



Catherine E. Pugh
Mayor

**COMMISSION FOR
HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL
PRESERVATION**

Tom Liebel, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

July 10, 2018

REQUEST: Final Concept Review Design Elevations

ADDRESS: 509 South Washington Street (Fells Point Historic District)

RECOMMENDATION: CHAP staff recommends Concept Approval with the applicant returning to the Staff with a Final revised proposal that addresses the following:

- 1) A parallel reduction in the visibility of the 5th floor along South Washington Street by either increasing visible 4th floor and/or raising the parapet cornice edge.
- 2) Setback top stair/elevator towers from north elevation

STAFF: Walter Edward Leon

PETITIONER: Justin Seto

SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

The site is located on the southeast edge of the Fells Point Historic District. Fells Point is significant as one of the original three settlements that merged to form the beginnings of Baltimore City. The area is directly linked to early maritime trade, which was to Baltimore's growth and development. Besides the significance of Fells Point in the eighteenth century, the community has been a constantly growing and changing urban place. Many of the earliest houses were added on to in the Victorian era creating a unique blend of pre-Revolutionary War and post-Civil War architectural styles and characteristics. Fells Point has been a diverse neighborhood of many ethnic groups each influencing the growth and development of the area throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many of the later structures are of architectural significance and are consistent with the waterfront character of Fells Point, even if stylistically different. Recreation Pier is an example of this type of significant structure in Fells Point.

Site Conditions/Architectural Description: There were no structures located on the site when the district was designated in late 2007. Historic maps indicate that a pair of rowhouses existed. The site also includes a driveway entry where a garage once stood. The site is land locked on all to the north, south and east by other structures or rear yards. The 500 block is composed of a variety of typical 19th century styled rowhouses that range in height, width and massing. All are typical mid to late Victorian variations of the Baltimore rowhouse. The site is near the intersection with Eastern Avenue, one of the prime commercial corridors in the neighborhood. There is no public right of way on the property. Today, the property is used as a parking lot.

The 500 block of South Washington Street comprises two, two-and-a-half, and three-story rowhouses and two and three bays wide. The rooflines range from slanted flat roofs with decorative and simple cornices to shallow gables roofs, and steep gabled roofs with dormer windows. The height of these rowhouses range from 30 to approximately 38 feet high. The width of the rowhouses range from approximately 14 to 20 feet wide.

BACKGROUND

The site was reviewed for Height, Massing and Scale on February 13, 2018. By Motion the Commission requested further 3D view renderings, cross sections and elevations drawings. And that the applicants study setting back the 4th and/or 5th floors from the Washington Street elevation.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to construct a new five-story residential building with ground floor parking. The proposal is for apartment units built along a central corridor on each floor and a terrace roof deck above the fifth floor. The fourth and fifth stories are setback from the front property edge.

APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

The staff applied relevant portions of *Chapter 2: Design Guidelines for Additions, New Construction, and Non-Contributing Buildings*. Guideline 2.1 directs applicants to identify the character defining features of the surrounding historic buildings and streetscape. Design new buildings to visually relate to the historic environment. Respect the established design precedent in the immediate area. It also states that contemporary architectural design that reflects its current time, place, use, and culture is accepted, provided the design is compatible with the character of the historic district.

Guidelines 2.2 Site Design, directs applicants to retain established property line patterns, street and alley widths, setbacks, primary and secondary building orientation, and landscape elements, incorporate character-defining site design features of the historic district into the designs of new construction projects, and design new construction to follow the existing pattern of building widths and spacing between buildings. It also states that primary buildings should have a similar orientation and relationship to the street as the existing buildings. Primary entrances and facades should be located, oriented, and sequenced to be consistent with the pattern of entrances and facades in the neighborhood. Also, new construction projects should reinforce existing patterns of open space and enclosure created by existing vehicular and pedestrian circulation routes, fences, walls, yards, courtyards, gardens, and landscaping.

Finally, the guidelines states that new construction at corners or abutting public spaces require special consideration in the design of entrances and multiple, publicly visible facades.

Guideline 2.3 Scale and Form states that new buildings must be compatible with the height and depth of surrounding buildings. Where there is variation of building height within the immediate neighborhood, the new building should generally relate to the predominant pattern.

The guideline also directs that new buildings must complement the massing of surrounding buildings, including the proportion of solid surfaces (walls) to voids (window and door openings.) Respect the characteristic rhythm (fenestration, bays, rooflines, etc.) of existing buildings. It also states that applicants should design the new building to be proportional to surrounding buildings. Consider important building proportions such as floor-to-floor heights, the size and placement of windows and doors, the scale of articulated elements such as porches, overhanging cornices, and bay windows.

Design rooflines to be compatible with those found on surrounding buildings.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

The Fell Point Design Review Committee and the Fells Point Task Force was notified of this proposal. The DRC has reviewed the proposal and given in-depth comments.

ANALYSIS

The Staff has reviewed the revised proposal that was updated as a result of the Commission Motion and Guidance at the February 2018 Hearing. The applicant has provided the necessary cross section diagrams as requested as well as the revised plans and South Washington Street elevation. The staff reviewed the renderings from the north of the Eastern Avenue buildings abutting the site and believes that the stair/elevator towers possibly could be relocated further in so as not to be easily seen from the north. Staff believes the appearance and fenestration pattern on the west elevation have improved however, the staff still feels the appearance of the 5th floor may still be too predominant on the perspective views.

RECOMMENDATION: CHAP staff recommends that the applicant return to the full commission with a Final revised proposal that addresses the following:

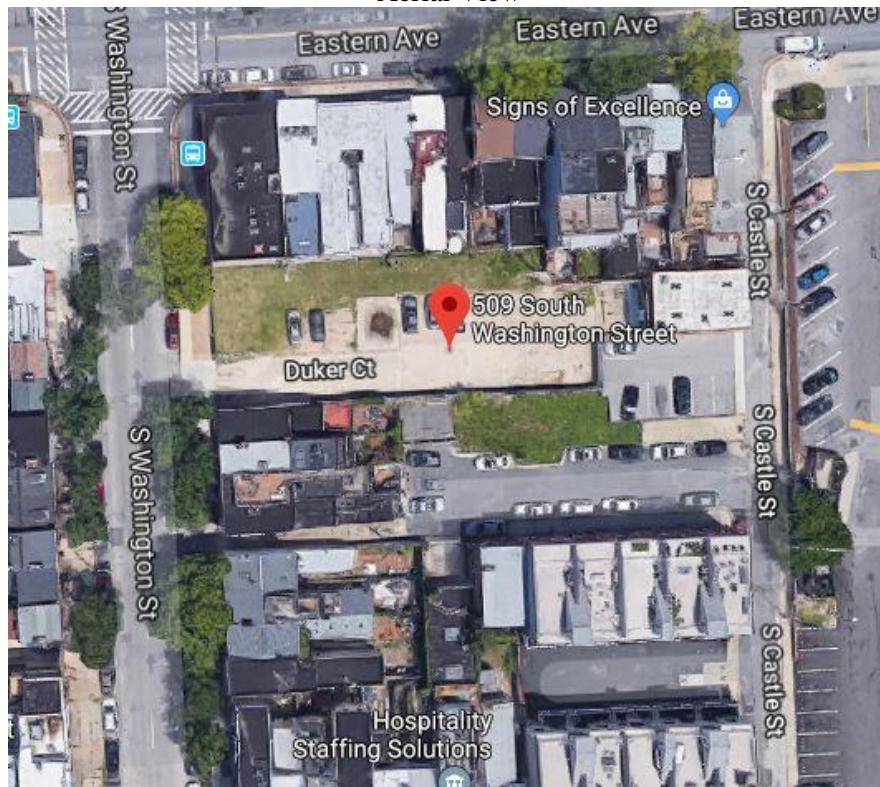
- 3) A parallel reduction in the visibility of the 5th floor along South Washington Street by either increasing visible 4th floor and/or raising the parapet cornice edge.
- 4) Setback top stair/elevator towers from north elevation

Eric L. Holcomb
Executive Director

Site Map- Historic District



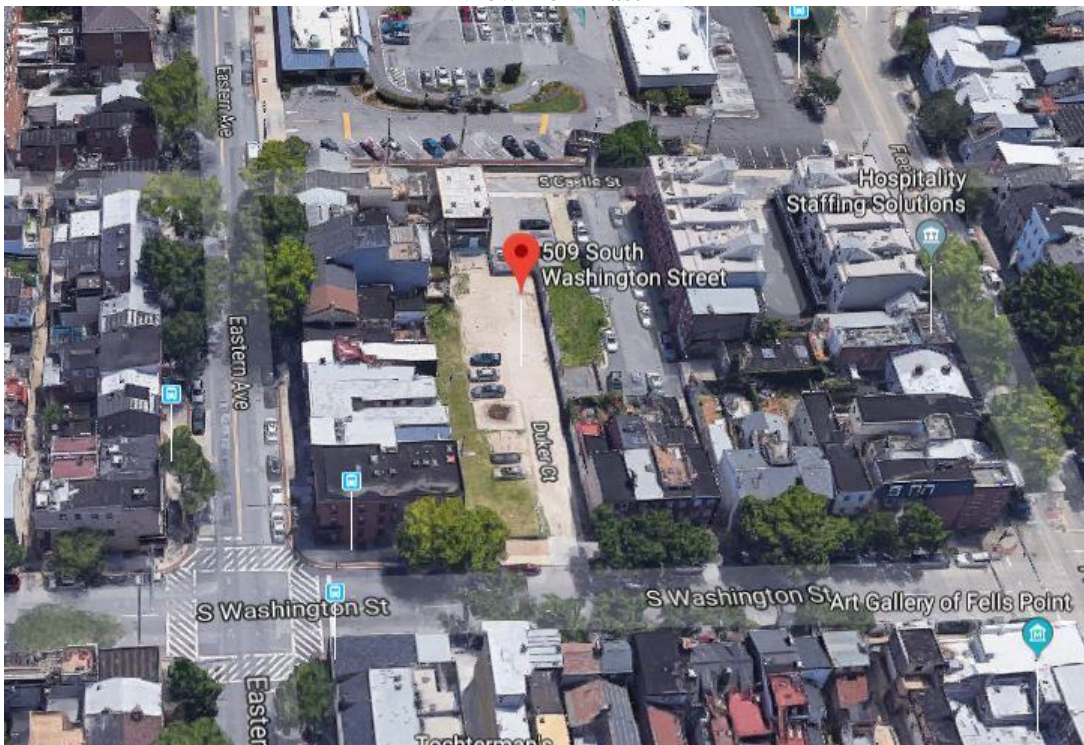
Aerial View



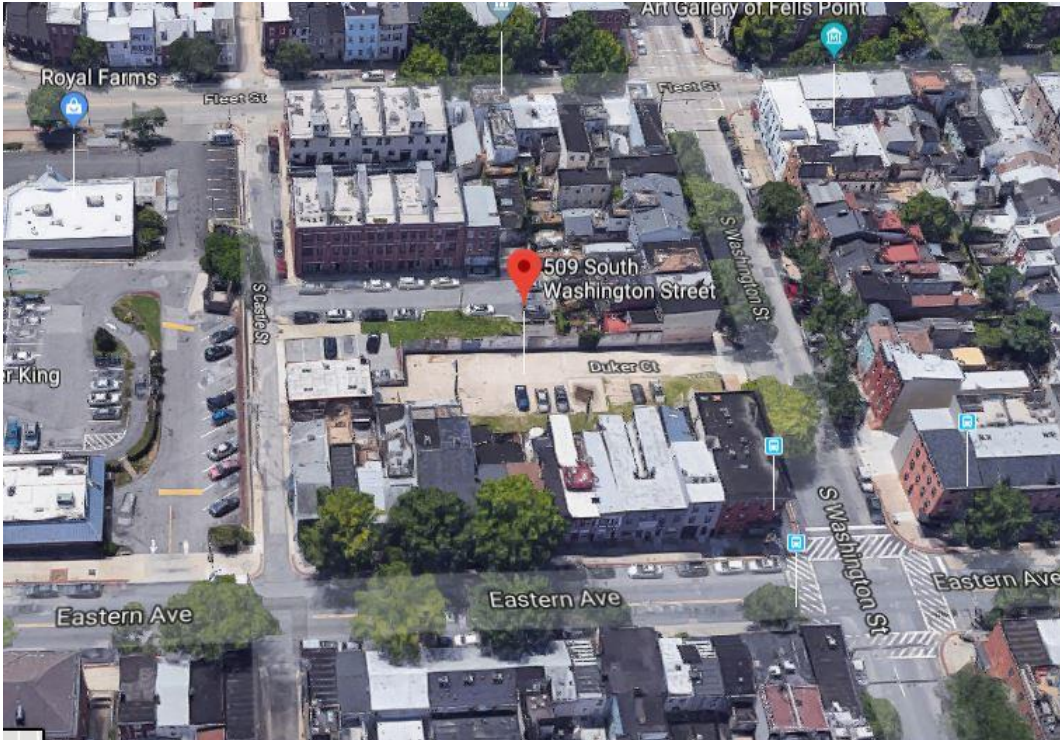
View from South



View from East



View from North



View from the West

