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

Property Address:	1232-1234 10th Street NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Mount Vernon Square Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
		<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	November 29, 2012	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	13-024	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Brendan Meyer	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The applicant, Suzane Reatig Architecture, represented by Megan Mitchell, seeks renewal of an expired concept approval for construction of two, 2-unit flats at 1232-1234 10th Street, NW in the Shaw Historic District. The applicant is both owner and designer.

Property Description and Context

In 2004, the Board approved a conceptual design for construction of two, 2-unit flat buildings. Each building was identical and took the form of a three-story contemporary brick rowhouse with projecting bay. Building permits were issued and renewed but ultimately expired in November 2008.

The Board's regulations stipulate that an approval of a conceptual design review application remains in effect for two years from the date of the Board's action. Upon expiration of this period, the applicant may return to the Board with a request for an extension of one additional period of two years for good cause. The regulation states that the Board is not required to reopen the review of the application, and shall not unreasonably withhold its approval of an extension (DCMR 10A, 332.1).

Proposal

The applicant seeks renewal of the Board's concept approval for the 2004 design. Only minor modifications to the original design have been made. The most notable is a reconfiguration of window divisions and removal of the windows adjacent to the entrances.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The primary purpose of the renewal mechanism in the regulations is to allow the Board to assess whether the context of the historic district, or the policies of the Board, have substantively changed in the time between the original approval and the renewal request. In this case, the Board should consider its recent position on basement entrances and areaways.

In the years since 2004, there has been increasing requests for basement entrances in new construction and to alter existing buildings to accommodate basement units and entrances. The Board responded in 2011 by adopting *Preservation and Design Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows*. For new construction, the Board has consistently approved basement entrances and areaways that are inconspicuous and proportional to the building such that the street face of the building meets the ground in a substantial way. The Board has increasingly found basement areaways that are large and divorce the building from the ground with a moat-like effect to be not compatible in a context of historic rowhouses close to the street.

The concept design includes a large areaway that is unmodified from its original approval. It does not serve as the unit's main entrance, but is a below grade patio or court. The areaway should be reduced in size and depth to the point that it still meets egress requirements for the front bedroom. Accommodating egress at the windows under the entrance and reducing the other windows from full-height below-grade windows to basement windows on grade will allow the areaway width to be reduced. In this way the building can rest squarely on the ground while still allowing sufficient light and egress to the basement. Raising the depth of the remaining areaway will eliminate the need for railings further streamlining the base of the building.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board:

- *Reconfirm its 2004 finding that the concept is compatible with the historic district and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act,*
- *Condition its finding on a minor reduction being made to the front basement areaways to ensure that it is consistent with the Board's policies and design guidelines, as recommended above,*
- *Delegate final approval to staff, and*
- *Reiterate that no part of this recommendation shall be construed as a recommendation for approval or disapproval for any necessary zoning relief or interpretation.*