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

Property Address:	1322-26 18th Street NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Dupont Circle Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	March 24, 2022	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	22-144	X	Alteration
			New Construction
			Demolition

Working with PGN Architects, owner Julio Murillo of MMG Development seeks concept review to add behind and on top of three rowhouses in the Dupont Circle Historic District. The 3-story-plus-basement houses were part of a row of four built in 1882 by developer John Sherman, each with a two-story rear ell. The houses have long been used for institutional and commercial purposes, notably as the Emerson Institute. The house at 1322 has been altered significantly through the loss of its front bay, front steps, and dormer, as well as the replacement of the rear ell with a taller one.

Project Description

The project proposes to convert the property to 39 residential units, replacing the existing rear ells with a 6-story addition. The addition would sit atop the back half of the existing buildings, set back 20 feet from the façade at the 5th floor and 25 feet at the 6th. The addition would be clad in vertically seamed metal panels above the existing roofline and square and horizontally oriented panels at the rear. Punched sash windows are proposed in the north side wall, where the property abuts a driveway leading to the loading dock of the adjacent building.

At the front of the property, the proposal includes some aspects that are beneficial to the preservation of the buildings and some that will need revising. The missing bay and dormer at 1322 will be rebuilt to match the others, however, the front steps are not proposed for reconstruction to allow the existing basement entry to serve as an egress route. The original front door location will be infilled with casement windows. At 1326, a door is proposed in one of the front window openings in the bay and windows and doors are to be replaced throughout the buildings.

Evaluation and Recommendation

HPO fully supports reconstruction of the bay and dormer at 1322 and takes no issue with not restoring the stair for egress purposes. Removing the rear wings and replacing them with a sizeable addition is also supportable given their relatively minor size and importance to the buildings. However, due to the visibility of the addition from the north, south, and directly across the street, the overall height of the current design is not compatible with buildings or the standard that the Board has applied to additions to contributing buildings.

The addition is especially visible from north on 18th Street and from Massachusetts Avenue. It appears that it would be considerably more visible than the perspective rendering shown on page A.21 (see photos below). The 6th floor especially is problematic as it gives the building a top-

heavy appearance and disrupts the proportionality of the horizontal base provided by the three historic rowhouses.

A 5th floor of simple design could be compatible in this location, but it should be set back to the rear of the original buildings' main block – essentially in the place of the rear ells – which is a standard generally applied by the Board to rowhouse additions. The 5th floor would remain visible from the northeast but given the context of non-contributing buildings to either side and taller buildings behind it, the addition would not be overtly apparent against this backdrop.

The proposal to lengthen and widen a window in the front bay of 1326 to make a door is inconsistent with the Board's *Preservation and Design Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows*. The Guidelines expressly state that adding a door into a projecting bay is not compatible with historic rowhouses, nor is lowering the berm and adding a second leadwalk.

Other recommendations include the following:

- The visible brick side wall of 1326 should be retained as it steps down toward the rear.
- The historic vestibule materials, stained glass transoms, and front doors should be retained.
- The use of brick on first four floors of the addition where visible on the side should be considered.
- Proposed rooftop mechanical equipment should be shown in the plans and renderings.
- At 1322, the original size of the main entry should be restored and compatible doors installed, rather than filling the opening with windows.

HPO recommends that the Board approve a 5-story addition set behind the original block of 1322-26 18th Street with no new basement door opening in 1326 and in consideration of the bulleted comments above with final approval delegated to staff.

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Google Streetview showing the visibility of the roofline of 1322-26 18th Street NW

