

The proposed dormers are too large for the available space on the roof of the rear wing; they are same size as those on the much wider larger main roof and, according to the elevations, reach higher than the hip ridges on the ell. Any new dormer should not exceed the size of the existing one on the rear of the ell. If designed like the rear dormer, it could comfortably occupy the alley-facing side of the ell without compromising the original character of the building. However, no dormer should be added to the Monroe Street side, because on such a prominent elevation, it would constitute a major alteration. *The District of Columbia Design Guidelines for Roofs on Historic Buildings* state that, “If dormers are added to sloping roofs, they should be located on non-character-defining slopes and be designed to be compatible with the character of the building.”

The sunken terraces would be deleterious to the appearance of the building as they would visually undermine it. In addition to removing the visual base of the building and changing its proportions, such extensive terraces reduce the green space—already reduced by the parking pad—require railings or fences where they would otherwise not occur, and bring about large openings in the exposed foundation. Although the north side yard is higher than the Monroe Street right of way, it is not so high that passersby could not see down into such terraces. Sequestering exterior space for the use of individual units is characteristic of modern garden apartments and not historic single-family dwellings. While entrance areaways and light wells could probably be accommodated in this location and are frequently approved for historic property, creating extensive areaways or sunken terraces has been discouraged except in the fenced rear yards of rowhouses. The amount of excavation should not exceed that necessary to provide light and access to the basement, i.e., not more than the present areaways around the ell, plus perhaps some lengthened windows in conventional wells. *The District of Columbia Preservation and Design Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows* state that, “Basement areaways should be kept to a minimum size, typically projecting no more than 36” from the face of the building. The creation of large sunken patios or outdoor living areas in front of a primary elevation of historic property is not appropriate.”⁴

The size, location and general concept for the addition are compatible with the character of the property, as it adds bulk to an almost symmetrical building in a way that detracts little. However, rather than taking its design cues from the center bay of the front porch with its beefy doubled pilasters, a somewhat lighter, quieter structure, hierarchically subordinate to the main porch in the heft and order of its columns or pilasters would be a more compatible solution.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept, with the conditions that: the excavation of the yard and expansion of basement windows be limited to what is necessary for light and access; the north dormer be eliminated and the south dormer reduced in size; and that the detailing of the addition be developed further.

⁴ The Guidelines also state that, “Basement entrances and stairs on historic property service secondary entrances and are designed accordingly. They are typically obscured or entirely hidden from public view, and are often located directly below the main stair and entrance. Historic basement entrances are almost never a focus of the building’s façade composition. To be compatible, new basement stairs and areaways for historic property should conform as much as possible to the design principles of historic conditions on similar properties.... Window wells for basement windows should be kept to the minimum dimensions required by code.... Fences around areaways are discouraged because they are obtrusive and out of character with historic site conditions.”