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

Landmark/District: **Foggy Bottom Historic District** (x) Consent
Address: **2526 I Street, NW**

Meeting Date: **November 29, 2012** (x) Alterations
Case Number: **12-449** (x) Additions

Staff Reviewer: **Tim Dennée**

The applicant, owner Roumen Boudin, with engineers Bruce Ensor and Michelle Benoit, requests the Board's review of a revised concept for rear additions, one to fill in the court of a dogleg ell, and another, an extension of the basement.

The Board first reviewed this proposal in June and unanimously supported the concept with further revision. The original staff report is attached for more background and detail.

The Board's previous motion included the following conditions:

- (1) that the roof and floor framing of the main block be retained;
- (2) that the glass-block openings be revised to be closer to the size and orientation of traditional windows on such a rowhouse;
- (3) that the drawings be redrawn and thoroughly detailed and dimensioned, including a site plan, and as necessary to carefully depict all of the doors and windows and openings proposed and to account for roof slope and drainage and a replacement fence;
- (4) all exposed, exterior walls of the basement addition be clad with brick, with the brick sample to be approved by staff; and
- (5) that the revised plans return to the Board for review.

The drawings have been revised, including depicting the roof slope and more dimensions, and with the glass-block side windows improved in proportions. The exposed portions of the rear additions are to be brick.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends approval of the concept as compatible with the character of the historic district, with the condition that a brick sample, additional details on the windows and balcony, and final working drawings be provided and coordinated with staff. The HPO recommends that final approval be delegated to staff.

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

Landmark/District: **Foggy Bottom Historic District** (x) Agenda
Address: **2526 I Street, NW**

Meeting Date: **June 28, 2012** (x) Alterations
Case Number: **12-449** (x) Additions

Staff Reviewer: **Tim Dennée**

The applicant, owner Roumen Boudin, with engineer Bruce Ensor, requests the Board's review of a concept for rear additions, one to fill in the court of a dogleg ell, and another, an extension of the basement.

The property is situated at the south boundary of the historic district, near its southwest corner, giving the project relatively little visibility, as it would be seen principally from the rear of the alley behind, and from the highway and tall apartment building to the south.

Addition to wing

A small addition to the side of the original wing would obviously cause a fair amount of demolition, as the present west side wall would be demolished, as would the ell's floor framing, which could not span the new width. While far from ideal, this kind of addition/alteration has occurred in numerous projects, both to gain more space and to avoid or remove a non-conforming court. It is acceptable when the addition is sufficiently well and compatibly designed. Especially in light of the level of demolition, the roof and floor framing of the main block should remain, to keep demolition within acceptable limits.

This addition's present design requires more careful detailing, as well as revision. Proposed for the addition's side elevation are three larger openings to be filled with glass block. This is because the building code does not permit a wall on a common property line to have openings for fire separation, yet the property owner wishes to replace some of the natural light to be lost with the present side windows. Glass block is characteristic of some examples of the Moderne and Deco styles; its use elsewhere may be sufficiently compatible to the extent that it is limited and not prominent. Its visibility here would go little beyond the immediate neighbor, 2528 I Street, whose own narrow court would be bounded by this wall. Still, in extent and orientation, the large glass-block openings proposed are more commercial or industrial than suited to a rowhouse of this vintage. The staff has suggested that the glass-block openings be closer in size and shape to traditional window openings, and the applicant has agreed to revise them.¹

¹ As designed, a partition falls across one of the second-story openings, and the first-floor opening, centered in the middle of the west wall of the kitchen, takes up a lot of the wall space available for cabinets.

As the west elevation, the proposed south or rear elevation is drawn schematically (Sheet S6-1). It indicates large openings at both floors, French doors at the first and a balcony at the second. The materials and details of doors, windows and the balcony and framing elements are not indicated. In part because of its situation relative to the rest of the historic district and the fact that the houses sit on a rise, this block has been the site of a number of substantial rear additions and alterations. The general approach suggested by the drawings is sufficiently compatible, although there will certainly be some refinement², as well as revision to represent important features such as the lintels supporting the openings.

Both the side and rear elevations show no slope to the roof—which is presumably to be pitched to the rear to drain—nor a gutter at rear.³ Drainage is something that should be considered not only for its own sake, but also for how the roof slope will affect the headroom in the second story.

Basement addition

Although certainly not unprecedented, the proposal includes an unusual extension of the basement rearward beyond the footprint of the house. There have been several such additions wholly below grade in Georgetown and elsewhere. In this case, the addition would stand approximately half above the alley grade, with its roof replacing and forming the terrace or yard behind the building's main level. The addition's walls would replace the concrete wall that presently retains that grade, which can be seen in the attached photographs. This seems a reasonable way to add to the house, given that the addition would look essentially like the present rear yard, except that it would be clad with brick and have window and door openings facing the alley parking.

As with the upper stories, the basement is presently only schematically detailed (Sheet S6-1). The door is not shown, only the opening through which one would have to pass to descend from the parking pad to the basement floor level. It is not clear if the depiction of the more than six-foot-wide window opening is meant to suggest double-ganged windows or some other configuration. Also not shown is a replacement fence, which will be necessary to bound the elevated roof/terrace atop the basement addition.

Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Board support the concept with the conditions that:

1. the roof and floor framing of the main block be retained;
2. the glass-block openings be revised to be closer to the size and orientation of traditional windows on such a rowhouse;
3. the drawings be redrawn and thoroughly detailed and dimensioned as necessary to carefully depict all of the doors and windows and openings proposed and to account for roof slope and drainage and a replacement fence;
4. that all exposed, exterior walls of the basement addition be clad with brick, with the brick sample to be approved by staff.

² Are the broad framing pieces at the window openings to be understood as a flat casing, or as a six-inch-wide frame? What are the materials of this system? Are the windows operable? Does the frame or casing include or function as the window frame—i.e., is it all one unit—or are their individual window frames set into a larger structural frame? Etc.

³ The code reviewers also frequently require a higher parapet, for fire separation, on an addition at a common property line.