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

Property Address:	421 T Street NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	LeDroit Park Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consent Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Concept Review
		<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Review
Meeting Date:	September 24, 2020	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	20-300	<input type="checkbox"/>	New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/>	Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Subdivision

The applicant, owner Vitis Investments LLC, seeks continuing concept design review to combine three lots into one and add a three-story rear addition to 421 T Street NW, a freestanding three-story house which contributes to the LeDroit Park Historic District. At the June 2020 meeting the Board approved the height and massing of the addition and advised the applicant to revise the scale and complexity of the roof components. Plans were prepared by Square 134 Architects.

Property Description and Context

From the June 2020 staff report, “The house is one of the original houses in the LeDroit Park subdivision, built in 1876 by architect James H. McGill. It exhibits a high degree of integrity—except for its missing front porch—and shares many characteristics with the other McGill houses of the historic district. The brick house has an asymmetrical cross-axial form capped by a complex roof encompassing the third floor. The front façade is dominated by the face of the slender axis which has a board-and-batten room nested on top of a brick bay. Set back from that is the wide cross-axis which is nearly square in proportion. Like the front façade, the west elevation of the wide axis displays a board-and-batten and brick bay composition. The narrow axis has a tall gable roof which crosses with the mansard roof of the wide axis. All four sides of the slate roof are articulated by a variety of different dormers, balconies and chimneys. The brick two-story rear wing extending off the back of the house has a simple gable roof and terminates with an ornate chimney. A non-original one-story addition is attached to the west side of the rear wing.”

Proposal

The applicant has maintained the height and massing aspects of the design approved by the Board in June and has made a number of revisions to the elevations and roof components. On the west elevation, visible from the intersection of 5th & T, the projecting bay has been narrowed and shifted slightly away from the historic house. The dormer has been narrowed and pulled forward of the roof eaves. The other roof dormer on this side has been shrunk and moved back from the eave to disengage it from the façade. On the east elevation the oriel at the eaves has been reduced in size and the wall materials have been rebalanced in favor of a more uniform masonry pattern. This side of the gable roof has been aligned into a single roof plane instead of two nested planes. At the rear, the projection that had hung off the corner of the second and third floors has been pulled away from the east façade and is now attached solely to the rear elevation. The fenestration on all sides has generally been reduced in size and quantity.

Evaluation

The applicant has revised the concept design in the direction advised by the Board and has produced a concept design compatible with the house and historic district.

In general, the rear addition has been reorganized and pulled back within itself so that its components are less prominent than in the original concept. The reordering has produced a balance of components and a

scale of roofscape more consistent and sympathetic with the the historic house. The best example of this on the west elevation where the diminishment and rearrangement of the projecting bay and its capping dormer is a crisper echo of the combined bay and porch on the historic house. The changes to the size and arrangement of components on the other elevations, while subtle, accrue to a simpler composition in scale with the historic house.

Staff has further analyzed the potential prominence of the rear elevation as it will be seen from U Street between houses and cannot dispute the accuracy of the perspective presented by the applicant. It shows that the new addition will appear as a background element and that its roofline will be lower on the horizon than the rear eaves of the U Street houses. Based on other structures visible between U Street houses-- which are shorter but closer--the visibility of the rear addition will not be intrusive.¹

Recommendation

The HPO recommends the Board approve the subdivision and find the concept design for a three-story rear addition to 421 T Street NW to be compatible with the character of the house and historic district, and delegate final approval to Staff.

Staff contact: Brendan Meyer

¹ The one-story garage at 416 U Street and the side of the two-story elevation of 1911 5th Street.