

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

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Property Address:	<b>1637 17<sup>th</sup> Street NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Dupont Circle Historic District</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>May 27, 2021</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>21-318</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration

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Working with architect Steve Fotiu, owner Callagroup 1641 17th Street LLC and restaurant Dupont Italian Kitchen propose to add an enclosed seating area on the R Street side of this corner restaurant. Designed by George Santmyers, the building was constructed in 1928 as an eight-unit apartment building over a first floor store. The building is brick with decorative cast stone features, including a continuous band of scrollwork between the two floors.

The apartment entrance, located midway along the 17<sup>th</sup> Street façade, is recessed, surrounded by limestone trim, and denoted by two cast stone shields above it on the second floor. A canted corner entrance provides access to the street-level restaurant. The storefront is lined with projecting bays composed of large display windows over stone bases with decorative metal vent covers (most are now missing) and framed at the top with a metal cornice embossed with a strip of egg-and-dart-like panels and occasional rosettes. The bay roof is continuous around the entire building and at the entrances features coffered wood ceilings. It is believed that this roof was originally flat but has been built up to its current shed roof form.

**Previous Review**

In 2001, Dupont Italian Kitchen proposed a similar addition, which was denied by the Board. While plans were not available to review, the staff report describes it as a 14 x 16' enclosure, whose design was "as glassy and open as possible." It included a flat roof, with the possibility of being glass, and large sliding windows. The Board found the concept inconsistent with the character of the historic district.

**Proposal**

The current proposal is for a 13 x 16' enclosure in the same location as the 2001 application where it would take the place of existing outdoor seating. It would feature a wood base, sliding metal windows, and a gently sloping metal roof with metal end panels. The addition would necessitate demolition of the original bay except for the eastern end wall. The metal roof would continue over the corner entry.

**Evaluation**

This building, while seeming to exhibit much change over the years, is actually quite intact in its articulated form of projecting bays broken at the entrances and covered by a continuous roof. The bays at the south end of the edifice have unfortunately been infilled with brick and the Public Space inappropriately added to the interior, but at the north end and around the corner on R Street, the bays and entry features are intact. It is likely the original flat roof structure exists under the current sloped surface on both sides of the building.

The Board has approved restaurant enclosures, but the matters of proportion, original features, and context must be taken into account in each review. Here, a case could be made that the proposed addition is designed with a feeling of lightness, but it is a sizable addition to a narrow building face and is deeper

than the building is tall. This unbalanced proportionality coupled with a heavier enclosure than was previously denied (sloped roof with solid end panels) does not represent a compatible addition to the building.

The original design of the building has fairly ornate bays on both elevations, which contribute to its character and which should be retained. The restaurant already features a fixed awning on the 17<sup>th</sup> Street side with an additional extendable awning. An enclosure on the R Street side would demolish original features and effectively engulf the entire lower floor, fully blocking it from view. It should be noted that there are other restaurants to the immediate east on R Street and approving an enclosure at the subject property could be interpreted as a precedent for these businesses to apply for permanent enclosures on their façades.

In summary, the concept and conditions are largely unchanged from the applicant's previous submission, and the staff does not see a rationale for the Board to change its decision that the proposal is compatible with the historic district.

**Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board deny the concept as inconsistent with the Act, reaffirming its 2001 decision that the proposal is incompatible with the Dupont Circle Historic District.*

*Staff Contact: Anne Brockett*