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

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Landmark/District: **Foggy Bottom Historic District** (x) Agenda  
Address: **2507 I Street NW**

Meeting Date: **December 20, 2018** (x) Alteration  
Case Number: **19-040** (x) Concept

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The applicant, Mateusz Dzierzanowski, agent for property owner 2507 I St. Holdings LLC (Charles Paret/Coloma River Capital), requests the Board’s review of a concept to construct a three-story rear addition to this 1892 rowhouse, to alter its façade, and to perform a “full gut renovation.” The rear yard would be mostly paved for a parking space and a patio.

**Addition**

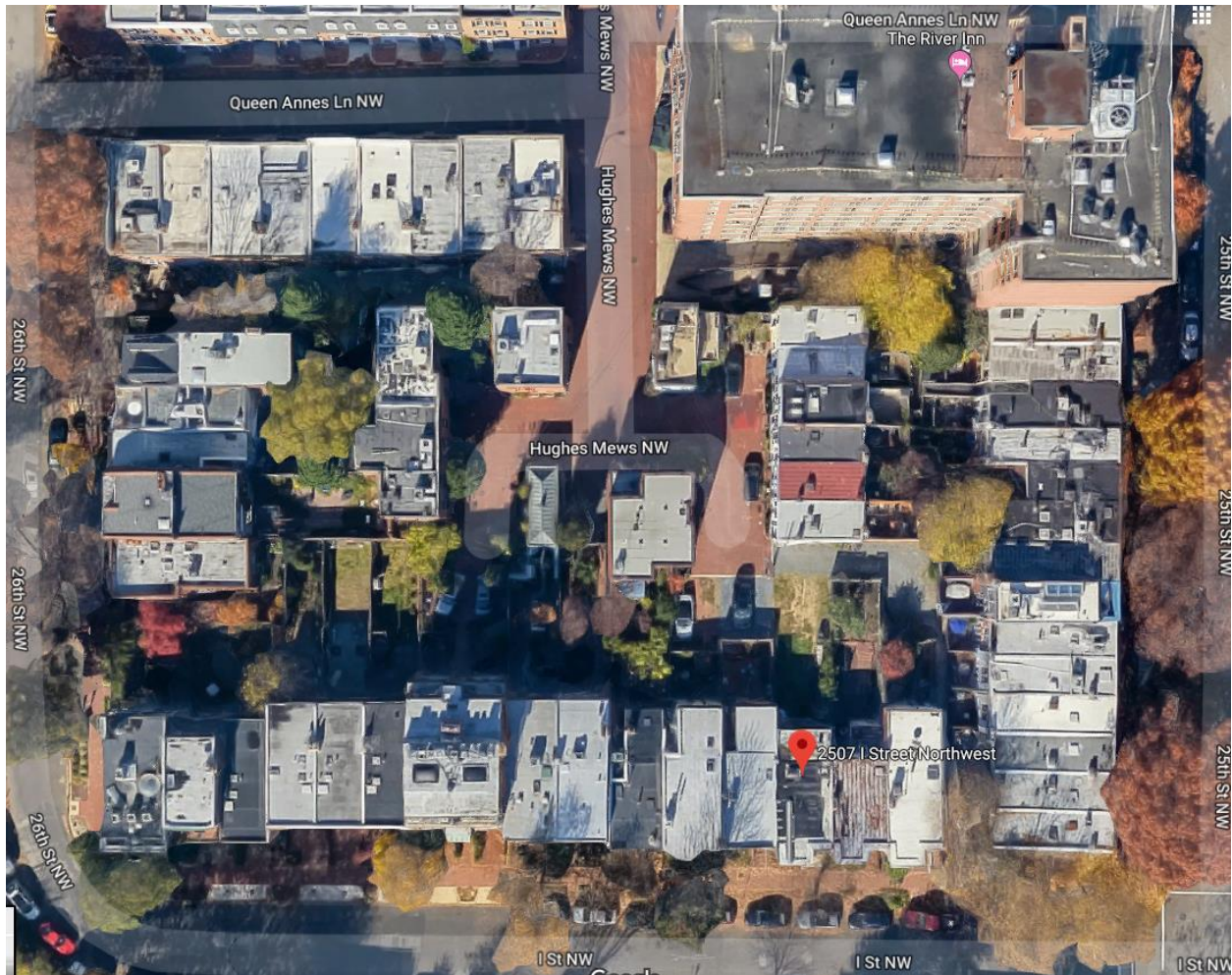
The addition would more than double the depth of the building, taking it from about 27 feet to 59 (not counting the front bay projection into public space). This would make it the deepest building on this side of the street, even accounting for the various setbacks of the houses. The other houses have been little altered in terms of extensions, as can be seen from the aerial photo below.

The addition would not only be deeper than, but also taller than, the subject house and its neighbors. This is incompatible, as the volume of the addition would overwhelm the smaller main block and those of adjacent properties. It would create an odd massing that reverses a traditional hierarchy of telescoping down toward the rear. A two-story house typically has a two-story wing, but often only a one-story one and almost never a three-story. This is certainly true of Foggy Bottom, with an exception discussed below.

Foggy Bottom is a very small historic district and, when designated, had only 135 contributing buildings out of 226 total. The heights of the historic buildings are remarkably consistent at two stories. Only four contributing buildings were erected at three stories; most of those at three stories or taller today are noncontributing, plus there is a handful whose grades have been cut down to enter at the basement, and several with partial or full third-story additions, mostly built before designation of the district.

The historic buildings on Square 16 were all built at two stories’ height. One, 913 26<sup>th</sup> Street, had its basement exposed by the cutting down of the front yard, and two—917 Hughes Mews and 912 25<sup>th</sup> Street—had third stories added, but before the historic district was established. These anomalies have not so altered the historic district that the present proposal could be considered consistent or typical of the district’s pattern of development. And these two upward additions are on the main blocks, not on an oddly larger rear addition. There are no two-story buildings with three-story wings. This square can be roughly divided into a southern portion of two-story buildings (at least originally), and a northern one of three-story noncontributing houses

and taller multi-family buildings and hotels. When a new house was constructed on Hughes Mews behind the 2500 block of I, the Board limited it to two stories, consistent with that block. When another was erected north of the three-story Queen Anne's Lane, and barely visible from the historic homes, it was permitted to be three stories, consistent with the pattern of the modern houses.



In short, there is no precedent on the square for an addition of this size or a massing like this. Across the street, on Square 17, there are a few houses with taller rear additions, the more prominent of which predate the historic district. But the Board approved a three-story addition behind the two-story 2512 I Street in 2005 citing its distinct context, namely that it stands at the southern boundary of the historic district, with the addition visible mainly from highways and apartment buildings beyond. And the Board acknowledged that that particular row had been transformed by two earlier, and slightly larger additions immediately to the west. It could be argued that approval of that 2005 concept was a mistake, but for the purposes of the present case, we must consider the subject property's different context.

The roof addition is to be clad in an unspecified material, which looks like it may be fiber-cement panel. The Board has sometimes recommended in favor of limited use of such panels,

typically on a rear-facing elevation only, unless the other elevations are obscured from view. This is not the sort of house that takes a penthouse.

### **Front alterations**

The proposal to remove the bay window and replace later doors and windows is welcome. The original arches have all been removed, so some deviation from the originals will probably be necessary. But the proposed replacement windows do not attempt to match what would have been one-over-one windows in 1892, similar to those at 2503 I; they instead seem to be emulating the mid-twentieth-century multi-light replacement windows next door at 2505 I.

The front door has been widened, including the arch. It would be most compatible to have the opening rebuilt to the original width, but at the very least, it would be nice to avoid having the asymmetrical doorway shown.

The proposed basement window opening is an improvement, in that it would be reduced in size. But the present opening and the dugout front yard was the result of a former owner's unpermitted work, a continuing violation. If the Board permits the completion of a basement window, then it should require the restoration of the former front-yard grade.

### **Interior work and demolition**

The Board does not have jurisdiction to review interior work here, except to the extent that a lot of structural demolition is proposed. A description including "full gut renovation" might be construed as indicating that the floor framing would be removed which, in combination with the removal of the rear wall, may constitute demolition of the building in significant part. The floor framing should stay, unless it is demonstrated that it is unsound.

### **Site work at rear**

The rear yard would be dug out and fenced, with the surface covered with paving for a sunken patio, and for a parking pad at alley grade, bounded by a retaining wall and fence. While the amount of paving could raise issues with the Department of Energy and the Environment, the work is sufficiently compatible facing this alley.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept as retaining the character of the house and as compatible with the character of the historic district, with the conditions that:*

- 1. the addition be of two stories, not three;*
- 2. the façade's door and window configurations be revised;*
- 3. the floor framing not be demolished;*
- 4. the original front-yard grade be restored; and*
- 5. further review of the project be delegated to staff.*