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

Property Address:	1845 Kalorama Road, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Washington Heights Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	November 17, 2011	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	11-520	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

Architect Laurence Caudle (Hickok Cole Architects), representing Brookland Homes LLC, seeks conceptual design review for a four-story rear addition to a three-story plus basement brick row house. The addition would be separated from the main block of the house by a small courtyard and connected by an enclosed stair and breezeway. The project also includes a small roof addition on the existing building.

Property Description

The 1800 block of Kalorama Road is comprised of an architecturally varied collection of large three and four-story rowhouses from the first two decades of the 20th century. The block is anchored at each end with larger mid-rise apartment buildings fronting Columbia Road and 18th Street.

1845 Kalorama was constructed in 1920, designed by local architect Henry Breuninger for his father's construction firm, Lewis E. Breuninger & Sons. The Breuninger firm was responsible for the construction of over 2,000 houses in Washington in the first half of the 20th century, including 80+ porch-fronted rowhouses on Harvard and Hobart Streets in Mount Pleasant, rowhouses in Glover Park, and detached houses in Shephard Park. Henry designed many of the firm's projects in the 1920s and early 1930s; the Georgian Revival styling of 1845 Kalorama is representative of his work for the firm.

Proposal

The project calls for retaining and renovating the existing row house and constructing a four-story addition within the rear yard. An open courtyard, measuring approximately 22 feet deep, would separate the addition from the house. The existing house is approximately 37 feet deep; with the courtyard and addition, it would extend approximately 103 feet into the lot, with a 17 foot deep rear yard for two parking spaces off the alley. A one story addition would be constructed on the roof of the existing house, set back approximately 25 feet from the front façade. The rear addition would be clad in brick on the first three floors to match the color of the front portion of the house; the top floor and roof addition would be clad in cementitious panels.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The proposal's courtyard plan is an historically unusual strategy for adding to a row house, made possible by the depth of the lot and the site's R-5-D zoning, which allows up to 75% lot occupancy. Historically, when rowhouses were expanded and converted to apartment buildings, they more typically took a "T" or "dumb bell" form (a slightly narrower rear wing which expanded to the full width of the lot at the rear) or as a long rear ell wing, with windows on the side. Both of these solutions now require zoning relief.

The courtyard approach has the benefit of preserving the original block of the historic building intact and creates more light for the interior units. However, it also results in the mass of the addition being pushed further back on the lot where it potentially impacts surrounding yards. The courtyard plan has been approved by the Board for several properties in the 400, 900 and 1100 blocks of M Street, NW (in the Mount Vernon Square and Shaw Historic Districts), where the context of these blocks included historic apartment buildings that extended to or close to the full depth of their lots.

The Board has traditionally given flexibility on rear additions in rowhouse neighborhoods where an addition would not be visible from the street or affect the public perception of the building, finding that such additions do not impact the character of the historic district. While the proposed addition would have some visibility from Columbia Road, it would be viewed through the two large apartment buildings that flank that alley and would not project significantly farther than the adjacent property's large stair tower.

The Board has typically required a greater degree of compatibility for rear additions where there is a strong or ordered historic context. This alley context is extremely varied, and does not have a strong feeling as an intact, uniform or even particularly ordered historic environment. While the majority of houses retain some vestige of a rear yard or have their mass weighted toward the street, this is not a uniform condition. The apartment building immediately next door (a converted rowhouse) has a very large covered stair that extends the full height of the building and projects deep into its rear yard, an historic apartment building on Belmont (across the alley from the subject property) extends to the rear of its lot, and the apartment buildings on either side of the alley facing Kalorama Road extend deep into their lots.

The HPO recommends that the Review Board approve the conceptual design as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff.