

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

Landmark/District:	Grant Circle HD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	7 Grant Circle, NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	September 22, 2016	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	16-614	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Kim Elliott	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Owner Jorge Euceda, with plans prepared by architect Scott Sterl, seeks conceptual design review for a 3-story rear and roof addition atop a two-story rowhouse in the Grant Circle Historic District.

Property Description

The house is one in a coordinated row of seven porch-fronted, two-story masonry houses that were designed by Merrill T. Vaughn in 1915. Under separate permits, the interior of the property has been gutted down to the joists and studs with the rear wall open.

Proposal

The project calls for a three-story, 14' deep rear addition that would extend the full width of the house. The third floor of the addition would extend up and over the main block of the house, with a setback of 12'-9" from the front and 4' from the back. At the rear, a balcony would span the full width of the house at the 3rd floor, with shorter length balconies at the first and second floors; a metal stair would connect the second floor to the rear yard. A front balcony is also proposed that would be behind the tall pent roof. The addition would be clad in fiber cement siding.

Evaluation

Rear additions are common and widespread in the Grant Circle Historic District. Most of the houses around the Circle were originally built with a two-story dogleg or sleeping porch. Many of those have been altered, removed and expanded over the years.

The unusual property boundaries of this lot result in an addition that is substantially wider than is typical; while other properties in this row have parallel lot lines, 7 Grant Circle is unique because the footprint of the house takes on the lot's radiating shape, making the rear façade much wider than the front. More importantly, however, the overall depth of the addition is not incompatible with the neighboring rear additions. Given the context of rear elevations along this portion of the Circle, which doesn't exhibit a consistent rhythm, coherent pattern, or harmonious treatment of materials, the rear addition is compatible with the established pattern of other additions in the historic district.

The more challenging aspect of the proposal from a compatibility standpoint is the third floor addition which overlaps onto the main block of the house. The applicant has worked very hard to reduce the size of the 3rd floor—setting it back 12'-9" from the front and 4' at the rear and eliminating the roof deck—which helps minimize the perception of the height from the rear yard.

The Board's guidance to property owners on roof additions provides the following:

Adding vertically to a historic building is generally discouraged as such additions typically alter significant features, such as its roof line, height, relationship with surrounding buildings, and overall form and mass. Additions on top of a building can sometimes be achieved when they are not visible from street views, do not result in the removal or alteration of important character-defining features of the building or streetscape, and are compatible with their context. If conditions allow, this approach typically requires a substantial setback, the extent of which depends on the height of the addition, the height of the building, the height of adjacent buildings, the topography of the area, the width of the street, the relationship of the subject building to its surroundings, and views from public vantage points surrounding the building.

Accordingly, the Board has sometimes approved roof additions that overlap on to the main block of a house when it is not visible from the street and when it fits into the site context considering the design principles of setback, scale, massing, rhythm, height, and proportions. In other instances, the Board has found that roof additions are not compatible where the context doesn't include roof additions, even in instances where they were not visible. In a recent case at 2341 Ashmead Place in the Kalorama Triangle Historic District, the Board concluded that a roof addition was not appropriate, as there were no other such additions in the row. Similarly, the Board has consistently found roof additions and roof decks to be incompatible in the LeDroit Park Historic District, where no such roof additions exist.

With the exception of the roof addition at 15 Grant Circle, permitted just prior to the designation of the historic district, the district does not yet have third floor roof additions. As this is the first case that has raised the issue in the Grant Circle Historic District since it was designated in 2015 – a district that was nominated by the community in response to concerns about demolition and pop-ups – the HPO seeks the Board's guidance on how it wants to apply its policies on roof additions to this new historic district as it will set an important precedent for the future management of the neighborhood.

If the Board determines that a roof addition can be compatible for this property, the plans will need to be revised to reflect the results of several flag tests that were conducted in coordination with HPO. HPO attended three separate flag tests at the property in which the front of the addition was moved back to the point where it would not be visible; however, the plans in the Board's packet do not appear to reflect the results of these adjustments. It will be important to complete a final flag test now that the design has been submitted to HPRB to confirm that there is no visibility from Grant Circle and the radiating streets.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board find the concept for a two-story rear addition to be compatible with the character of the historic district, and seeks the Board's guidance on the third floor roof addition. If the Board determines that a third floor addition is compatible, revised plans should be prepared and a flag test should be performed to confirm that the addition will have no visibility from street views.

7 Grant Circle (with green lawn) 2014



7 Grant Circle – current condition



Alley view of 10 thru 6 Grant Circle



1960 SANBORN MAP

