HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address:	**622 A Street, NE**	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	**Capitol Hill Historic District**		Consent Calendar
		X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	**December 19, 2002**	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	**03-096**		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	**Emily Paulus**		Demolition
			Subdivision

The applicant, architect Fernando Zuniga-Pflucker for owner Eric Takamura, seeks conceptual design review for alterations and an addition to a rowhouse in the Capitol Hill Historic District. The alterations would be visible from public space while the addition would not.

The house is a two-story, late-nineteenth century, brick rowhouse. A narrow drive runs along the east side of the house, providing access to the alley at the rear. The proposal calls for the construction of a two-story addition at the rear, which measures approximately 10 feet by 10 feet. The addition would be finished in brick. Fenestration would include wood, two-over-two sash windows. A bank of French doors would be located at the first floor. The staff's only recommendation for refinement on the rear addition is to eliminate the beltcourse and restudy the ornate patio railing, in an effort to simplify the detailing.

On the main block, the proposal calls for the insertion of stairs and a small areaway at the front of the projecting bay, leading down to the relocated gas and electric meter boxes. In addition, the sills at the basement bay windows would be dropped to provide additional light into the basement apartment. The perimeter of the areaway would be bound by an iron fence. The proposal also calls for the insertion of a balcony within a recessed portion of the side elevation. To accommodate doors that would provide access to the balcony, the sills of the existing windows would be dropped and the openings converted to doors, while the first floor openings would remain intact. Stairs, a door, and two windows would be located at the basement level within the recessed portion. The existing vertical wood fence would be replaced with a metal gate. Also along the side elevation, four small windows would be located at the basement level. Finally, the existing six-over-six windows on the side elevation would be replaced with two-over-two wood windows.

While the rear addition is generally well-conceived, the most problematic aspect is in the creation of the stairs and areaway at the front façade. The insertion of the stair appears to be solely to provide access to the relocated utility boxes. Moreover, the addition of the railing along the perimeter of the areaway only calls attention to the stair. Staff would encourage the applicant to find a less invasive alternative, particularly as utility boxes are almost always relegated to secondary or rear elevations. The Board does, in some cases,

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Exhibit No. 10

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
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approve the creation of window wells at primary elevations, where the depth is minimal and where the change is virtually indistinguishable from the street. The applicant may want to explore the possibility of inserting a shallow window well and dropping the sills of the basement windows, to provide additional light to the basement apartment. In order to have minimal impact on public space, the window well should not have exterior stairs or doors opening to them, and should be limited to no more than three feet in depth or width.

The proposed new railings and gate also require further study, as they appear rather ornate, particularly for secondary and rear elevations. Finally, staff would urge caution in the creation of the basement apartment, as the side wall of the building (fronting the alley) will be particularly vulnerable during excavation and underpinning.

The staff recommends that the Review Board approve the project in concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act, direct the applicant to work on design development as outlined above, and delegate final approval to staff.