

---

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

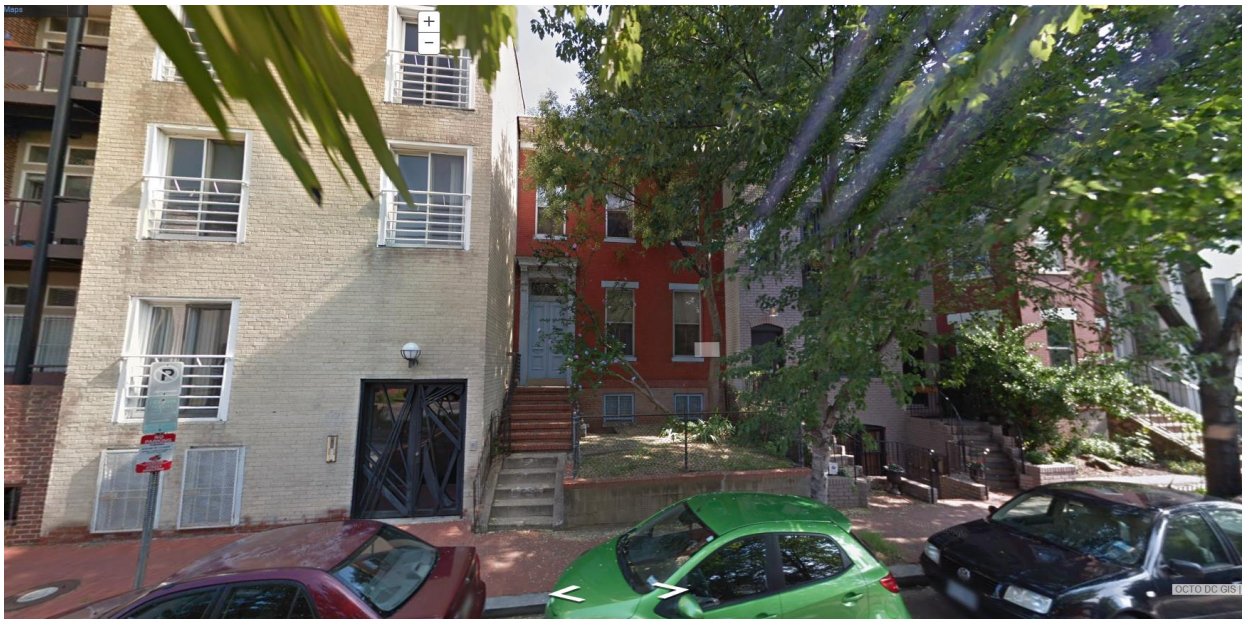
---

Property Address: **1523 Church Street, NW**  
Landmark/District: **14<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District**

Meeting Date: **January 24, 2019**  
H.P.A. Number: **19-077**

**X** Agenda  
Consent Calendar  
**X** Concept Review  
**X** Alteration  
New Construction  
Demolition

Landis Construction, representing owners Dell and Saun Robinson, seek conceptual design review for construction of a two-story rear addition, a roof top stair addition and deck, replacement windows and doors, replacement of the front stairs, and excavation of the front yard to provide access to a basement apartment.



*1523 Church Street, NW (red brick house at center)*

**Property History and Description**

1523 Church Street is a two-story, flat-front brick house set above a partially-raised basement. It was constructed in 1875 and retains its original elevated front yard, although the retaining wall and front stairs to the house are not original.

The house is immediately adjacent to a non-contributing 1950s apartment building to the west that extends out to the edge of the sidewalk and a non-contributing (possibly refaced historic building) to the east. An assortment of contributing rowhouses extends further to the east. A large surface parking lot for St. Luke's Church is located immediately across the street.

## **Proposal**

The project includes removal of a small brick ell wing and construction of a full-width, two-story rear addition, an enclosed stair access addition on the roof and a roof deck over the new rear addition, two-over-two replacement Marvin clad wood windows, elongating the basement windows by dropping their sills, replacement front doors, replacement of the non-original brick stairs with a blue-stone and brick stair with a metal railing, and creation of an at-grade entrance and small patio area in front of the house with a raised planter at the edge of the sidewalk.

## **Evaluation**

The rear and roof addition and roof deck are compatible in height, size and proportions for the house and the historic district. The adjacency of the house to taller surrounding properties and the setback of the roof addition and deck will ensure that they will not be visible from public street view.

The replacement windows are consistent with the Board's window standards, replicating the appearance and profiles of the originals. While the detailing of the replacement front stairs and railing should be further developed and detailed in the construction drawings, the proportions and materials are compatible with character of the property and district.

The paneled front doors appear to be original to the house, exhibiting recessed panels, raised moldings, and decorative detailing. Given their distinctive character, all efforts to repair them should be made prior to considering replacement. If replacement is necessary, the new doors should be developed following the recommendations in the HPRB's *Guideline for Door Repair and Replacement*:

*2.1 If an historic door cannot reasonably be repaired, or if the door is not original, the replacement should match the original door design and materials as closely as possible if known. Replacement doors should have design characteristics that are compatible and appropriate for the building's architectural character and era of construction.*

*2.2 A replacement door's design should be based on the original door if present or an evaluation of the building's character, original doors on similar buildings, or historic documentation.*

*2.3 Replacement doors on primary elevations should be compatible in material, composition of panels and glazing, profile and overall appearance with the building.*

The proposal to elongate the basement windows by dropping the sills is consistent with the Board's *Guideline for Basement Entrances and Windows*:

*4.1 Lowering the sills of existing basement windows can be achieved when it has minimal visual impact on the building's façade and does not result in a perceptible increase in window dimensions as seen from the street.*

The extent of removal of the front yard grade is somewhat greater than is typically found compatible. However, the guideline acknowledges that some greater level of excavation may be acceptable given the particular condition of the street:

*3.1 Basement entrances and areaways should be subordinate to and not dominate the setting of historic property unless significant alterations to the site or street have fundamentally changed the original condition.*

With the property immediately flanked by non-contributing building – one of which builds out entirely over the front yard and the other which has excavated down to the sidewalk level – the proposal is sufficiently compatible in providing a balance between paved area and green space, and in retaining a sense of the original elevated grade in the raised planter. The raised planter will also provide a visual privacy buffer for the patio area behind.

**Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept plans compatible with the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District and that final approval be delegated to staff.*

*HPO Contact: Steve Callcott*