

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

---

Property Address:	<b>1902 17th Street, NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Strivers Section HD</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>May 30, 2013</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>13-271</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Kim Elliott</b>		New Construction

---

Landis Construction, representing owners Mr. and Mrs. Artusio, seeks conceptual review for a roof deck. This two-story (above English basement), flat-front, brick rowhouse was built as part of a row of six similar houses in 1979. As they fall well outside the period of significance for the Strivers Section Historic District, they are non-contributing buildings to the district.

**Proposal**

The applicant proposes to add a roof deck with seating, kitchen area, and plantings on the rear portion of the building's roof; the front portion would be finished with a vegetated green roof. The deck would be enclosed by a glass guardrail on the front and rear; the sides would be enclosed by privacy walls and planter boxes rendered in the illustrations as a clapboard siding material. Access to the roof deck would be from an exterior spiral stair at the rear of the property with a landing cantilevered off the rear of the house. An existing chimney would be extended vertically three feet above the top of the deck railing in order to comply with the building code. The deck would be visible from vantage points on both 17<sup>th</sup> Street and T Street.

**Evaluation**

Due to the relatively low height of the buildings in this row, their flat roofs with minimal parapets, their location close to the intersection of 17<sup>th</sup> and T Streets, and the slight incline in grade to the north of the property, almost any construction on the roof of this building would be visible from surrounding public streets. Even with the setback proposed from the front, the deck would be partially visible from 17<sup>th</sup> Street and quite prominently visible from T Street.

The Board has generally required that roof appurtenances in historic districts – decks, additions, mechanical equipment or other additive features – not be visible from the street. While there are additional preservation considerations that come in play for contributing buildings -- such as the importance of retaining original character defining roof features (turrets, parapet walls, roof forms and materials) -- one of the primary aesthetic purposes is to ensure that incongruous features aren't introduced that alter rooflines and streetscapes of buildings as they are silhouetted against the sky. This principle is as important to apply to non-contributing buildings as it is to contributing structures in order to maintain a consistency of building rooflines and profiles throughout an historic district.

While the Striver's Section Historic District contains a variety of building types, its rooflines are consistently simple and are not characterized by visible roof decks or other appurtenances. As this building is non-contributing to the historic district, it may be possible that a more deliberate alteration that is fully integrated into the design of the underlying building could result in a compatible solution. Rather than an additive feature that sits on top of the house, a solution that reads as an integrated extension of the building in the form of a third story addition or roof element might result in the desired outdoor space while also being compatible with the surrounding streetscape and historic district.

**Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for a visible roof addition to be incompatible with the Strivers Section Historic, and suggest that the architect may want to explore an alternative solution that fully integrates deck space into a compatible roof addition that maintains the simplicity of roofline that is characteristic of the historic district.*