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

Property Address: **2422 North Capitol Street NW**
Landmark/District: **Bloomingdale Historic District**

Meeting Date: **October 22, 2020**
H.P.A. Number: **#20-461**

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

Applicant Darren Camody, on behalf of owners 2422 North Capitol St LLC, seeks permit review for adding a third story to the two-story rowhouse at 2422 North Capitol Street NW, a contributing property in the Bloomingdale Historic District. Permit plans were prepared by Stryker Sessions, RA.

Property Description and Context

2422 North Capitol Street is part of a row of 15 two-story brick houses that comprise the entire block from Bryant Street to Channing Street. Built by Harry Wardman in 1907 they exhibit notable features for this time period, including a continuous line of porches across the front of the row, Georgian jack arches, dentil metal cornices, and short mansard slate roofs. Three houses have third floor additions which were built before the historic district was designated, one of which is still under construction.

Proposal

A third-floor addition is proposed to be added on top of the two-story house. It would be in conjunction with a rear addition already under construction and span nearly the full length of the house. The front of the addition would be set back nine feet from the front façade. With its front parapet it would be 8 feet taller than the ridge of the existing mansard roof. The front would be clad in beveled siding and include a pair of double hung windows. The rear of the new third floor would align with rear addition under construction and include a gallery of porches at each floor. A flag-test of the proposal has been erected and inspected by staff (Figures 1 and 2).

Evaluation

Adding on top of a rowhouse has two fundamental challenges making it exceedingly difficult to do in a compatible manner. First, excessive demolition must be avoided. Second, any additional height must not significantly change the perceived height and scale of the historic house because it is in those basic aspects that the house contributes to the character and scale of the historic district. As a general rule, a rooftop addition that is set back beyond visibility could successfully address both of these challenges. However, the more a rooftop addition extends toward the front of the house the more potential it has to be visible and likely to result in excessive demolition. These assessments should be calibrated against the context of the addition. If the context has a high degree of integrity, additions that might produce a conspicuous change should be reviewed guardedly, but if the context has eroded integrity the addition could fit inconspicuously into its surroundings.

The proposed addition would produce a prominent incompatibility in a generally intact and uniform group of houses that is highly characteristic of the Bloomingdale Historic District. The flag test clearly shows that the proposed addition would stand starkly above the houses on this end of the row. Occasionally some accommodation can be made by reducing the size of the addition and setting it back away from the front as much as possible, but in this case the rear of the addition would also be prominently visible from Channing Street and the alley behind the house. The impact on the rear of the row would be just as prominent. Due to the simplicity of the interior plan and construction type, demolition of load bearing features and floor systems would not be substantial.

When Bloomingdale was designated by the Board in July 2018, the question of pre-existing roof top additions was surveyed and addressed. 78 roof-top additions were identified in the historic district representing 4.6% of contributing buildings. Based on that analysis it was determined the neighborhood as a whole remained overwhelmingly intact, had a high-degree of integrity which compared favorably with other historic districts in the city, and that Bloomingdale would benefit from designation and protection from further intrusions.¹ While some roof-top additions are near-by, they do not substantially erode the context of the district because there are not many of them. Adding to their numbers would only propel the historic district towards compromised and eventual loss of integrity.

The proposal is incompatible with principles outlined in the Bloomingdale Historic District Guidelines (proposed for final adoption by the Board at the October 22 meeting), which state:

Bloomingdale represents an architecturally rich, cohesive and intact collection of late 19th and early 20th century masonry rowhouses. The rhythm of repeating projecting bays, turrets, and rooftop ornaments of the late 19th-century houses, and the front porches, decorative roof forms and dormer windows of the early 20th-century houses, give the urban neighborhood's streetscapes an exceptionally rich visual quality that should be preserved. Particular care should be taken to ensure that alterations and additions do not alter the historic massing, roof height or ornamental features of each particular rowhouse.

Section 7.3: Rooftop additions and roof decks are permitted if they are set back sufficiently to the rear portion of the roof so that they are not visible atop a primary building elevation from street view.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the proposed third-story addition to 2422 North Capitol Street NW is not consistent with the purposes of the preservation law because it is not compatible with the character of the historic district.

Staff contact: Brendan Meyer

¹ Staff Report, Historic District Case No. 17-17, July 26, 208



Figure 1, Flag test at 2422 North Capitol Street NW from across the street.



Figure 2, Flat test at 2422 North Capitol Street from Channing Street NW