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

Property Address:	1225 5th Street NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Mount Vernon Square Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
ANC:	2C	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	September 22, 2011	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	#11-474	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Brendan Meyer	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Owner Lovelyn Anderson seeks concept review for a two-story side addition on a two-story brick rowhouse at 1125 5th Street NW in the Mount Vernon Square Historic District. Plans were prepared by Fowler Architects.

Property Description and Context

1225 5th Street is a small, two-story projecting bay rowhouse. While no original building permit can be found, the front façade likely dates to c. 1890. Survey information contained in the historic district nomination cites tax records which indicate the original structure at 1225 may be a wood frame dwelling from c. 1870 and that that the later brick façade was an alteration to the older structure.

Adjacent to 1225 is a vacant corner lot that historically had been used as a commercial lumber and coal yard, and later as an automobile gas station. This type of commercial use was not infrequent in Mount Vernon Square; the southeast corner of 4th and Ridge streets had the same history of use. As these types of commercial uses were eclipsed in the 20th century, many such corner lots were improved with commercial or residential buildings.

Proposal

The owner proposes to combine the two lots into a single lot and add a two-story 12 x 30 foot addition to the rear half of the south side of 1225 5th. The proposed addition will only occupy a small area of the corner lot and be of simple massing and little ornament. Clad in 6” wood siding and resting on a brick water table, windows will be single and paired with minimal casing. A plain cornice and parapet will screen an open roof deck.

Evaluation and Recommendation

Designs for this concept proposal have gone through several revisions with none reaching a satisfying point that arrives at a truly compatible addition. Ideally, the vacant corner lot begs an independent building, or at least an addition that is a facsimile of such; something of large enough size to anchor the corner. Such an addition or separate building could have the size and appearance to be compatible with the scale and rhythm of housing in this part of the historic district. Conversely, a small simple side/rear addition might find a suitable fit to 1225 such that it appears as another organic rear addition typical of the traditional growth pattern of a Mount Vernon Square rowhouse. However the proposed building program falls somewhere in between, resulting in an addition both too small to anchor the corner, but too big and out of synch to be a compatible addition to 1225.

The HPO seeks the Board's direction on appropriate and acceptable solutions. If a side addition at this location and of this size could be endorsed, it would benefit from some adjustments in massing and materials. Rather than a single large frame addition, the addition would be improved if it simulated an assemblage of smaller units that didn't compete in size with the main body of the house. Considering the three bays of the proposed addition, the two western most bays (towards the front), if clad in brick could seamlessly attach to the masonry of the original house. It would take the form of a side projecting bay and help terminate the main part of the house.

The remaining eastern-most bay of the addition could then be set back farther to the north, remain frame construction, change to a more sloped roof shape and take the form more clearly of a rear addition. All together, the introduction of the brick to the addition could reinforce the traditional hierarchy of materials (brick in the front, frame in the rear), and the setback of the frame component could help break down the mass of the addition and put it in a scale compatible with 1225 5th Street and the rest of the streetscape on Ridge Street.

Alternatively, if Board believes the only compatible solution is for a rear addition to 1225 to remain behind but not project south of the existing side wall, or for the addition to take the form of a corner building in the vacant lot that extends to the front face of 1225, it would be helpful to establish those perimeters in order to assist the owner in developing alternative concepts.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board direct the applicant to restudy the proposal and return to the Board after further development of the concept.