

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

Landmark/District:	Dupont Circle HD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1626 Riggs Pl, NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	October 27, 2016	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	16-617	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Kim Elliott	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

BriStar Properties LLC, with plans prepared by R. Michael Cross Design Group, seeks conceptual design review for a two-story rear addition on a rowhouse in the Dupont Circle Historic District.

Property Description

1626 is part of a coordinated row of 13 houses on the south side of Riggs Place designed by architect Harvey L. Page and built between 1892-1889 by developers Addison & Larcombe. The original Queen Anne architecture is very intact both front and rear. The rear of these buildings has a rigorous continuity, with flat rear facades, regular window composition, and all but the end unit built to the same depth. Several houses have had one-story doglegs that were added in the 20th century, including 1626 Riggs, which has a modest one-story wing that extends 10'-4" deep and is 8'-4" wide.

There have been very few alterations along the rear of this row. Two notable exceptions are at 1616 Riggs and 1624 Riggs. At 1616 Riggs there was a 2-story plus partial 3rd story rear addition; while the original construction of this addition could not be located, it is known that it was re-clad in copper about 12 years ago. At 1624, a two-story rear addition, measuring approximately 10' deep and extending across 2/3rds of the rear wall, was constructed sometime between 2009 and 2012. The recorded permit for this addition called for a one-story addition.

Proposal

The project calls for removing the one-story dog-leg and construction of a two-story rear addition with a roof deck on top. The new addition would extend 10'-1" deep and span the width of the lot; it would be clad in brick at the first floor and diamond shaped copper shingles at the second floor. The new fenestration would match the scale and proportions of the existing house. The metal roof deck railing on top of the addition would be set back approximately 1' on all three sides.

Because the proposal is for a renovation converting the house into two, two-level condo units, there is a significant amount of interior demolition—all interior walls, the stair, and two levels of the rear masonry wall would be removed. The plans specify that the roof and the floor joists will be retained and sistered with new joists as needed.

The existing windows will be retained on the front elevation, with the exception of the basement windows, which will be replaced in-kind. The brickwork, front stoop and railing will be repaired as needed. A utility closet will be located under the front stair in an existing carved out space.

Evaluation

The original proposal called for a three story addition and a roof deck atop the main block of the house. While this size and type of addition would be compatible on many blocks in the Dupont Circle Historic District, HPO and the community identified the unique coordinated and intact rear condition as an important character-defining feature that required a more respectful approach. While typically providing substantial flexibility on rear elevations to row buildings under the normal circumstances in which these rear elevations do not have important character-defining features and are often much-altered, the Board has sometimes identified rear elevations or conditions that must be considered in the context of proposals for alterations. As an example, the Board has identified the rear elevations in the 1700 block of Q Street -- a consistent row of 21 houses in which each house has a semi-hexagonal three-story rear bays – as significant, and has only approved two-story additions so that the rhythm of the entire row would be maintained.

The architect has been working with HPO, the ANC, the DCC, and the neighbors to work toward a compatible solution that respects the history, scale, and integrity of this unique row. The compatibility of the design has been improved by reducing the massing, raising the quality of materials, and paying attention to architectural detailing. Reducing the addition to two stories has helped maintain the visibility at the third floor level of the continuous rear façade along the entire row. Setting the roof deck railing back also helps to this end, but a setback of 3 feet on all three sides is recommend so that the visibility of the railing is minimized.

The depth of the proposed addition—10'-1" is compatible. The adjacent property at 1628 has a dogleg that is 20' long, although it is only 1 story tall (at 17'-10" tall) and is not the full width of the property. The property on the other side at 1624 has a two-story addition that matches the depth of the proposed addition, although it is not the full width of the building. While the proposed addition is the full width and two-stories tall, the massing remains subordinate to the main house.

The chosen materials relate specifically to the historic row in a way that many rear additions do not. The use of brick is an obvious and appropriate choice, and the diamond-shaped copper shingle cladding is a specific reference to the use of copper on the front elevations in this row.

The scope of demolition is extensive, and it is not entirely clear how the joists will be maintained as indicated when all of the interior walls, the stair, rear wall and load-bearing components are being removed. The proposal should be modified to maintain the original rear wall within the building and the extent of demolition further explained and minimized.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board find the concept generally consistent with the preservation act and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act with the following provisions:

- 1) increase the roof deck setback to 3' on all sides;*
- 2) maintain the rear brick wall of the original house and incorporate it into the existing design;*
- 3) further document how the extent of demolition will not result in substantial demolition, and work to incorporate more of the existing structure into the new plans.*