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

Landmark/District:	Georgetown Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1665 Wisconsin Avenue, NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
Meeting Date:	July 28, 2011	<input type="checkbox"/> New construction
Case Number:	11-374	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Addition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alterations
Staff Reviewer:	Tim Dennée	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept

The applicant, Salvatore Benvenga, agent and designer for owner Murat Durak, requests the Board's conceptual review of a proposal to construct a two-story rear addition and a second-story, cantilevered deck, to perform significant interior alteration and demolition, and to add skylights to the roof. The purpose of the addition is to provide more space for a hair salon on the ground floor, and an office and apartment on the second.

The case has been referred to the Board because the project is outside the jurisdiction of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, because the addition, demolition and alterations would not be visible from a public way.

The addition is sizable relative to the main block, more than doubling the area of the building. But the present building is diminutive and unusually narrow, having originally been a modest residence. As the building abuts several others there would be no opportunity for an observer to compare the front and rear portions, so the relative size is not much of an issue, especially as the finished depth would mediate between the depths of the presently deeper buildings on either side.

With a modest building to begin with and only a limited portion of the addition exposed but not visible from public space, painted fiber-cement siding is an appropriate skin for an addition. The deck is not an issue in the commercial corridor.

The proposed demolition of the one-story, rear ell or addition is necessary for the construction of the new addition. It is probably not a character-defining feature of the property, and its removal is in line with approvals for other, similar projects in Georgetown and elsewhere.

The principal issue is demolition elsewhere. This includes removal of the rear wall at the second floor. The preservation law asks us to balance the strict preservation interest with the adaptation of buildings to modern use. The drawings suggest that the existing rear wall could be retained without doing violence to the plan or program and could remain as original fabric and a demarcation of the original construction from the new. The applicant has indicated that he and his client would be willing to retain this and rework the drawings.

The demolition would also include that of the north masonry exterior wall at the first floor—which bounds a passage through the building leading from the street to the rear yard—and modifications to the roof framing. The second-floor framing presumably bears upon this north passage wall. It may extend beyond the wall to the abutting building on the north, or the joist ends may rest on the wall, with shorter joists extending from it over the passage. If the former is the case, then the wall can presumably be removed with some additional structure added. If the latter condition obtains, then the removal of the passage wall would occasion the removal and replacement of the existing framing with longer joists. If this is true, then with the removal of all of the interior partitions, the reorientation of the stair, and the introduction of the skylights (and whatever incidental replacement of framing might otherwise be required in a 130-year-old house), it is possible that there will not be much left of the building. The applicant will explore the framing and work with staff on a resolution. If the removal of the passage wall necessitates the removal of the second-floor framing, then this aspect of the project at least must be revisited.

There are a couple of other practical considerations. The floor-to-ceiling heights in this building are not grand. Merely extending the present roof pitch rearward is going to create pretty low (and sloped) ceilings in the second floor of the addition, without accounting for likely HVAC ductwork. The code official may also request higher parapets for fire separation. And at this stage, the drawings do not depict the mechanical equipment, leaving the question open as to its location.

The staff recommends that the Board approve the projects in concept, conditioned upon the ability of the owner and applicant to retain the second-floor framing, with further review delegated to staff also subject to this condition.