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

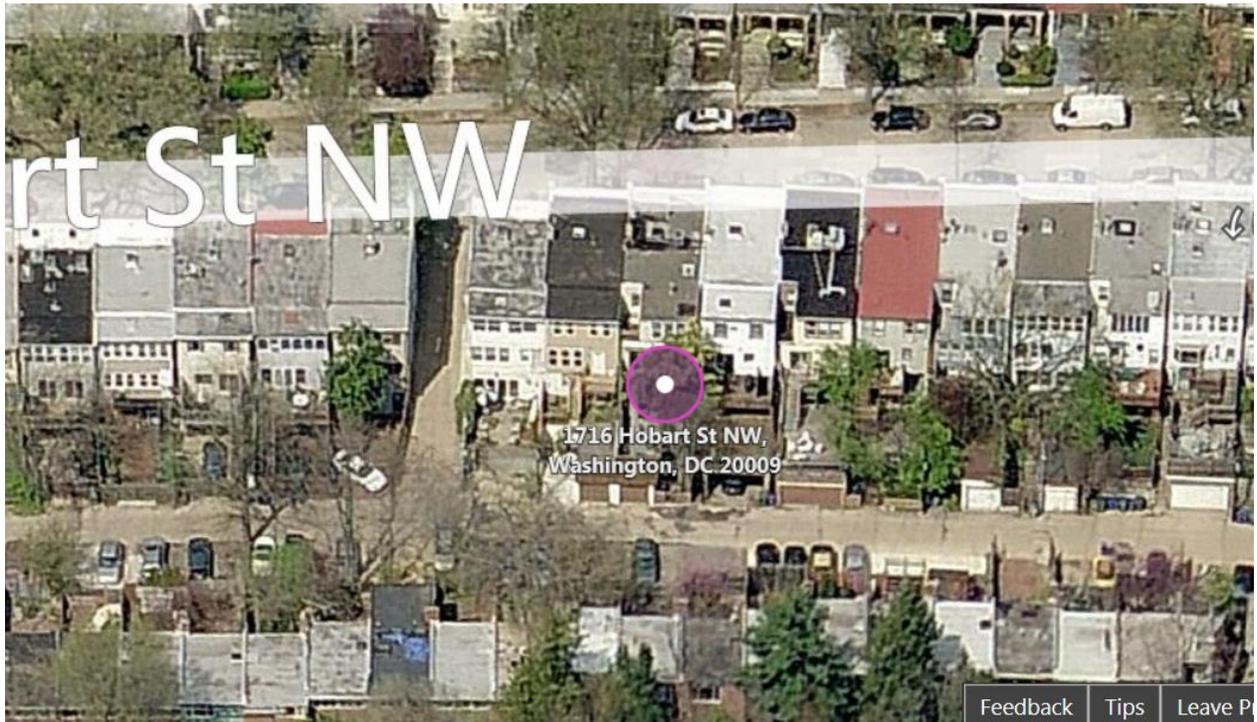
Landmark/District: **Mount Pleasant Historic District** (x) Agenda
Address: **1716 Hobart Street NW**

Meeting Date: **December 17, 2015** (x) Addition
Case Number: **16-046** (x) Alteration

Staff Reviewer: **Tim Dennée** (x) Concept

The applicant, Joshua Gobel (Four Brothers LLC), designer and agent for property owner Kerry Reichs, requests concept review for reconstructing the rear enclosed porch and adding a master bedroom suite in a partial story atop this two-story rowhouse.

The drawings are not very clear about the relationship of the rear of this building to the backs of the abutting rowhouses, but the proposal would essentially reconstruct upon the footprint of the present two-story enclosed porches. It would also fill in a recess at the second story, as other houses on the row have been altered, but it would cantilever further rearward a second-story office bump-out and second- and third-story decks.



The addition's materials are not specified. The deck railings appear to be metal, but like the unidentified siding, they are merely specified as "painted." These should be clarified and discussed at the hearing.

One is reluctant to commence rooftop additions on another block, especially one where the buildings are shallow and they lack attics. The present house has a false mansard, but it is low in profile. The Board approved a concept for a roof addition on a similar building at 1705 Hobart in 2013, but that project was apparently dropped by the owner. The only other roof addition on this street was not really an addition but an alteration of the attic roof slope at 1643. But the proposal is not really different in kind from the several Mount Pleasant attic extensions the Board has supported in the past and the many roof additions and taller rear additions the Board has supported elsewhere in which the standard applied has been to ensure that they are not visible from the street. That is, the Board has not taken the position that a roof addition is only possible if integrated into an existing mansarded attic, which has been the usual approach in Mount Pleasant, but rather that a more abrupt boxy shape on the roof might be compatible if it cannot be seen from the right of way in front.

It has not been demonstrated that this addition would not be visible from the street. The sightline drawing would seem to indicate so, and it appears to be fairly accurate as to the topography, but we can never be absolutely certain that an addition will be constructed as drawn. Further, the drawing does not account for typical features such as higher parapets above the party walls, which are constructed for fire separation (but may be avoided by the use of fire-rated wall and roof materials) or heightened chimneys or vents. The sightline is also taken from a point directly across the street and does not account for oblique views. The street drops toward Rock Creek, and the rowhouses step down in that direction; 1718 Hobart is a little bit lower, which raises the possibility that it would result in a glimpse of this project.¹

In addition to being invisible from the street, it is crucial that the roof addition also be set *forward* of the main rear wall plane, and those of the houses adjacent, in order to retain the roofline along the back of the row and make the roof addition recede. The drawings indicate this principle, proposing that it be set four feet forward.

Because the slope of the roof addition's roof is calculated to avoid visibility from the front, it rises toward the rear. In addition to making roof drainage difficult, it makes the rear wall taller than the first and second stories. It is recommended that the height of the roof addition come down about a foot to address the visibility issues from front and back. This would still give the new bedroom a higher ceiling than the house's present ones.

As the design of the rear elevation seems intended to have a clean, contemporary vocabulary albeit with more projections, this project may be an opportunity for the amelioration of the appearance of the structures that stand between it and the alley, particularly the ramshackle wood screening over the garage entrance, to make the whole more consistent in feeling and more open.

¹ A similar addition would not work atop 1718 Hobart, because 1720 stands on too low a grade and would not block views. It would also not work on 1720 or 1722, because their sides are exposed by the alley that separates them.

Recommendation

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

- 1. any permit be conditioned upon the roof addition and appurtenances such as mechanical equipment, chimneys, flues and vents being invisible from the Hobart Street right of way, with the drawings to indicate the same;*
- 2. the roof addition be reduced about a foot in height;*
- 3. the permit drawings portray the relationship between the proposed additions and the houses abutting, including showing the rear wall of the roof addition at least four feet forward of the rear walls of 1714 and 1718 Hobart;*
- 4. a stick test be conducted prior to permit application;*
- 5. if the stick test indicates that the addition would be visible from Hobart Street, the applicant must revise the project, or abandon the roof addition, or return to the Board; and*
- 6. the drawings specify compatible materials for siding and rails.*

