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

Landmark/District: **Anacostia Historic District** (x) Agenda
Address: **1326 Valley Place SE**

Meeting Date: **October 23, 2014** (x) Addition
Case Number: **14-717** (x) Alterations

Staff Reviewer: **Tim Dennée** (x) Concept

The applicant, the District of Columbia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), along with the District of Columbia Housing Authority and architect Brasher Design, requests the Board's review of a concept to reconstruct portions of, repair, add to, and perform site work around the structure. This house was one of six similar, two-story, detached homes constructed on this block of Valley in 1885 by Henry A. Griswold, the developer of this subdivision on the south side of Uniontown. The residences are unique in the neighborhood for the projecting pediments on the porch roofs and the vertical-board friezes or rakes below the eaves.

Ironically, 1326 used to be the best preserved of the group, in the sense of retaining the most original fabric, despite a lot of damage and deterioration. For a dozen years, the Historic Preservation Office pursued the former owner to perform repairs on the property. But the owner effectively abandoned the property, and the city was forced to demolish much of the house in order to stabilize what it could. It acquired it outright for unpaid taxes in 2011. Happily, a couple of its neighbors have been nicely restored. But DHCD proposes a last-ditch effort to save and bring back the building, which is more important because it is part of a row.

Reconstruction of the main block

The demolition left about a third of the building. The principal idea is to build back the rest of main block, to match the depth of the other houses—and then to add a rear wing to it. In general, the drawings are fine, but a break or transition in the siding along the sides of the house is oddly placed. It would demarcate and honor the memory of the present depth of the structure, which is an arbitrary point, given that it is only incidentally the point where the worst deterioration occurred and the demolition stopped. It creates a strange division proportionally, as main blocks are typically the deepest section of residences. This approach gives the impression of a deeper addition to an extraordinarily shallow main block. It is true that the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation emphasize that *additions* should be sufficiently distinct from the original construction, but the principal aim here is not addition, but reconstruction to reasonably match the house's original depth and character—and the depth and character of the other houses on this row.¹

¹ Restoration and reconstruction are both valid preservation approaches and appropriate here. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Restoration, for instance, state that "[w]here the severity of deterioration requires

The siding's exposure changes at a transition marked by the vertical trim. There may be a practical rationale for the change, as replicating the narrow-exposure siding would be more expensive than adding new, wider siding. But, with the possible exception of the rear elevation, the main block should have a consistent siding, matching the original as closely as possible, as this siding is characteristic of the building and its row, indeed, of a period and type of frame house. The rear addition certainly may have different siding.

The design also takes this vertical break as a signal or license to change the proportions of the windows rearward of it. While there is surely some flexibility on this point, the side windows should mainly reflect the sizes and proportions of the windows on the front section, and vary as necessary for kitchen and bathroom windows and on the rear elevation. There is still greater flexibility for the rear wing.

Rear addition

A two-story rear addition is proposed which would be clearly subordinate to the main block. In an unusual move, the addition is offset relative to the main block. This allows an additional window in a bedroom (that already has three) and windows at a rear stair, as well as two levels of decks at the inside corner formed at the rear. On the other hand, the offset forces the addition roof, and probably the ceiling, to be very low in order to stay under the house's eave. As discussed in a recent staff report, offsets or wider rear wings do occur in the historic district, so although such an offset is not encouraged, it is not incompatible.

Skylights

The historic preservation guidelines have long discouraged skylights being located prominently. The mid 1990s guidelines stated that "If dormers are added to sloping roofs, they should be located on non-character-defining slopes and be designed to be compatible with the character of the building. Skylights added to sloping or flat roofs should be located *so that they are not visible from a public street.*" [Emphasis added] In this case, skylights would be acceptable atop the nearly flat-roofed rear addition, but not on the sides of this front-gabled principal roof, where they would be plainly visible. If more light is needed in the spaces beneath the sidelights, there should be sufficient flexibility to adjust the fenestration.

Restoration

Most important, the project will bring back a blighted property and restore the row of houses. The front porch will be reconstructed to match the other original ones. The multi-color sidelights at the entrance will be retained and refurbished. A standing-seam roof is proposed, similar to the original. The replacement windows would be of wood.

Site work

A two-car asphalt parking pad would be laid adjacent to the rear alley. A door off the kitchen would provide access to a presumably concrete or paver patio located in the wide side yard. An ornamental front fence and a rear privacy fence are proposed, but we do not yet have the details.

replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials." And "[r]eplacement of missing features from the restoration period will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence. A false sense of history will not be created by adding conjectural features..." The Standards for Reconstruction include the instruction that "[r]econstruction will be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs ... A reconstructed property will re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic property in materials, design, color, and texture."

There is no information yet on locations of mechanical and electrical equipment. A landscape plan is included.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept as compatible with the character of the historic district, and delegate to staff further review of the details, with the conditions that:

- *the main block be constructed to its original depth, be sided with wood siding to match the original profile and exposure, and have fenestration generally consistent in size and proportions; and*
- *there be no skylights installed on the principal roof.*



Would skylights be visible on the side of the house? Yes.