

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

Property Address:	1632 17th Street NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Dupont Circle Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	November 20, 2014	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	21-370	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Anne Brockett		New Construction

John Katinas of Katinas Bruckwick Architecture, on behalf of the owner Katinas Family c/o Paul Katinas, proposes to add to the rear and above the two end rowhouses on this row in the Dupont Circle Historic District. The seven houses in this set were designed by architect W.T. Palmer as a speculative investment in 1887. Three of the houses face 17th Street and four front on R Street.

Property Description and Context

This row of former single family dwellings is distinguished by its uniform height, corbelled brick cornice, basketweave and other molded brick detailing, and parallel, projecting string courses between the first and second levels. The western two rowhouses on R Street present the most intact facades, complete with their original bays, entry level height, and windows (see photos at end of report). The other buildings have been altered with the removal of the berm and addition of storefronts at street level. A stair tower was added to the roof of 1632 17th.

This row contains the tallest buildings on this block of 17th Street. There is one building across the street which is a similar 3-story residential structure with ground level retail. All other buildings are two or one story in height. The building to the immediate south of 1632 is one story and is separated from 1632 by an alley, making the whole side and roofline of 1632 visible.

Project Description

The design proposes adding to the rear, in place of an existing 1-story ell, and adding two floors above both 1632 and 1634. A traditional mansard roof with dormers would be set at the front and rear facades on the 4th floor and the 5th floor would be set back from the front, rear, and alley sides. An additional stair tower, elevator override, roof deck, and mechanical enclosure would be set on top of the 5th floor. Cladding would be horizontal board siding, windows single pane casement and cut into the built-up brick parapet on the alley side, and balconies would project at the rear from the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors.

At the façade, a new storefront would be added, but it is unclear from the site plan and elevation drawings if the retail entrance is proposed to project or recess. Shallow bays would flank it, with another door providing access to the residential units above.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The issue of compatibility in adding a mansard roof is one that the Board has grappled with many times – always with a thorough examination of the individual contexts and a thoughtful weighing of the preservation concerns specific to that context. In determining the appropriateness of this type of roof addition, consideration must be given the regulations, guidelines, and to similar cases that have been reviewed by HPRB.

The Board's current policy on roof additions is set forth in its handout *Roof Decks and Additions: Design Considerations and Submission Requirements*. The handout states, "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 property." It goes on to say 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."

In the limited instances where the Board has approved mansard roof additions, all were over a decade ago and all had extenuating circumstances. At 1422 S Street NW, the rooflines of the row varied and had been altered over time. At 901 U Street NW a mansard floor was approved in consideration of the overall project, which removed formstone and rehabilitated an extremely deteriorated building. At 1316 8th Street NW, exceptional circumstances included the fragmented context of the block and the fact that the front of the house was an addition to an earlier building.

In other situations, rooftop additions taking traditional forms have not been approved, either because they were incompatible with the particular building or context, or because of concern about setting precedent. For instance, mansard additions were denied 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 denied 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. Most recently, mansards were denied at 1508 Caroline Street NW (2017), 620 C Street SE (2019) and 142 D Street SE (2019) based primarily on their visibility.

At the subject property, it is difficult to find any aspect of the roof addition compatible or consistent with the Board's current policies for roof additions, with the possible exception of a roof deck and access, pushed to the northwest corner of the property where it would be least visible. A fifth floor is not appropriate on the underlying rowhouses. Regardless of the visibility, two additional floors are more than three-story rowhouses can typically bear and retain their character. In addition, these are already the tallest buildings on either side of this block of 17th Street and a fifth floor would alter the scale of the block.

The buildings are not of a robust Italianate style that one would typically associate with mansard roofs and their architectural character would be substantially altered by such an addition. In addition, the Board has consistently denied this type of addition in recent years. While the street-level conditions could certainly be improved at 1632 and 1634, there are no exceptional circumstances that outweigh the highly visible and incompatible roof addition.

Additions to the rear of the buildings, as long as they were no taller than the existing three stories, could be compatibly achieved, and such a design could be delegated to staff for approval. Similarly, refinements to the design of the storefronts to improve their compatibility could be worked out in consultation with HPO.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept for a fourth and fifth floor roof addition to be inconsistent with the Board's guidelines and incompatible with the Dupont Circle Historic District.







