HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Landmark/District:	**Dupont Circle HD**	(**X**) Agenda
Address:	**1630 Riggs Pl, NW**	( ) Consent
		(**X**) Concept
Meeting Date:	**October 27, 2016**	(**X**) Alteration
Case Number:	**16-608**	( ) New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	**Kim Elliott**	(**)** Demolition
		( ) Subdivision

Riggs Place Land Trust with plans prepared by ADG+G Architects seeks conceptual design review for 1630 Riggs Place for a two-story rear addition on a rowhouse in the Dupont Circle Historic District.

Property Description
1630 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. Another unique feature that remains on three of the houses on this row (including at 1630) are the original outdoor toilet rooms, accessible only from the rear yard.

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 proposal calls for underpinning an additional 1'-3" depth at the basement, removing the exterior toilet room, and construction of a two-story rear addition with a roof deck on top. The new addition would extend 12'-4" and span the width of the lot; it will be built in brick. The configuration of the windows would be 2 over 2 to match the existing windows, however the scale, size, and alignment of the windows does not correspond with the windows in the original building. The metal roof deck railing on top of the addition would be set back 3' on all three sides, and a spiral stair extends from the roof deck to the rear yard.

Because the proposal is for a renovation converting the house into three 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 proposal calls for replacing the windows at the front elevation to match existing and to repair and repoint the masonry and the existing stair and railings. Utility meters will be located under the front stair.

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 3' on all three sides also helps to this end minimizing visibility of the railing.

The depth of the proposed addition—12'-4" 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. 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 brick corbeling and rowlock headers are fitting details, however, the alignment and scale of the fenestration could relate more to the historic rear elevations.

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) *maintain the rear brick wall of the original house and incorporate it into the existing design;*
2) *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;*
3) *reconfigure the composition of the rear elevation windows to more closely relate to the scale and alignment of the historic openings;*
4) *confirm that front elevation windows will be wood windows*