

---

---

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

---

---

Landmark/District: **Mount Pleasant Historic District** (x) Agenda  
Address: **1715 Kenyon Street NW**

Meeting Date: **November 16, 2017** (x) Addition/alterations  
Case Number: **18-111** (x) Revised concept

---

---

The applicant, Dave Bloom, architect and agent for property owner Mahmood Nawaz, requests the Board’s review of a concept to: build a third-floor addition; reconstruct the rear of the house to fill in the porch and unify the rear elevation; demolish most of the house’s framing; and replace windows, the entry door, and the porch balustrade in front.

**Demolition**

The floor plans suggest the demolition of much of the building, although there are no drawings that state that the floor and roof framing would all be removed. The roof addition would necessitate the removal of the roof framing rearward of the mansard. The interior bearing walls are shown to be removed, as are the rear walls, which suggests that the joists they support would be removed unless new beams are put in place.

Retention of only the front and the party walls would constitute demolition of the building “in significant part” contrary to the purpose of the preservation law. (D.C. Official Code §§ 6-1101(b)(1)(a) and 6-1102(3) and 10C DCMR § 305.1) Because the applicant seeks an open floor plan, and the roof addition necessitates removal of most or all the roof framing, the applicant should strongly consider retaining the floor framing as well as most of the brick rear wall. The latter would better retain the rhythm of the row: brick ells bracketing frame porches that are nearly all filled in.

**Rear addition/alteration**

Filling in the remaining first-floor open porch is not preferred, but it is a sufficiently compatible alteration in light of the extent to which the other porches on the row have been filled. But it would be much more compatible to retain the rear wall of the brick ell and infill with frame beside it, even if there has to be some alteration to the openings in the masonry to accommodate the program’s fenestration.

The Board has previously found two-story, exterior, circular stairs to be compatible on Mount Pleasant rowhouses, but the two rear decks would be more compatible unified into a double porch. It is probably more practical structurally not to rely upon a cantilever to support the second-floor deck, and a roofed porch would cut off some views to the roof addition and deck.

**Roof addition and deck**

The expansion of an attic space into a partial third floor is a common enough alteration to Mount

Pleasant rowhouses and usually has been approved by the Board on the condition that the addition is not visible from the street(s) the subject property fronts. That means that any appurtenances, including mechanical equipment, vents and vent stacks, not be seen either, and that there be no visible raising of the parapets or firewalls along the sides of the rowhouse, nor conspicuous alterations made to conduct water from the addition roof over the roof ridge and into the front gutter.

There is only a single roof addition on the north side of the 1700 block of Kenyon; the Board approved that one in 2007 against the recommendation of the staff, which was then reluctant to support the first one on the block. There was already some precedent, however, as a roof addition and deck were constructed sometime in the 1990s, around the corner atop 3103 18<sup>th</sup> Street.

Invisibility from the front is not the only criterion, of course. A roof addition should generally be set forward of the rear wall of the building, to make it less prominent and retain the original roofline along the rear of the row. Setting it forward four feet is usually sufficient for the purpose, and in the present case, the more-than-ten-foot distance is plenty. That space is proposed to become a roof deck. Roof decks typically observe the same rules as roof additions. They, too, are most often set forward from the rear wall in order to obscure views to the deck and its supports atop sloped roofs. But a similar project was approved two doors down, at 1711 Kenyon, which entailed demolition and reconstruction of the infilled porches and the incorporation of a deck into the new roof, allowing the railing to be located near the rear wall plane.

#### **Alterations at the front of the house**

On the front of the house, the windows and doors and porch balustrade are proposed for replacement. The replacement door is to match the existing/original one, which is probably difficult to do exactly. Repairing the existing one, if possible, is encouraged, and the door appears sound enough to be retained and repaired. Staff will carefully review any proposed replacement.

The front windows are drawn with the proper configuration, except that the dormers were probably originally six-over-one sash (rather than six-over-six), like the larger windows below. Window-product information will have to be furnished for an eventual permit.

The house still has its original front-porch balustrade: wood, 33½ inches tall, and consisting of closely spaced rectangular balusters between a top and bottom rail. It has not been repainted in years, but it appears to be salvageable. That would be preferable to and cheaper than replacement in kind, and the old wood is likely superior to what may be used in replacement. The drawings call for replacement with a metal rail, but that would be incompatible with the character of the property and the historic district.

What does require replacement is the westernmost column supporting the porch. Unlike the other two fluted columns, this one—or at least its base and capital—is likely beyond repair.

The porch deck, which is reinforced concrete, probably also requires replacement, because there is a crack near the entrance that appears to cut entirely through the slab. The upper run of entry stairs is in poor to fair condition but could be repaired as it does not contain corroding rebar. The

lattice porch apron is shot and should be replaced with wood lattice framed by 1x4s. But the front elevation drawing suggests that the apron may be removed entirely. There are several other items that need repair, such as the cornice and the flashing on the stepped parapet.

### **Basement unit**

The creation of a second unit partly within the basement space may have implications for the appearance of the front of the building.

The plans show a bathroom in the front of the basement. That will presumably have a waste vent stack that comes out through the roof. It is unclear in the floor plans if this would be the case, but a stack emerging so far forward, near the roof ridge, would be a problem, because it would be seen from the street.

The basement plan also depicts a bedroom in front. Its emergency egress would be through windows under the porch that appear insufficient to meet the minimum clear opening size for the purpose. And as there is no section drawing of the building, we also cannot say whether those openings exceed the maximum 44-inch height above the basement floor. More problematic is the fact that those windows open onto a low space beneath that porch.

The addition of living units typically necessitates additional and separate meters. Because of their size, multiple-meter electrical boxes are especially problematic in front of homes. There are no meters depicted in the drawings, but one cost of dividing a home into multiple units is having to find a location for new meters that is not visible on the front of, or in front of, the home.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept and delegate further review to staff with the following conditions:*

- 1. that the house not be demolished “in significant part,” and its floor framing and rear masonry wall be retained even if modified;*
- 2. that the roof addition and any appurtenances—including but not limited to its roof, firewalls, mechanical equipment, vents or vent stacks, or new drainage features—not be visible from the Kenyon Street right of way;*
- 3. that the roof deck be incorporated into the reconstructed roof so that its deck framing is not exposed to view over the rear wall of the house;*
- 4. that the applicant consider uniting the rear decks as a two-story porch;*
- 5. that the front windows be of six-over-one double-hung sash of an appropriate material to be approved by staff, and to fit the original masonry or rough opening, with brick molds to match the originals and external muntins not to exceed 7/8-inch width;*
- 6. that any new electrical meters not be placed on the front of or in front of the house;*
- 7. that the front door be retained and repaired or closely matched with a new wood door;*
- 8. that the front porch balustrade be retained and repaired, or be matched in wood to its present height, design and material;*
- 9. that the staff review any other repairs to the front of the building, including removal or replacement of the porch apron.*

HPO Staff Contact: Tim Dennee

