
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address: **50 Adams Street NW**
Landmark/District: **Bloomingdale Historic District**

Meeting Date: **February 4, 2021**
H.P.A. Number: **#21-129**

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Owner Errin Green seeks concept review to add a one-story addition on top of the one-story garage at 50 Adams Street NW, a contributing property in the Bloomingdale Historic District. Plans were prepared by Dilan Homes.

Property Description and Context

The property sits in a very regular and consistent square of rowhouses generally built between 1910 and 1925 in groups of seven or eight. Detailing of the houses are slightly varied but the house form is generally two stories with front porches, occasionally combined with a projecting bay and turret roof. A brick alley traverses the length of the square and is densely populated with original one-story brick garages in a range of conditions; disrepair, highly altered or replaced with roll-up vehicle gates. The details of the garages indicate they were not built with the houses, but likely as individual improvements by first owners of the houses. The overall effect is a character defining alleyscape of simple structures enframing a long view.

Proposal

The applicant proposes to add one story on top of the existing one-story garage at the rear of the lot. This is the first such concept applied for in the Bloomingdale Historic District. The concept plans show that the brick walls of the garage will be retained and a fiber-cement clapboard addition built on top. The addition is set back slightly to conform with zoning regulations. The alley elevation of the addition includes three traditional double-hung windows.¹

Evaluation

The addition is compatible with the general character of the alley. This is largely due to its simple, traditional shape, materials and fenestration. It avoids the mistakes of unsympathetic additions which are large and windowless. It is scaled to fit its surroundings and would reinforce the alley paving and wall relationship that defines the long axial view of the alley. This addition might be evaluated differently if the row of garages was more intact and uniform or if the scale of the alley was smaller, but is compatible in this context. Retention of the historic brick fabric is an especially helpful preservation measure. In the same sense, the applicant should be encouraged to also retain the metal cornice across top of the garage, or if it cannot be retained it should be replicated with similar ornament.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for a one-story addition on top of the garage at 50 Adams Street NW to be compatible with the character of the historic district, and delegate final approval to Staff.

Staff contact: Brendan Meyer

¹ The concept includes a small roof deck at the rear of the house that meets the standards for approval by staff under delegated authority (DCMR 10C, 320.1(f)) and is therefore not discussed in this report.