

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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Dupont Circle HD</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>1722 Swann Street NW</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>March 23, 2017</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>17-072</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Kim Elliott</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Owner Michelle Bullard, with plans prepared by Cunningham|Quill Architects, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a 3-story plus basement and loft level row house on a vacant lot on Swann Street in the Dupont Circle Historic District.

**Property Description**

The owner of the lot also owns the house at 1724 Swann Street which was built in 1895 with a wrap-around porch and an unusual 28' setback that is unique on this row of Swann Street. All of the other houses on this block share the same front street plane. According to Sanborn maps, the 1724 lot was a double lot – subdivided into two lots sometime after 1927. There was a rear alley building built on what is now lot 1722, but no record of any house ever occupying this lot. The majority of the south side of this row is comprised of 3 story bayfront rowhouses and 2 story porch-front rowhouses.

**Proposal**

The proposal calls for a 3-story plus basement plus loft penthouse infill rowhouse for 4 condominium units. The parti calls for a design that navigates between the two adjacent facades of 1720 and 1724 Swann, with the main façade of the new construction set back about 8' from the façade and the porch aligned with the face of 1720. The entry for three of the units would be through the front porch door, while a basement stair entry under the front porch would access the basement unit. Utility meters will be located in a closet under the porch. A continuous public hallway at the basement level would provide access for all units to the rear of the property for access for trash disposal and to two parking spaces.

The massing is similar in height and depth to the 3-story rowhouse to the east with the main massing of the proposed design about 8' shorter in height than 1720, and the 4<sup>th</sup> story loft level equal to the roof level of 1720. The depth of the project is 3' deeper than the dogleg at the rear of 1720. In addition, the loft level is set back from the north façade 24'-9" and set back from the west façade by 3'-9" to minimize its visibility from Swann Street. The footprint at the rear of the building steps back to allow for the bay windows on 1724 to remain exposed.

The building will be brick on all elevations with 2 over 2 aluminum clad wood windows and a metal panel penthouse with casement windows at the rear elevation.

**Evaluation**

The unusually large setback of the house at 1724 creates a unique challenge for an infill rowhouse in this context and the design team has tested several different partis in consultation with the ANC, neighbors, and HPO over the last several months. The design solution to create a

front porch feature helps relate the new construction to both 1724 and 1720 and provides a bridge between their two very different setbacks. The design relates in scale and through the architectural porch-front expression to 1724, while the face of the porch and the three-story height relates to the plane and massing of 1720 and the rowhouses to the east.

While the overall footprint and projection of the porch correspond to the proportions of the porch-front typology, some refinements to the design are recommended to improve its compatibility. Pulling the porch stairs out from the footprint of the porch (instead of recessed into it) would provide a more generous and obvious entry. As currently designed, the basement stairs are also cut into the footprint of the porch, creating a condition where the porch and porch railing are pushed back to accommodate it, resulting in an odd proportion and relationship leaving just 4' of habitable porch. An alternative solution would be to bring some of the stair run parallel or perpendicular to the porch in order to get the headroom under the porch and retain more of a true porch depth; alternatively, the basement stair could be relocated inside the house.

The overall height and massing of the new construction is compatible, with the proposed design slightly shorter than the main mass of its neighbor at 1720 and only about 3' deeper at the rear. The design and scale relates to the block, and it incorporates architectural details that are harmonious with the rowhouse typology. The set back at the west side to accommodate the architectural side bay of 1724 retains rather than covers up this feature and its windows.

The exterior materials of brick with two over two aluminum clad wood windows are consistent with the character of the neighborhood and compatible with this row. While the penthouse loft level is clad in aluminum panel, it is set back from the front and west of the house to minimize its visibility. As the design progresses, additional fenestration within the penthouse, especially on the west elevation if code permits, could help lighten and articulate the feature. Similarly, the detailing of the penthouse should continue to be studied with a finished roof edge provided to ensure that it doesn't simply read as an unfinished metal box.

### **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) The front porch and basement stair relationship should continue to be studied and refined as outlined above;*
- 2) The details and finish of the penthouse should continue to be developed;*
- 3) It is recommended that final approval be delegated to HPO.*