

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address: **1307 Riggs St NW**
Landmark/District: **Fourteenth Street Historic District**
ANC: **2F**

Meeting Date: **June 23, 2016**
H.P.A. Number: **#16-454**
Staff Reviewer: **Brendan Meyer**

() Agenda
(**x**) Consent Calendar
() Denial Calendar
(**x**) Concept Review
() Permit
(**x**) Alteration
() New Construction
() Demolition
() Subdivision

The applicant, Guy Prudhomme, Trustee of Riggs Street Land Trust, owner, seeks concept review for a three-floor rear addition on a three-story brick rowhouse at 1307 Riggs Street NW, a contributing building in the Fourteenth Street Historic District. Plans were prepared by Akseizer Design Group.

Property Description and Context

The 1300 block of Riggs Street NW consists of two and three story rowhouses built in groups of about five houses each. Three-story rowhouses and mansard rowhouses predominate on the east half of the block while two-story rowhouses occupy the west half. 1307 Riggs was built as part of a row of six houses (1305 to 1315) in 1875 by builders Dearing & Johnson. All houses in the group are the same design, with a varying degree of alteration. Houses are two stories on top of a tall raised basement. The third story is a slate mansard roof that includes two dormers, the one above the first floor projection being nested in an inset tower. The ornament of the house is spare at the cornice (boxed soffit and a frieze of brick panels) and eclectic at the door surround with tall attenuated proportions and Italianate brackets at the hood. 1307 Riggs specifically has a modern stair instead of a historic cast iron stair, a much altered door surround stripped of its ornament and a slate roof deteriorated and open in some sections. All houses in the row are still at their original depth of 36 feet without rear wings or courts.

Project Summary

The proposed rear addition would be the full width of the lot and extend the house almost 14 feet. Projecting balconies at the first and second floors (the grade of the rear lot is 9 feet below the first floor) supported on metal posts would be flanked by a spiral stair from grade to the second floor. The rear addition would be clad in EIFS, a stucco over Styrofoam panel system. At the front, the slate mansard would be repaired and restored and the front door surround would be restored to its original design to match 1311 Riggs.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The addition itself is not incompatible with the house or historic district. The very limited view to 14th Street from which the addition might have been visible is blocked by existing buildings. The depth of the addition approximates the size of a one- or two-room rear wing that one would expect to find on a historic rowhouse of this size.

The submitted concept drawings show all the structural floor framing and roof framing to be removed, which would be a concern under Section 305.1 of the historic preservation regulations which defines what constitutes a demolition under the act.¹ Fortunately, this matter has been corrected in the permit plans already prepared by the applicant and shared with staff which shows that all of the floor framing will remain. The amount of roof framing to be replaced will be behind the mansard ridge and not visible from the street. Taken together, these revisions will substantially retain the structural components of the building and avoid demolishing the building.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for a three story rear addition 14 feet deep at 1307 Riggs Street NW to be compatible with the character of the historic district, consistent with the purpose of the preservation act, and that final approval be delegated to Staff, on the condition that a substantial portion of the structural components of the building not be removed.

¹ District of Columbia Municipal Regulations Title 10A Historic Preservation, Section 305.1(b), “Work considered demolition under the Act shall include, but is not limited to, any of the following, as determined by the Mayor’s Agent:… The removal or destruction of all or a substantial portion of the structural components of the building, such as structural walls, floor assemblies, and roofs;”