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The AIA|DC Design Awards
for 2021

Inside:

AC Hotel Brings European Flair to DC
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Arlington Expands its Community Amenities
Psychiatric Facility Transformed into Modern Housing



Restored main facade of the Kanawha.



Renovated rear facade, with newly enclosed bays at center.



Main facade before restoration.

Courtesy of Bonstra | Haresign ARCHITECTS



Renovated stairwell.

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Washingtonian Residential Design Citation for Restoration

The Kanawha

Washington, DC

Bonstra | Haresign ARCHITECTS

Interior Designer: Akseizer Design Group

Structural Engineers: Keast & Hood; Simpson Gumpertz & Heger

MEP Engineer: Capitol Engineering Group, LLC

Historic Consultant: EHT Traceries

General Contractor: Harbor Builders

Nestled among the row houses lining Dumbarton Street, NW, is the Kanawha, a four-story apartment building designed by Leon Emil Dessez and built in 1901. With its red brick façades, arched second-floor window niches, stone accents, and simple entrance portico, the building fits comfortably in genteel Georgetown despite being taller than most of its neighbors. It had fallen into disrepair, however, and its front façade was marred by cracked

masonry, clunky window air conditioners, and an obtrusive fire escape added in the 1950s.

Bonstra | Haresign ARCHITECTS was hired to oversee the building's rejuvenation, which earned a Citation for Restoration in the Chapter Design Awards program. For passersby, the most obvious improvements include the repair and repointing of the brick façade, the removal of the fire escape, and the fresh coat of black paint on the portico (previously painted a stark white) and on the window frames and cornice (previously a dingy gray). The A/C units are also gone, thanks to the introduction of a modern split HVAC system that allowed outmoded radiators to be replaced, too.

The building's interior was thoroughly revamped. Apartment layouts were modernized and rationalized, and the ground floor was excavated to increase the floor-to-ceiling height on that level—a process that required the removal of large boulders, which were blasted out and removed through the front door. An iron veranda spanning the rear façade was partially restored, but the center portion was replaced by projecting enclosed bays that extend the living spaces on the top three floors.