

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

Landmark/District:	Dupont Circle HD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1761-1763 N Street, NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	November 3, 2016	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	16-684	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Kim Elliott	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The Middle East Institute, with plans prepared by Gensler Architects, seeks conceptual design review of a four-story plus basement rear addition behind two row buildings in the Dupont Circle Historic District.

Property Description

The property contains two contributing buildings that are internally connected. 1763 N Street is a large brick and stone double-bay Romanesque Revival townhouse that was built in 1885 for owner John Sherman. 1761 N Street, set back 8'6" from the building line, is a three story brick building with a slate mansard roof that was built as a private stable in 1890 for owner J.B. Eustis. A second brick stable building, with a gabled roof and crowned with cupola, is located at the rear of 1761 and was apparently constructed at the same time as the front building.

Proposal

The project calls for removing the two-story and three-story appendages at the rear of the buildings and constructing a five-level addition that would extend 46' into the rear yard and would rise 52' tall as measured from the rear grade. The rear stable will remain. Portions of the rear wall at both properties will be removed to make connections to the new construction. A new circulation core with an egress stair and elevator would be located in the existing volume of 1763. The roofs on both properties would be altered to accommodate the fifth floor across the full width of the addition. The height of this top floor would be substantially taller than usual due to transferring the structural system of the building to 3 foot deep beams at the top floor in order to create a clear span for the 2nd floor conference room. The addition would be finished in limestone and styled in a contemporary version of traditional Islamic architecture. A portion of the fifth floor would be visible from street view above and behind 1761 and has been designed as a slate-clad mansard roof with dormer windows.

Evaluation

While the addition is large in comparison to the historic buildings, with a substantially greater footprint and one story taller than 1761, it is not unprecedented for the block. In 2013, the Board approved a concept for a large rear addition (six stories) behind the five houses at 1743-1755 as part of a project that minimized the extent of demolition, included restoration of significant interior spaces, and did not result in the addition being visible from street views.

However, while the size of the addition could be appropriate for its context, the extent of structural demolition and the visibility of the fifth floor addition should be further evaluated and ideally reduced. The overall height of the rear addition above 1761 is apparently being driven by structural engineering

to allow for a column free space on the lower floors, and the architect has worked to make design changes to ameliorate this visible section. While the idea of a second mansard roof behind the existing is one that could result in a form and vocabulary that is familiar to the block, the size and scale of the roof and dormers is uncomfortably large compared to the historic roofline just in front of it, resulting in a top heavy and oversized appearance. Reducing the height and/or pulling the fifth floor further back from the rear of the building to reduce the sightlines of the addition, and reducing the size of the dormers if they are to remain partially visible, are recommended.

The extent of demolition of the floor and roof assemblies in 1763 is being caused by the location of the new elevator and stair in the building's original footprint. Given that the historic building footprint is quite small, and that the new addition is large, a better preservation solution would be to locate one or both of these new circulation elements in the new construction in order to maintain more of the structural elements in 1763.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board find the concept generally consistent with the historic district and consistent with the preservation act, and delegate final approval to staff, with the following conditions:

- 1. Lower the height and/or further pull back the proposed top floor at 1761 to eliminate or reduce its visibility from street view, and reduce the scale of the dormer windows to be more compatible with the historic building;*
- 2. Locate one or more of the core elements in the new construction to minimize structural demolition in the historic buildings.*