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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	732 4th Street, NE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	January 26, 2017	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	17-129	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Gabriela Gutowski	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Owner Anthony Balestrieri, with plans prepared by architect Lilian Noya of New Vision Properties, seeks concept review for rooftop and rear additions in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description and Context

The subject property is one of eight brick rowhouses built by Diller B. Groff in 1889. The rowhouses are characterized by full-height projecting bays, ornately corbeled brick cornices, and varied decorative string-courses and window lintels. The windows at the primary façade at 732 have been replaced and are currently incorrectly sized six-over-six double-hung windows with infill panels. The brick secondary north façade has no window openings or other architectural features. The north facade abuts the alley and is visible from the street. The rear façade is brick and features a historic “dog leg” extension. The rear is not visible from any street.

732 4th Street, NE is located at the northern-most boundary of the “Swampoodle” Capitol Hill Historic District extension, which was designated in 2015. The buildings directly across the street on 4th Street do not fall within the district extension boundaries; neither do any of the buildings directly north on H Street.

The Capitol Hill Historic District was first designated in 1973 and subsequently the boundaries have been expended three times; in 1976, 2003, and 2015. The most recent expansion encapsulated an additional four blocks, terminating just south of H Street, NE, between 2nd and 4th Street, NE. A total of 188 buildings were included in the extension, 170 considered contributing. The added buildings were almost exclusively residential with the vast majority being rowhouses from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that are architecturally consistent with those found throughout the rest of Capitol Hill. Diller B. Groff is just one of the many major builders within the extension found elsewhere in Capitol Hill and throughout the city.

When discussing the significance of square 777, (the location of 732), the extension report reads:

The row at 718-732 4th Street, N.E. was constructed in 1889 and the row at 715-723 3rd Street, N.E. was constructed in 1891. The earlier row, which lines 4th Street, N.E. was owned by Diller B. Groff, a speculative real estate developer. His row of eight two-story, two-bay brick dwellings with full-height canted bays offer an array of decorative molded elements that individualize each dwelling, but not at the expense of the continuity of the row. Common elements include molded metal cornices, corbeled bricks, brick string courses, double-hung windows set in segmental openings, and single-leaf door openings with one-light transoms. A series of brick moldings, such as pearl and nailhead molding, highlight the soldier brick segmental openings that surmount all openings. Decorative panels with rosette moldings ornament the canted bays of 718, 722, 728, 732 4th Street, N.E.

Currently two (726 and 728) of the eight buildings within the row feature third floor rooftop additions built sometime after August 2014 and before the extension's designation. The additions are mansard inspired in form, span the two buildings and are clad in continuous faux slate shingle. The fronts of the additions align with the front façades and feature tri-partite one-over-one double-hung windows in shallow shed dormers. A very similar scaled mansard inspired third floor addition was constructed one block south of the property at 626 4th Street, NE sometime prior to 2014. Like the property in question, 626 is a two-story brick building and is located at the end of a row adjacent to an alley. If the board were to visit 626 they would have a good indication of what the proposed addition would look like at 732. None of these additions received HPRB review.

Proposal

The plans call for the construction of a third floor addition. The addition would match the third floor additions at 726 and 728 in terms of height, massing and fenestration. It would be approximately 11.5' tall, align with the front façade, and feature a "mansard" inspired roof clad in imitation slate shingles. The front of the addition would feature a shallow shed roof dormer with three one-over-one double-hung windows with Hardi-panel trim. Due to the building's location at the end of the row adjacent to the alley, the north elevation at the rooftop addition would be visible from the street. The rooftop addition's north façade would be clad in horizontal Hardi-plank siding and feature two square-headed one-over-one double-hung vinyl windows. Additionally at the north facade, the plans show six new masonry openings with segmental-arches and the installation of six square-headed one-over-one double-hung vinyl windows within the new openings. The rear façade of the rooftop addition would align with the existing rear façade and be clad in horizontal Hardi-plank siding and feature three one-over-one double-hung windows. The dog-leg would be filled in with an addition at the rear and window openings enlarged to accommodate the installation of one divided light picture window and a pair of French doors. At the roof of the third floor addition the applicant would like to install a deck with metal picket railings. The southern portion of the deck would feature an 8" thick solid fire proof wall. The proposed rooftop addition would be visible from the street.

Evaluation

In determining the appropriateness of any roof addition, consideration must be given not only to the Historic Preservation Regulations, the Board's guideline *Roofs on Historic Buildings*, and the guideline *Additions to Historic Buildings*, but also to similar cases that have been reviewed by HPRB.

The roof guideline states that "Rarely is it appropriate to change the shape of an existing roof. To do so almost always drastically alters the character of a historic building. If, for compelling functional or economic reasons, the shape of the roof must be changed, it should be done in such a manner as to retain the historic character of the building."

The Board's published *Roof Decks and Roof Additions: Design Considerations and Submission Requirements* further discourages, but does not outright prohibit, visible roof additions:

Under most circumstances, roof additions that are visible from a public street are not appropriate, as they would alter an historic building's height, mass, design composition, cornice line, roof, and its relationship to surrounding buildings and streetscape – all of which are important character-defining features that are protected for historic landmarks and in historic districts. In rare cases, a visible roof top addition may be acceptable if it does not fundamentally alter the character of the building and is sufficiently designed to be compatible with the building.

The guideline *Additions to Historic Buildings* elaborates: "Any roof-top addition should be located far enough behind the existing cornice so that it is hidden from view by pedestrians on the street. If this is not possible, the design of the addition or its screening should be compatible with the character of the building."

When reviewing proposals for visible mansard rooftop additions the board always makes a thorough examination of the individual context at the building and site and carefully weighs a project's preservation concerns. There have been limited circumstances when the board has found a mansard roof addition appropriate for extenuating reasons. For instance, a mansard was found compatible at 1316 10th Street NW because the underlying house had an elaborate Italianate design. At 1422 S Street NW, as the rooflines of the row were varied and had been altered over time. At 901 U Street NW a mansard floor was approved in consideration of the overall project, which included the removal of formstone and rehabilitation of an extremely deteriorated building. At 1316 8th Street NW, exceptional circumstances included the fragmented context of block and the fact that the front of the house was an addition to an earlier building.

However, more typically, traditional mansard shaped additions have not been found to be compatible. Mansard additions were found incompatible at 506 4th Street SE and 1017 U Street NW as stylistically inappropriate for the underlying buildings and incompatible with the existing two-story contexts. Also found incompatible due to historically inappropriate design were mansards at 1123 11th Street NW, 1518 Kingman Place NW, 1461 S Street NW, and 1328 10th Street NW.

A similar case recently came before the board in 2014 and 2015 at 1508 Caroline Street, NW in the U Street Historic District. The building was one of two two-story brick rowhouses developed by Diller B. Groff in the late 19th Century. The proposal was to construct a third story mansard addition to replicate the mansard addition at the adjacent property (constructed prior to designation without HPRB review). At that time the board ruled the proposed addition to be incompatible with building and the historic district.

Although the proposed addition would replicate the massing and materials of the grandfathered additions at 726 and 728, due to the location of 732 at the end of the row adjacent to the alley, the addition would arguably have a more profound effect on the historic structure than at the neighboring buildings. Unlike the additions at 726 and 728, which are largely visible over the primary façade, the proposed addition at 732 is also visible over the exposed secondary north façade. The additional visibility highlights the additions inability to read as subordinate to the historic building's volume and how it detracts from the building's special architectural character. The buildings along this block have only been under HPRB's review for less than two years, yet they remain remarkably intact and unaltered with the exception of 726 and 728. If built, the addition would further erode the west side of 4th Street's defining characteristic as a row of historic two-story brick rowhouses. The argument that the addition will be primarily seen from vantage points outside the Capitol Hill Historic District does not diminish the effect on the historic building and streetscape. If that argument was upheld, buildings located at the edges of all historic districts would be allowed a wider range of alterations and a lower level of scrutiny.

Due to the angle of the alley it may be impossible for a rooftop top addition at this building to be non-visible from 4th Street; however, other possibilities of constructing an addition set back significantly from the front facade should be explored. A minimal amount of visibility from a limited vantage point would be an acceptable compromise to ensure that the historic roofline of this row was not further eroded and the historic 2-story volume of the building preserved.

The north façade is un-designed with no architectural features, therefore the introduction of punched window openings would not damage or destroy significant architectural features. However, revising the segmental arch openings to be rectangular in shape would maintain the utilitarian nature of the façade. The installation of vinyl windows on a visible secondary elevation is not consistent with the Board's guidelines as they do not reasonably match the historic windows in terms of configuration, dimensions, or material.¹

The concept for a rear addition infilling the dog-leg is a compatible alteration. A number of buildings within the row have had their dog-leg filled in and the alterations to the rear would not be visible from the street.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept for a third floor addition to be incompatible with the historic district; to find the new window openings at the north façade compatible; to find the rear addition compatible; that the applicant work with staff to revise shape of the new window openings and the material and details of the windows, and to delegate further review to staff.

ⁱ “If existing windows are visible from a street or public open space, a permit shall be issued if replacement windows reasonably match the historic windows in terms of configuration, method of operation, profile, and dimensions, and provided that they do not replace special windows. Matching the material and finish is encouraged but not required” (DCMR 10 Historic Preservation Regulations, Section 2308.3 (a))