

---

---

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

---

---

Landmark/District:	<b>Mount Pleasant Historic District</b>	(x) Agenda
Address:	<b>1817 Lamont Street NW</b>	
Meeting Date:	<b>October 5, 2017</b>	(x) Addition
Case Number:	<b>17-423</b>	(x) Demolition
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Tim Dennée</b>	(x) Permit

---

---

The applicant, James Kilette, agent for owner Castlebuilt Bethesda II LLC (Todd Wood), requests the Board’s review of a permit to renovate this three-story 1909 rowhouse, including the construction of a rear addition.

**Addition**

The three-story addition would have a footprint of approximately 250 square feet, including filling in the court space next to the present wing, and putting the rearmost wall 12’4” deeper than the present one.

Many of the homes on this row have had rear porches enclosed, but few have received additions. The Board approved a deeper (16’6”) addition 1855 Lamont in 2014, because it stands on a much deeper lot. Later the same year, the Board also approved a three-story addition to the house next door, 1815 Lamont.

The permit drawings lack a site plan, which impairs the ability to judge the building relative to its neighbors, but HPO has supplied the photograph below for understanding the context. The present concept appears to be based upon the adjacent 1815 Lamont addition, having the same footprint. But in this instance, the proposed furthest projection, designed like enclosed porches or a bay, extends the full three-story height of the building, rather than a single story.

The purposes of the preservation law—to retain and adapt properties that contribute to the character of historic districts—suggest that the Board should entertain the expansion of rowhouses when the character and intactness of the rear of their rows are not so compelling as to prevent it. One of the reasons this row has been little added to is a zoning limitation on lot occupancy; many homes have freestanding garages in the rear yard.

When both the 1855 and 1815 Lamont additions were reviewed, one of the issues raised was the fact that the third stories of these houses are distinguished visually from the lower stories, front and rear. At the rear, the distinction is one of massing (the corner porches), of material (slate shingles), and the fact that the two-story sleeping porches terminate below the top floor. Both of those projects ended up distinguishing the third story with slate or faux-slate shingles. At 1815 Lamont, the Board was concerned about the demolition or alteration of the rear wing for its

effect on the rhythm of the entire row, but settled on allowing the extension of the house if the rearmost portion were only a story tall.

For these reasons, on the present project, the projecting bay should not stretch the full height of the house, but stop at the second floor, like the nearby sleeping porches. Even *front* bays typically terminate before the top story, as is observed on this row. At three stories, the proposed projection is relentless in its repetition of the same enclosed-porch fenestration on four levels. Further, if the “porches” extend up through the top floor, they muddy the distinction of that floor from what is below. It is recommended that this addition follow the general pattern established by 1815 Lamont, except that the rearmost projection could end below the third floor.



*A recent photo of the new addition behind 1815 Lamont Street. The subject property is immediately to the right, largely obscured by a crepe myrtle, but the rear of the similar 1813 Lamont is seen at left. With the exception of a couple of details, the 1815 project was successful.*

### **Demolition**

The plans call for the demolition of the entire rear wing and the rear wall of the main block, as well as the removal of the internal bearing walls and all the floor assemblies. Retained would be the roof, the front, and the two party walls.

Section 305.3 of the historic preservation regulations state that “[t]he filing of an application for a demolition permit shall be considered to incorporate a request for determination whether the property contributes to the character of a historic landmark or district pursuant to § 704 of this title.” Although the 1987 historic district nomination for Mount Pleasant was prepared before the National Register forms required a list of contributing and noncontributing buildings, the rows in the 1800 block of Lamont are cited in the text. The historic district’s period of

significance was said to extend from 1870 to 1949.<sup>1</sup> This row of 24 houses was erected by Kennedy and Davis to a design by A.H. Sonneman in 1909-1910, well within this period of significance. Both the subject property and the row as a whole retain a high degree of all seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, making them all contributing buildings. While the proposed addition affects the design, materials, setting, and thus the feeling of the property and the block, the proposed demolition threatens these to a much greater extent and puts in question whether the remaining structure could still be considered a contributing building after such work.

According to the regulations (§ 305.1), “[w]ork considered demolition under the Act shall include, but is not limited to, any of the following, as determined by the Mayor’s Agent:

- a) The removal or destruction of any façade;
- b) The removal or destruction of all or a substantial portion of the structural components of the building, such as structural walls, floor assemblies, and roofs;
- c) The removal or destruction of all or a substantial portion of the roof along with all or substantially all of one or more exterior walls;
- d) The removal or destruction of all or substantially all of an entire wing or appendage of the building, such as a rear ell, unless the wing lacks physical or historic integrity, or is not a character-defining feature;
- e) The removal or destruction of a substantial portion that includes character-defining features of the building or structure;
- f) The removal or destruction of all or a substantial portion of a designated interior landmark, unless the elements to be removed lack physical or historic integrity, or are not character-defining features; or
- g) Any removal or destruction requiring a partial demolition or raze permit under the D.C. Construction Code, including any demolition of non-bearing walls, interior finishes, or other interior non-bearing elements within a building where an interior space has been designated as a historic landmark.”

The proposed demolition certainly meets the above criteria **b** and **d**.

The Board has commonly supported the removal of rear walls if necessary for an addition, and has even supported the removal of a number of rear wings for the same reason, as long as they constituted a minor portion of the building. But relative to the house’s total amount of historic fabric, the removal of the amount proposed is very considerable. It is more than the Board has supported for landmarks or for contributing buildings, and this is because the removal of all the interior structural framing is added to the removal of the rear.

Section 305.2 of the regulations states that, “[i]n general, the determination whether a proposal involves destruction of a building ‘in significant part’ shall depend on the extent to which character-defining historic features, historic or structural integrity, historic materials, or ability to convey historic significance would be lost. This decision shall depend on all the facts and circumstances of the case.” The loss of the character-defining feature of the rear adds to the loss of materials and historic integrity through the loss of so much of the structure.

---

<sup>1</sup> Although this probably inadvertently excluded the landmark Ingleside estate house at 1818 Newton Street, discussed in the nomination, but which predated the suburban subdivision.

To cite a few recent Mount Pleasant cases, the Board found the initially proposed demolition at 3118-3120 16<sup>th</sup> Street (2015-2016), 1682 Irving (2014), 1821 Newton (2014) and 3430 Brown (2009) to be excessive, and the projects were revised. This suggests that such extensive demolition is not necessary for the expansion of these homes or their conversion to multiple units. Concept approvals for rehabs at 1756 Kilbourne (2015), 3110 19<sup>th</sup> (2014), 1855 Lamont (2014) were conditioned on retention of their floor framing.

With regard to demolition, the preservation law directs that “[n]o permit shall be issued unless the Mayor finds that issuance of the permit is necessary in the public interest.” (D.C. Official Code § 6-1104(e)) Among the purposes of the law intended to serve the public interest is the “protection, enhancement and perpetuation of improvements... of [historic] districts” and specifically, while adapting them, the retention and enhancement of “those properties which contribute to the character of the historic district.” (D.C. Official Code § 6-1101) This building would be substantially gone, except for the front. If adaptation causes a contributing property to be insufficiently protected, retained or enhanced, then the project is contrary to the purposes of the preservation law and should not be permitted.

### **Other considerations**

The lack of a site plan indicates that there will be no site work requested or allowed under this permit. Similarly, the drawings do not show any work to be done on the front of the building, except that the additional meters shall be placed down in an existing areaway rather than in the yard or on the face of the building or its porch. It is not immediately evident whether the air-conditioning units will be placed out of sight on the roof or in the rear yard.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board recommend against clearance of the permit application, because the proposed demolition is too great, and because the addition needs some revision to be compatible with the row. As proposed, the work would be contrary to the purposes of the preservation law.*