
**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:	March 24, 2011	X Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	11-141	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	Demolition
		Subdivision

Owners Paul Pike and Jeff Springer, represented by architect David Delgado (DRD, LLC), seek permit approval for construction of a two-story addition and façade rehabilitation on a two-story contributing row house in the Greater U Street Historic District. The addition would not be visible from the front of the property on 15th Street but would be visible through the block on Swann Street.

Property Description

The house is one in a row of four originally identical houses built in 1878 by speculative builder James B. Robbins. Robbins built several dozen houses on the 1500 blocks of S and Swann Street and in 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.

The house to the north (at the corner of 15th and Swann) was converted in the late 19th century to a corner store and has been renovated back to residential use; it has a one-story addition that would be adjacent to the proposed two-story addition. Behind that one-story addition, on what was originally the corner house's rear yard, are two small brick houses dating from the late 19th century facing Swann Street. The two houses to the south of the subject property do not have rear additions but have two-story carriage houses at the rear of their lots facing the alley.

Proposal

The project calls for extending the rear of the building approximately 21 feet 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 fiber-cement siding above. The first floor would have an inset porch with columns and single-light French doors; the second story would have a Juliette balcony with French doors flanked by single-light windows. An automatic roll-up garage door is proposed at the rear of the lot facing the alley.

At the encouragement of the HPO, the applicants have conducted exploratory demolition on the aluminum-clad front bay, which has revealed the original design and wood molding profiles. While the deteriorated condition of the bay will require extensive

reconstruction, the applicant's intent is to replicate its original appearance. The non-original windows will be replaced with wood 2/2 sash to replicate the appearance of historic windows remaining on the adjacent house, the front doors replaced, and the cast iron stair repaired.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The restoration of the original bay, replacement of the front windows and doors, and repair of the cast iron stairs will significantly improve the historic character of the property.

The addition is subordinate to the house in size and footprint, and consistent with other rear additions that have been determined compatible by the Board in the historic district. The side party wall seen from Swann Street would be red brick, consistent in material and appearance to historic party walls. The use of fiber-cement siding on the rear elevation is not common in this neighborhood, however, it will not be seen from a public street and will be barely visible from the alley behind the proposed roll-up garage door. The drawings have been revised since initially submitted to simplify the detailing on the rear elevation and to include trim around the openings.

The applicants are confident that the small electric meter box, currently located on the front bay, will not need to be expanded as a result of the property's rehabilitation. However, it should be clear that if the meter box is changed in size or location, historic preservation review of that alteration is required.

The HPO recommends that the Review Board:

- 1) Approve the proposed rear addition and rear alley garage door as consistent with the character of the historic district,
- 2) Approve the reconstruction of the front bay and replacement of windows and doors, contingent on the submission of a measured drawing of the bay window and its detailing and window and door specifications,
- 3) Make clear that approval does not include expansion or relocation of the electric meter box without consultation and approval by the HPO.