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

Property Address: **2228 1st Street NW**
Landmark/District: **Bloomingdale Historic District**

Meeting Date: **June 25, 2020**
H.P.A. Number: **#20-343**

Agenda
 Consent Calendar
 Denial Calendar
 Concept Review
 Permit Review
 Alteration
 New Construction
 Demolition
 Subdivision

Property owner Shelly Parker seeks concept review for altering a three-story brick corner rowhouse in the Bloomingdale Historic District with a new basement areaway on a primary façade. Concept plans were prepared by JADS.

Property Description and Context

2228 1st Street NW is the corner house in a row of 15 three-story brick houses designed by B. Stanley Simmons in 1899. An octagonal corner bay with turret roof transitions the front façade to a long side façade facing Adams Street. Near the west end of the Adams Street façade is a 15-foot wide bay faced with pairs of windows at the basement and second floor. The basement window sills sit at grade even with the grade of the public sidewalk 14 feet away.

Proposal

The applicant proposes to construct a new basement areaway across the face of the bay at the west end of the Adams Street façade. The areaway would have interior dimensions of 3 x 13 feet (39 square feet) with no rail or wall above grade. The sills of the existing pair of basement windows would be lowered to fit the new areaway.

Evaluation

The applicant had originally applied for a larger areaway which included new stairs and a walkway to the sidewalk. With advice from staff the applicant reduced the size of the proposal in a positive way but it still remains a size and in a location contrary to guidelines adopted by the Board.

In general, the Board defines any street-facing façade as a *primary* elevation, regardless of whether the façade can commonly be thought of as a front or side elevation. Consequently, a corner rowhouse has two primary elevations for design review purposes.

*Preservation and Design Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows (2011)*¹ addresses the characteristics that qualify new basement window wells as compatible with a historic district. Creation of a large sunken area in front of a primary elevation is not appropriate (3.4). Also, areaways should be kept to the minimum size necessary to meet egress requirements which is 36” from the face of the building and nine square feet of total area, meaning that a 36” wide

¹ The following section numbers refer to this guideline.

areaway needs to only be 36" long. A strict reading of the guidelines would require a reduction in the size of the areaway, but a small areaway in this location would not be consistent with the symmetry of the bay face.

Window wells should also be subordinate to the architecture of the house (4.0). Locating it across the front face of the projecting bay on Adams Street places it in a prominent location in the parking of the public space adjacent to the sidewalk.

A more compatible arrangement would be to relocate one egress well to one of the corners formed where the bay meets the main wall of the house at the property line. A small nine square foot areaway would tuck unobtrusively in either corner. A new basement window would be required but these are allowed by the guidelines if they can match the width of the windows above so they coordinate with the architecture of the house (4.5). In either case, not including railings around the areaway and screening with evergreen plantings are recommended throughout the guidelines.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board decline to approve the concept to add a large areaway across the front of the bay on Adams Street, provide alternate guidance to the applicant and delegate final approval to staff.

Staff contact: Brendan Meyer