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

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Property Address:	<b>611 Florida Avenue NW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>LeDroit Park Historic District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consent Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Concept Review
		<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Review
Meeting Date:	<b>September 30, 2021</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>21-413</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/>	Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/>	Subdivision

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The applicant, BDP 01 LLC represented by Halil Ates, seeks concept review to replace a two-story rear wing with a three-story rear wing and partial fourth floor addition at 611 Florida Avenue NW. The existing house is a three-story contributing rowhouse in the LeDroit Park Historic District. Plans were prepared by Lee Design Studio of Falls Church.

### **Property Description and Context**

The three-story brick rowhouse at 611 Florida Avenue NW is typical of the two- and three-story rowhouses on this block and much of the historic district. It was built in 1892 and displays common rowhouse forms including a projecting bay, clay tile turret roof, pressed metal cornice and trim, and a rusticated stone first floor. On the rear, the shallow main block is augmented by a brick rear wing of one and two stories.

### **Proposal**

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing rear wing and the roof of the main block and replace it with a new three-story, dogleg rear wing. The height of the new wing would align with the roof height of the rear of the main block. A 14-foot tall partial fourth floor addition (11 feet floor to ceiling plus a 3-foot parapet) would appear as a penthouse straddling the new wing and main block of the house and nest into the space created by demolishing the roof. The fourth floor would be setback ten feet from the rear elevation of the new wing and provide space for a walk-out terrace from the penthouse. There would also be a small roof deck on the new flat roof in front of the addition (drawing HPR 08).

### **Evaluation**

The addition was flag-tested by Staff (see Figure 1 below). The test showed that the front and east side of the penthouse would be clearly visible above the three neighboring two-story houses to the east (605, 607 and 609 Florida Avenue). The penthouse would be a plain contemporary form incompatible amongst the articulated roof forms of its neighbors. The penthouse would not be visible from directly in front of the house or from the west because the adjacent house on this side is an equivalent height to the subject property.

Additionally, the massing of an archetypal row house—with its tall main block and its shorter or equal height rear wing—should be considered in the context of LeDroit Park. No precedent for a rooftop addition taller than the main block of the house has been identified in this historic district.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the historic district enjoys a level of integrity that protects its suburban views between and behind buildings from large roof top intrusions even on the rear of houses. The Board has regularly protected this characteristic of LeDroit Park by declining to approve rear or roof top additions that are taller than

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<sup>1</sup> The few roof top structures that exist in LeDroit park, like the shed and deck visible on top of 503 Florida Avenue NW either predate the historic district or were built at an unknown date without Board review.

the main block of the house.<sup>2</sup> The submitted design is not conceptually different from applications regularly declined by the Board based on this principal. The burden is on the applicant to show that an exception to the Board's standards is appropriate in this case.<sup>3</sup>

Except for the penthouse and its problems of visibility and massing, the remaining components of the concept pose few concerns. Without the partial fourth floor the rear wing would be a size and form, and have fenestration compatible with a LeDroit Park rowhouse. The wall material of the wing is rendered as clapboard siding (presumably fiber cement) which would be a large amount of clapboard in an otherwise historic context of brick, but the Board is typically flexible on materials on secondary elevations facing alleys.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for a new three-story rear wing 611 Florida Avenue NW to be compatible with the character of the LeDroit Park Historic District, and consistent with the purpose of the preservation act, on the condition that the fourth-floor addition is removed from the concept design, and delegate final review to Staff.*



Figure 1. Flag test mock-up of front façade of proposed fourth floor, August 31, 2021.

Staff contact: Brendan Meyer

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<sup>2</sup> 513 Florida Ave NW (HPA 19-039) December 2018, the Board did not approve a third-floor addition on a two-story house. 324 U St NW (HPA 15-490) July 2015, the Board did not approve a three-story rear addition on a two-story house. 1852 3<sup>rd</sup> St NW (HPA 14-246) May 2014, the Board did not approve a three-story rear addition on a two-story house.

<sup>3</sup> DCMR 10C, 2001.3