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

Property Address:	1534 14th Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	14th Street Historic District	X Consent Calendar Concept Review
Meeting Date:	February 23, 2017	X Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	16-254	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	Demolition Subdivision

Mediolanum LLC, with plans prepared by Demian Wilbur Architects, seeks conceptual design review for construction of rear and roof additions to a three-story commercial building in the 14th Street Historic District.

Property Description

1534 14th Street is a three-story, flat-front brick row building that was constructed in 1887 as a commercial building with residential above. The building features a projecting storefront on the first floor, segmental arched two-over-two windows on the upper floors, and is capped by a robust corbelled brick cornice. The rear of the building has a two-story brick ell-wing with a side court. Based on its date of construction and architectural characteristics, the building is contributing to the 14th Street Historic District.

The building's lot measures 18' wide by 100' deep, running east-west. It also includes a 10' wide pipe-stem portion of lot that extends south to the alley that runs through the square.

The building abuts a non-contributing four-story commercial and residential building to the south. To the north is the four-story Berrett School, a former DC public school constructed in 1889 that has been converted to residences.

Proposal

The project calls for a first story addition that would fill the lot, including the pipe-stem and within the side court; a second and third story addition that would extend approximately 88 feet deep and extend the full width of the lot, and two rooftop mezzanines. The front mezzanine would be 14 feet back from the facade and the rear mezzanine would be flush with the new back wall. An internal court would separate the mezzanine additions and allow the retention of two party-line windows on the south face of the school. The rear elevation of the addition would have a single large opening on each floor with projecting balconies on the third and mezzanine level. The cladding material of the addition is not specified but the architects have stated that they are exploring brick and other siding options.

Evaluation

While not explicitly called out in the plans, the full-width rear addition would likely result in the demolition of all but the north party wall of the existing rear ell wing. While the wing is a

large portion of the first floor of the building, the Board has traditionally been lenient in the removal of rear ell-wings, particularly in commercial contexts where these types of wings have often been substantially altered or removed and where the historic context of the alleys is not strong.

The primary preservation impact of the proposal is the potential visibility of the front mezzanine roof addition. Due to the configuration of the buildings on each side – with an open court to the north and a setback fourth floor on the building to the south, the addition will have some visibility in perspective from both north and south. Some minor visibility of the addition from these views would not be visually jarring in this commercial context as long as the addition is not seen over top of the corbelled cornice. In an effort to reduce the potential for visibility, the plans have been modified since the initial submission to lower the height of the mezzanine from 45' 11 ½" to 44' 0" [the revised is shown in a supplemental drawing labelled "Longitudinal Section 1" dated 2/14/17]. While this revision may be sufficient to ensure that the addition will not be seen over the top of the building, the HPO's recommendation for concept approval is conditioned on a field test mock up being conducted to confirm this, and additional adjustments to the height and setback being made if the addition remains visible.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for additions to be compatible with the character of the historic district, contingent on a field test to confirm that the front roof mezzanine will not be visible over the top of the building from any street view, and to delegate final approval to staff.