HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Landmark/District:	**Strivers' Section Historic District**	(**x**) Agenda
Address:	**1755 Seaton Street, NW**	( ) Consent
		(**x**) Concept
		(**x**) Alteration
Meeting Date:	**October 28, 2010**	( ) New Construction
Case Number:	**10-490**	( ) Demolition
Staff Reviewer:	**Eldra D. Walker**	( ) Subdivision

Property owner Marcy Logan seeks conceptual approval for the construction of a rooftop deck and roof access structure at 1755 Seaton Street, NW.

Property Description
In 1890, Samuel Norment commissioned builder James Grant to construct nineteen similarly designed brick Victorian row houses on half of Square 150, eleven fronting Seaton Street, two on Florida Avenue, and six facing V Street. The Seaton Street houses, including 1755, are three-story, flat-fronted and built with first floors at grade. Sited on narrow Seaton Street, the properties lack yards and are built right up to the public sidewalk.

As fine examples of the modest Washington Victorian row house, the houses were embellished simply through the creative use of decorative brick courses, contiguous metal cornice above corbelled brick, and a rhythm of single and paired windows. Although understated when considered individually, the properties gain prominence as a part of the row's cohesive form and articulation.

Proposal
The applicant proposes to construct a roof top deck of pressure treated wood accessible via a new Hardi-Panel clad roof access structure. The proposed 15' by 15' deck will have a setback of 16' from the façade and will step in about 6' from the rear wall. The roof access structure will pop up through the south west corner of the deck with a 6'9" by 6'6¾" footprint.

Evaluation
The Board generally requires that new roof decks not be visible from surrounding streets or public sidewalks so as not to alter the character or appearance of the building or its streetscape. This typically requires a substantial set back, the extent of which depends on the height of the proposed deck and its framing, the height of the building and its parapets, the height of adjacent buildings, the topography of the area, the width of the street, and views from public vantage points surrounding the building. Visibility of roof decks from mid-block alleys is typically not a concern unless the alley has a particular historic character or designation. This block of Seaton Street contains two visible roof access structures, providing examples of how access structures should not be designed.

As designed, the deck will not be visible from Seaton Street, given its 16' setback from the facade, Seaton Street's narrow width, the three story height of the properties, and the siting of those properties right at the public sidewalk. However, the steep topography of neighboring streets and the property's proximity to the corner expose the rear and rooftop to the public view. The applicant has responded to this concern by stepping the deck approximately 6 feet from the rear, but the roof access structure's girth, the height of the deck above the roof, and thickness of railing material will result in prominent visibility from Florida Avenue.

In order to minimize public visibility of the proposed deck, the HPO recommends the following refinements:

1) The railing material should be thinner and more unobtrusive railing material than can be provided by pressure-treated lumber, such as a cable rail system or a metal railing;
2) The pop-up roof access structure should be eliminated, with access provided by a low-profile roof hatch.

Recommendations

<u>The HPO recommends the Board approve the proposal with the conditions outlined above, and delegate final approval to staff.</u>