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

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	732 4th Street, NE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	May 24, 2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	18-248	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Owner Anthony Balestrieri, with plans prepared by Blue Star Design Build, seeks concept review for rooftop and rear additions and new window openings on a house in the Capitol Hill Historic District. The applicant has filed with the Board of Zoning Adjustments for special exception related to lot coverage.

Property Description and Context

The subject property is one of eight brick rowhouses built by Diller B. Groff in 1889. The houses are characterized by full-height projecting bays, ornately corbeled brick cornices, and varied decorative string-courses and window lintels. The windows at the primary façade at 732 have been replaced and are currently incorrectly sized six-over-six double-hung windows with infill panels. The brick secondary north side elevation has no window openings or other architectural features. The north elevation abuts the alley and is visible from the street. The rear elevation is brick and features a historic “dog leg” extension. The rear is not visible from any street.

732 4th Street, NE is located at the northern-most boundary of the “Swampoodle” Capitol Hill Historic District extension, which was designated in 2015. The buildings directly across the street on 4th Street do not fall within the district extension boundaries; neither do any of the buildings directly north on H Street.

Currently two of the eight buildings within the row (726 and 728) feature third floor rooftop additions built sometime after August 2014 and before the extension’s designation. The additions are mansard inspired in form and align with the front and rear elevations.

The owner, working with a different design team, proposed a similar mansard style roof addition, rear addition, and new window openings at the secondary north facade in January 2017 (HPA 17-129). At that time, the Board found the proposed rooftop addition incompatible with the building and historic district but approved a rear addition and new window openings at the secondary elevation. The Board acknowledged that due to the angle of the alley it may be impossible for a rooftop top addition at this building to be non-visible from 4th Street but other possibilities of constructing an addition set back significantly from the front façade could be

explored and that a minimal amount of visibility from a limited vantage point would be an acceptable compromise to ensure that the historic roofline of this row was not further eroded.

Proposal

The plans have been developed to respond to the Board’s direction for a minimally visible third floor addition, set back 16 feet from the primary elevation. A door at the front of the addition would lead to a roof-deck. Additionally, the plans call for a three-story full width rear addition extending 8’ 0” towards the rear yard. The dog-leg would be infilled. The rooftop and third floor rear addition would be clad in Hardi-plank siding. The first and second floors of the rear addition would be clad in brick. The north side of the addition would be feature paired one-over-one double-hung windows. The new rear elevation would feature three regularly spaced one-over-one double-hung windows at the first and second floors and French doors with sidelights at the ground floor. Both the rear and rooftop additions would be seen from 4th Street when looking west. The plans also show one new one-over-one double-hung windows at the secondary north elevation located approximately in the middle of the existing brick elevation.

Evaluation

The rooftop additions at 728 and 726, although built before the extension’s designation and not reviewed by the Board, are clad in siding and successfully differentiate themselves from the building’s historic brick facades. The dog-legs have been infilled with brick and alley-scape is consistently brick at the rear elevations.



Figure 1: Existing conditions at the rear of the property

Cladding the first two floors of the proposed rear addition in brick would relate well to the buildings within the row and alley-scape. Cladding the first two floors in brick would also help to preserve the sense of the building’s original two-story volume.

The rooftop addition is set back sufficiently from the front elevation that the historic roofline of the rowhouse is maintained and the two-story volume of the building preserved.

The guideline *Additions to Historic Buildings* reads: “Any roof-top addition should be located far enough behind the existing cornice so that it is hidden from view by pedestrians on the street. If this is not possible, the design of the addition or its screening should be compatible with the character of the building.” Rooftop additions that are not seen from the street are the preferred expansion solution within the historic district. However, 732 is located on the edge of the historic district adjacent to a large mixed-use development site on H Street and across the street from unregulated buildings, many with large additions. The visual impact of a visible rooftop addition would have less of an impact on the historic streetscape than elsewhere within the historic district.



Figure 1: Rooftop mock-up indication

height and location of proposed rooftop addition.

The concept for the rear addition infilling the dog-leg is a compatible alteration. Many buildings within the row have had their dog-leg filled in and the alterations to the rear would not be visible from the street.

The north elevation has no designed composition or architectural features, and the introduction of a punched window opening would not damage or alter important character-defining features of the property. The rectangular shape and one-over-one double-hung configuration would maintain the utilitarian nature of the façade and relate well to the one-over-one double-hung windows at the primary elevation.

The proposal does not include existing plan drawings or building sections, and it is unclear if the rooftop addition would be built on top of the existing roof or if the roof assembly is being removed and the new addition lowered down to the height of the interior ceiling. Removing the roof assembly and lowering the floor at the third-floor addition can be an effective solution to reduce visibility from the street, however, the overall extent of demolition of the building needs to be clarified to ensure that it is consistent with the Board's regulations (DCMR 10-C, Section 305).

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the revised concept to be compatible with the historic district and to delegate further review to staff with the condition that the following drawings be developed and submitted:

- 1. Documentation confirming that substantial demolition is not proposed;*
- 2. A building section confirming the new third floor does not intersect the windows at the front elevation.*