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

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Property Address:	<b>4624 Verplanck Place NW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Samuel and Harriet Burrows House</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
		<input type="checkbox"/> Permit Review
Meeting Date:	<b>September 22, 2022</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>22-436</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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The applicant, Eric F. Teran, agent for property owner Bryan H. Kanefield, seeks concept review to demolish an existing rear addition and replace it with a new one-story addition approximately within the same footprint. The existing house is a two-story individual landmark listed in 2011 for its importance to Washington’s rural past. The existing addition to be demolished was constructed in 1972 and possess neither historic nor architectural merit.

**Property Description and Context**

Samuel and Harriet Burrows built this farmhouse around 1850 off River Road near Ellicott Street. During the Civil War, the government built Fort Bayard upon parts of the Burrows family’s land and Samuel and Harriet hosted Union soldiers and even President Abraham Lincoln at their home on multiple occasions. Typical of other farmers in rural DC, Samuel Burrows sold much of his land to suburban developers in 1896 and died not too long after. His wife, Harriet, lived in the house until her death in 1923. In 1928, also typical of DC’s rural structures, the Burrows house was relocated. The house was moved about nine blocks to Verplanck Place. It was after that move that most of the house’s neighboring structures, in subdivisions such as American University Park, were built.

The original circa 1850 frame farmhouse was built in a vernacular style with Italianate details, such as the tall, narrow windows that open to the front wrap-around porch, and a series of modillions interspersed with heavy brackets at the cornice. A two-story rear frame wing with a projecting hexagonal bay on the east side was likely added during the late nineteenth century. In 1972, a rear addition was added to the rear gable wall. It is clad in German lap siding painted to match the rest of the house, and has high, fixed, plate-glass windows. The addition’s pitched roof is sheathed with standing seam metal.



**Image 1: The front of the Samuel and Harriet Burrows House, which will not be affected by the proposed work.**

## Proposal

The applicant proposes to demolish the 1972 addition and replace it with a new flat-roofed addition roughly within the same footprint. A new deck with seating and a hot tub will be constructed outside the original footprint and be reached by stairs from a rear door in the new addition. The proposed addition features a series of tall, narrow windows below transom lights. Above the addition, in the gable wall of the historic house, two new single windows are planned. The entire addition has an approximate height of fifteen feet, nine inches, and is expected to be clad in stucco tinted to match the original house.

## Evaluation

The proposed project offers an opportunity to enhance the existing relationship between the historic building and its 1972 addition, which is visible from the public alley. The introduction of a flat roof can be an improvement over the sloped roof of the 1972 addition by revealing more of the landmark's original massing. The 1972 addition, with its varied rooflines of different heights, awkwardly grips the rear of the landmark and blocks much of the historic gable wall. The proposed flat roof of the new addition will stand at a more consistent height of approximately fifteen feet, nine inches, which will present a more simplified appearance.

That improved change in roof form, however, will increase the overall massing of the proposed addition in ways that will not enhance the landmark. Though the proposed roof will be about eight feet shorter than the highest point of the 1972 roof, it will also be about five feet taller than the lowest point of the 1972 roof. Revisions to the proposal, particularly in terms of its height, would result in a more compatible addition that better realizes the full potential this design opportunity presents for enhancing the landmark.

To fully enhance the landmark, as the historic preservation law encourages, it is recommended that the proposed roof height of the new addition be lowered to be better aligned with the height of the historic front porch of the landmark (see Image 2). That height would be approximately two-and-a-half feet lower than the currently proposed roof height. Lowering the roof by that amount would accomplish two goals: 1) it would reveal enough of the historic gable wall to allow the two new windows proposed for that wall to be sized like the landmark's existing windows, and 2) it would allow the new rear addition to relate to and echo the character-defining porch at the front of the historic house.



**Image 2: The red line indicates the approximate maximum height, as recommended by HPO, for the new addition (south elevation), which is the current height of the historic front porch (north elevation).**

As proposed currently, the new plans include two single windows be placed in the historic gable wall directly above the addition's flat roof. The height of the new addition forces those new windows to be both shorter in length and higher in location than the landmark's other second-story windows. This creates an awkward relation and partially negates the benefit of revealing more of the historic gable wall. By lowering the addition's flat roof, those new windows can be sized and placed to match the landmark's existing windows (see Image 3). Though the windows will be new, their traditional size and configuration will be typical of the fenestration in the rear gable walls of similar historic structures. It is possible that such windows existed in the wall before the 1972 addition. Such windows will thus enhance the historic appearance of the rear of the house and reap the full benefits of revealing more of the gable wall.



**Image 3: The two red rectangles indicate the approximate size, location, and configuration of the proposed gable wall windows, as recommended by HPO staff, if the height of the new addition is lowered.**

Lowering the new addition's roof will further benefit the rear of the landmark by relating to the historic front porch. The home was originally landmarked primarily for its connection to Washington's rural past, yet the 1972 addition mostly destroyed any clues of that past for observers at the rear of the house. Porches were nearly ubiquitous among Washington's rural houses and country estates, especially those homes inspired by the picturesque styles of the mid to late nineteenth century, like the Burrows House. At the time, builders were influenced by designers such as Andrew Jackson Downing who championed the use of porches, verandas, and sunrooms to help blur the boundary between interior and exterior.

Of the District's rare remaining rural residences, single-story porches are visible, character-defining features of the Lincoln Cottage (built 1842-1843), the Amberger Farmhouse (built circa 1850), the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site (built 1855-1859), the Tucker-Means House (built circa 1858), the Jost-Kuhn House (built 1859), the Dietrich and Augusta Edel Farmhouse (built 1859), and the Scheele-Brown Farmhouse (built 1865).

Lowering the height of the proposed addition will help it relate not only to the front of the landmark, but also to the house's rare, remaining rural brethren. As proposed, the tall, narrow windows of the addition, minus the transom windows, will also relate to the character-defining, Italianate-style windows that open to the historic porch at the front of the house, which will further highlight that relation while still keeping new and old appropriately distinct.

It should be noted that the current height of the proposed addition is approximately four feet lower than what was originally proposed by the applicant. Following discussions with staff, the applicant lowered the proposed flat roof height from nearly nineteen feet tall to the currently proposed fifteen feet, nine inches. As proposed, the current interior ceiling height of the addition would vary between twelve feet, nine inches and fourteen feet. If the roof was lowered as recommended by HPO, the interior ceiling height would be between approximately ten feet, three inches and eleven feet, six inches tall.

It should also be noted that, regardless of the flat roof height, an awkward relationship would still exist on the eastern elevation between the addition's wall and the hexagonal bay of the historic house. HPO, though, does not recommend further changes be made to address that issue. The awkward wall alignment is a leftover of the 1972 addition, and it seems reasonable for the applicant to retain that footprint. After discussions with staff, the applicant has agreed to adjust the wall connection by bringing it inward approximately ten inches so that the proposed addition meets the historic house at the corner of the bay rather than against the bay's wall, as the 1972 addition does. That concession removes a small portion of interior square footage and will greatly enhance the appearance of the east elevation compared to its present configuration.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board find the concept for a new rear addition replacing a 1972 addition at 4624 Verplanck Place, NW, to be compatible with the character of the landmark and the purposes of the preservation act, on the conditions that 1) the height of the new rear addition's flat roof be lowered to be better align with the historic front porch and 2) that the two new gable wall windows be placed symmetrically and sized and placed to match the structure's existing second-story windows. It is recommended that final permit approval be delegated to staff.*

*Staff contact: Todd Jones*