



CAPITOL HILL HOUSE & GARDEN TOUR

October 7, 2015

Anthony Hood, Chair
District of Columbia Zoning Commission
Suite 210
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Case No. 15-07, 315 H Street, NE

Dear Chair Hood and Members of the Commission:

Below you will find the comments of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS) regarding this case. CHRS is interested in this case because a portion of the property is across the alley from and visible to the Capitol Hill Historic District. Unfortunately, for the set down hearing, neither the applicant nor the Office of Planning called this to your attention. Had you know this, you may have made additional or different comments. Unfortunately, neither the Office of Planning's Final Report nor the applicant's supplemental materials sufficiently address the project's impact on the Historic District. CHRS finds three difficulties with the project:

1. The building is too tall
2. The materials and the windows on the sides of the building are incompatible with H Street and are visible from the Historic District, and
3. The flexibility requested for the number of units is too great.

1. Too Tall

This 8 story building will be two stories taller than any building on that block of H Street. The photographs of the neighborhood in the applicants supplemental materials dated September 18 show that the new building across H Street is only 6 stories. There is no picture of the building under construction on the SE corner of the 3d and H intersection, but it is only 6 stories. Landmark Lofts is only 5 stories at the intersection as is the Station House project. The neighborhood to the south is occupied by two and three story row houses both within and without the Historic district. The whole neighborhood includes the residential, the 8 story building will truly tower over the residential and the building is incompatible with the whole neighborhood.

2. Poor Choice of Materials and Windows

On the east and west sides of the building the applicant has chosen to use a grey fiber cement panels on the walls. He has also proposes windows that are long and narrow. The sides are visible from the Historic District and H Street and are

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incompatible with the brick that is ordinarily used in the area. The narrow and fake windows are also incompatible. CHRS believes that the sides should have materials and windows more compatible with the neighborhood. Copying the pattern and colors from the front and the back of the building is preferred. In theory, buildings could be built to abut the subject but the applicant controls the height of the building to the west and the property to east is too small for a substantial development. The sides will be visible for the foreseeable future and the materials and windows must be change. The sides can easily look much better.

3. Thirty Unit Flexibility

The applicant has asked for the ability to build between 105 and 135 units. This 30 unit flexibility is not a minor change but represents a 28.6% increase over 105 units. The plans filed in the supplemental materials show a building with 115 units. Of those units, 20 are two bedroom and 5 are one bedroom with den. The rest are studios and one bedroom. With the additional flexibility, the applicant can make all the two bedroom units into one bedroom units. This will then provide 130 units as studio or one bedroom and 5 units as one bedroom with den. This can make this building not a family or elder friendly building. The applicant should be given flexibility of 105 to 115 units and not more.

For these reason, we urge the Commission not approve the application until these difficulties are addressed.

Respectfully,



Gary M. Peterson, Chair
Capitol Hill Restoration Society
Zoning Committee