

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

Landmark/District:	Dupont Circle HD	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1716 17th Street, NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	September 22, 2016	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	16-602	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Kim Elliott	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

GME Attache Development 1 LLC, with plans prepared by Bonstra/Haresign Architects, seeks conceptual design review to add a 3-story rear addition to a 2-story rowhouse for conversion to 7 apartment units in the Dupont Circle Historic District.

Property Description

The rowhouse built by Peter Fersinger in 1891 is part of a mixed residential and commercial block with single family rowhouses and larger-scale apartment buildings.

Proposal

The project calls for demolition of the rear ell and a 3-story addition that overlaps the main block of the house. The 3rd story is set back 18'-10" from the façade, and will include a roof deck in front of the addition. The new construction will be painted brick at the north elevation and fiber cement panel at the rear and south elevations. The front façade is in relatively good shape and will be maintained and restored as needed including historically appropriate replacement windows, and repair of the cast iron front stairs and other character-defining architectural features. The proposed plans locate the utility meters below the existing stair.

Evaluation

The existing house sits on a deep 130' lot, and is set amongst a variety of building scales, styles, and heights. The rear elevations of buildings on this alley exhibit a hodgepodge of treatments, without a consistent rhythm, scale, depth, or pattern. Within this extremely varied context, the proposed design is not incompatible. The addition extends 14'-10" beyond the original house and overlaps the main block on a deep site. This proposal is consistent with other projects the Board has approved where the overlapping addition is set far enough back from the facade, is not visible from the street, and maintains a sufficient amount of the main block of the building. The rear façade could be improved by being consistent with the architectural details – such as adding the soldier brick course at all floor levels, instead of just at the third floor. Also, any additional design detailing to the roof edge at the rear and sides would make the addition a more coherent design.

Due to the conversion to seven units, there is quite a bit of demolition, but the plans indicate that the majority of the floor joists and part of the rear wall of the main block of the house will be maintained. As such, the project does not constitute demolition as defined in the historic preservation regulations.

The specifications for the proposed window replacements and other exterior repair or replacement work should be coordinated with HPO to ensure that they are consistent with the Board's standards and guidelines. While the utility meters are shown underneath the front stairs, the applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with their electrical engineer and Pepco to ensure that this space is sufficient for the meters required, and if it is not, an interior utility room must be provided.

Although the sightline study drawing is not entirely convincing that the addition would not be visible from street view, HPO conducted a flag test with the applicants documenting four flag locations that proved that there would be no visibility along 17th Street. While the test day did not include a sightline from Riggs Place, further study should be done to confirm there is no visibility from this angle.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board find the concept consistent with the historic district and consistent with the preservation act and to delegate final approval to staff with the following recommendations:

- 1. Sightline study and flag test from Riggs Place confirms no visibility of addition;*
- 2. Utility meters are located inside if the proposed exterior stair location is not sufficient;*
- 3. Continue to develop design details of the rear addition*