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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	302 South Carolina Avenue SE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
Meeting Date:	October 25, 2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Case Number:	18-675	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
		<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Owners Matthew and Claire Portolese, with plans prepared by architect Bill Putnam, seek concept review for a one-story rooftop addition and a rear porches on a rowhouse in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

302 South Carolina Avenue SE is one in a row of seven houses developed by Bailey & Pumphrey in 1907 and designed by Edward O. Volland. Constructed of brick, the building features a half-hexagonal projecting bay, one-over-one, double-hung windows, and a cast-iron stoop. The rear elevation is also brick and features a dog-leg rear wing and one-over-one windows. Of the seven houses in the row, six feature intact dog-leg rear wings. The building is the second building in from the corner and the rear elevation can be seen from 3rd Street, SE. No buildings within the block feature roof-top additions.

Proposal

The plans call for construction of a one-story rooftop addition. The addition would be set back approximately 12 feet from the front facade. The addition would be set back 2' 2" from the rear elevation and maintain the dog-leg. The rooftop addition would not be visible from South Carolina Avenue over the primary elevation, but it would be seen from 3rd Street over the rear elevation. The addition would be clad in steel panels and feature steel window and doors.

Additionally, the drawings call for construction of open rear porches at the first and second floors. The porches would be constructed of wood and feature square columns and vertical picket railings. Existing window and door openings would be modified to accommodate paired doors at the second floor and a single-leaf door and two one-over-over double-hung windows at the first floor. The porches and modified fenestration would be seen from 3rd Street.

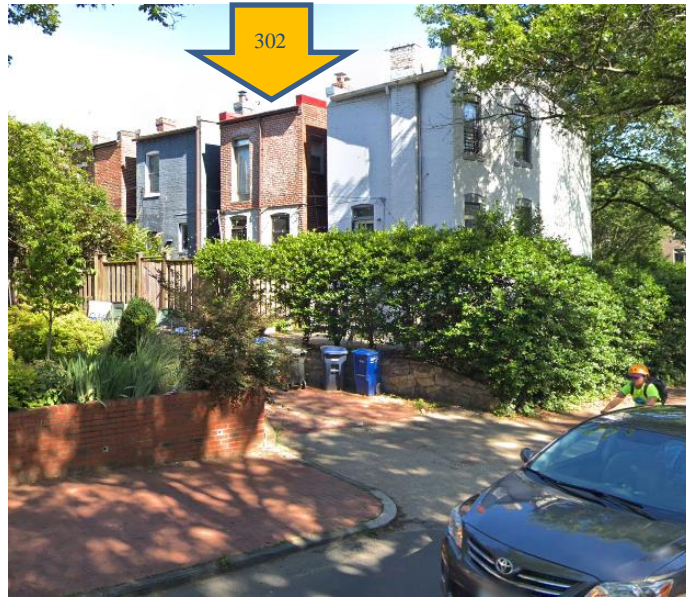


Figure 1: View of rear facade from 3rd Street, SE

Evaluation

The Board’s guidelines on rooftop additions state, “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.” The guidelines further state, “In rare cases, a visible roof addition may be found acceptable if it does not fundamentally alter the character of the building and is sufficiently designed to be compatible with the building.”

Based on the direction in the guidelines, HPO encourages property owners to develop plans for rooftop additions that are not seen from any streets; as a result, the Board reviews relatively few proposals for visible rooftop additions. When the Board does consider visible roof additions to determine appropriateness, consideration is given to the context of the site. For example, is the addition visible over the primary or rear elevation? Is the property part of a row of un-altered matching rowhouses or a unique, one-off building? Will the addition be seen from a distance or directly from the abutting street? Will the addition be seen in context with other rooftop additions or against a backdrop of taller buildings? As with any type of addition or alteration, the particular conditions and context have been an important part of the Board’s consideration.

In the case of 231 10th Street SE, the Board denied a rooftop addition that was visible from the street over the primary elevation. In 2013, the Board voted to approve a visible third-story addition at 202 9th Street SE (HPA # 13-383), in a situation somewhat similar to the proposed site; it too was located one property in from the corner and the rear and rooftop additions were seen from the side street at the alley entrance. However, the third floor was constructed above a new two-story addition and did not extend on to the roof of the historic building, the house was not part of a matching row of properties, and the third-floor addition is not seen against a backdrop of intact matching rear elevations. Instead, the rear of the property is obscured from view by existing two-story carriage houses facing the alley and Independence Avenue.

The Board has been more flexible in their review of non-contributing rowhouses built after 1945 and has approved the construction of visible third floor rooftop additions set flush with the front face of the building, as in the case of 423 7th Street, SE (HPA #13-554) and 17 6th Street, NE (HPA #17-289). In these instances, the Board applied the standard that the alterations were compatible with the character of the historic district and didn't result in alterations to contributing buildings.

There have also been instances in the past where the Board has approved what were represented as non-visible rooftop additions on contributing buildings that, when completed, resulted in some visibility. To avoid this situation, HPO now works closely with applicants to create sight-line drawings and field mock-ups prior to the start of construction to ensure that the principle of non-visibility is achieved.

Given the considerations applied by the Board in the review of past cases, and the circumstances of the proposed project and site, it is recommended that the Board not find the concept compatible with the character of the building, row, and historic district. The house is one in a unified row where their rear elevations and roof forms remain unaltered. The rear elevations of this row are not only visible from a street but are set within shallow rear yards that bring the rear elevation unusually close to the alley, sidewalk and street making the visibility of the proposed addition not incidental but prominent. The angle of the block, in which the roof addition would be seen straight-on from vantage points on 3rd Street (as opposed to obliquely) would exacerbate the extent of visibility. Finally, the context of the addition would be on a row of houses of a uniform height undisturbed by roof additions and without taller adjacent buildings that could provide a compatible context for a taller addition.

The proposed rear porches are compatible in form, materials and design. Open wood porches were historically widespread on Capitol Hill, and many remain today. It is not unusual to see sleeping porches from the street and their open form would not alter or obscure the original massing of the house and row.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept of open rear porches as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff; and that the Board deny the proposed rooftop addition as in consistent with the purposes of the preservation act

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