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

Property Address:	1818 15th Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	U Street Historic District	X Consent Calendar
		X Concept Review
Meeting Date:	February 24, 2011	X Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	11-141	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Eldra D. Walker	Demolition
		Subdivision

Owner Chauncey Gould, represented by builder Fernando Garcia, seeks permit approval for construction of a two-story addition and new windows on a two-story contributing row house in the Greater U Street Historic District. The addition would not be visible from the street.

Property Description

The house is one in a row of four identical houses built in 1878 by speculative builder James B. Robbins. Robbins built several dozen houses in this block on the 1500 blocks of S and Swann Street, and the 1800 block of 15th Street in the late 1870s and early 1880s. The subject house is characterized by a Italianate wood cornice, decorative cast iron stair, brick construction, and one-story frame projecting bay (covered in aluminum siding). The rear of the house is utilitarian, with two windows on each floor.

Proposal

The project calls for extending the rear of the building 20'8" on the basement, first and second floors. The addition is proposed as brick on the sides; the rear elevation would be brick on the basement level with fibercement siding above. The first floor would have an inset porch with columns and multi-light French doors; the second story would have a Juliette balcony with French doors flanked by multi-light windows. An automatic roll-up garage door is proposed at the rear of the lot facing the alley.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The addition is subordinate to the house in size and footprint. In terms of material, the use of fibercement siding is not common in the neighborhood, however, if it is to be used, the detailing should be revised to include trim around the windows and doors.

Alternatively, continuing the brick on the upper two floors of the rear to match the new side elevations would also be a compatible option.

The permit application states that the work includes new windows and doors, however, it is unclear whether this refers to windows and doors simply for the rear addition or will also include replacing the non-original windows on the front elevation. While there is no requirement that the front windows be replaced, if they are, they should be replaced with two-over-two windows, as was original on this house and is still found on surrounding

properties. Similarly, no information has been provided on the treatment of the front projecting bay, currently covered in aluminum siding and in poor condition. As a starting point, the applicants may want to selectively remove pieces of the siding to assess the condition of the underlying material which may be the original. Any work on the exterior of the bay should be coordinated with the HPO.

The plans also indicate that a gas fireplace flue will be vented to the front elevation in the projecting bay on the basement level, however, no information on the visual impact of that vent have been provided and the flue does not appear to meet code requirements which prohibit flues this close to a property line and within projecting bays. The plans indicate the location of the existing electric meter box, a small standard box typical of mid-20th century installations. However in the context of this project, it will be required that the electric service be upgraded, resulting in a significant increase in the size of the meter box. The existing location on the face of the projecting bay will not be sufficient or appropriate for an expanded meter box, and an alternative location needs to be identified.

The HPO has discussed these outstanding issues with the project architect and understands that they will need to be addressed prior before submission of final plans.

The HPO recommends that the Review Board approve the proposed rear addition as consistent with the character of the historic district, and, pending resolution of the outstanding issues identified above, delegate final approval to staff.