit structure proposed between the western-most new townhouses and the Maples itself featured a corner block with a modified hipped roof and a more contemporary side extension with a lower hipped roof. The design struggled to seamlessly blend in with a historic landmark constructed in 1795 and the planned new construction rowhouses that assume a late Victorian-era brick bayfront presence, an understandable challenge.

This structure's design has been restudied, and the result is a great improvement. It is now shown as two connected frame structures with side gabled roofs and dormer windows. Design details between the two buildings vary just slightly to break down the horizontality of the new structure. The base of both buildings, including the brick piers that support the porch columns, is shown in red brick.

It is not unusual for a frame building, particularly one that is entered slightly above-grade, to show an exposed masonry foundation at the base. However, this expanse of masonry generally does not extend alongside windows and doors. The overall effect would be more convincing by simply lowering the masonry application to just under the door threshold and by extending the wood columns down to the porch floor.

The somewhat unbalanced massing of the two structures results from the upper-story porch that is provided on the right building but not on the left. Although varying the architectural details of the two buildings is welcome, slightly narrowing the second-floor porch and removing the outer two windows would help it feel less top-heavy in comparison to its adjoining mate. The upper story dormer windows should also be changed to 1-over-1 (rather than 6-over-1) for consistency with the ground floor. Likewise, the patio doors accessing the porch should be single-lite.

Landscape

A landscape firm has joined the project team since the Board's last review, and the general landscape plan provided this month has both expanded on the information previously submitted and also addressed comments from the Board, the HPO, and the community.

As suggested, walkways across and alongside the front lawn have been much reduced in number, resulting in one main lead walk from South Carolina Avenue to the front door of the historic building, with minimal branches off the main walk to access flanking wings and new construction. A gentle slope has been reinstated for the lawn as it approaches South Carolina Avenue, with a low wall of 2' in height stopping just short of the sidewalk to allow plantings in front to soften the wall. The tree plan for the lawn leaves views open and loosely intersperses the trees along the periphery in a manner that appears more organic than planned. As the design for this stone wall is further detailed, it will important to keep it simple and to avoid any attempt to faithfully duplicate the granite walls that extend along the remainder of South Carolina Avenue, as those are of a taller height and are more ornamental than the minimalism needed for the Maples expanse.

Along D Street, the existing courtyard accessed from the sidewalk has been reduced in size, providing the opportunity to plant softscape against the building. The treatment of the existing curb cut and driveway on D Street, which currently lead to garage doors at the base of the 1938 addition, has been further detailed in these expanded plans. The curb cut will be closed and the sidewalk and curb restored to DDOT standards. The existing brick retaining wall extending along D Street will be continued, with planting in the public space behind the wall. A sunken terrace will be placed against the building face where the garage doors are presently sited, creating dedicated garden space for the lower unit. This alteration will reinstate a portion of the missing berm, close the curb cut, and establish greater continuity along the D Street streetscape. As final construction drawings are prepared, it will be important to ensure that the terraces are as shallow as possible, while still being useable, which will afford ample planting space to screen views.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff.