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

Landmark/District:	Mount Pleasant Historic District	(x) Agenda
Address:	3118 Mount Pleasant Street NW	
Meeting Date:	September 23, 2021	(x) Alteration/Addition
Case Number:	21-501	(x) Concept

The applicant, Scott Patterson, agent for property owner 3118 Mount Pleasant LLC, requests the Board’s review of a concept to construct a three-story rear addition and to make alterations at front of this three-story 1910 commercial building, originally a residence. The use would be residential over office over retail.

Addition

A three-story, very contemporary rear addition is proposed, cantilevering behind the original wing, visually framed and sided with metal panels. Although distinct from the building’s fenestration, its proposed windows have a regular rhythm and vertical orientation.

The new work would extend a story taller than the original ell, but it is within a context of three-story buildings. The addition is neither overwhelming in itself, nor does it fail to remain subordinate to the historic main block. The new work adds little to the building’s footprint, only partially filling in the court beside the ell and thereby retaining a sense of the original wing’s width.

The principal preservation issue is the degree of demolition proposed. A ramshackle one-story-over-basement addition would be removed, as would much of the rear ell and the rear wall of the main block. Perhaps optimistically, the south side wall is said to be largely retained, with openings altered, but its encapsulation at the lower floors will likely lead to further demolition in the near term or later. Still, the amount of demolition is consistent with what the Board has found tolerable in previous cases—*if the main block’s floor framing is mostly retained*.¹

Front alterations

The present storefront would be reconstructed, and a new areaway would be provided to access a deeper basement retail space.

HPO is loath to recommend an areaway in front of a porch, something expressly discouraged by the *Preservation and Design Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows*. It ticks many of the boxes for being problematic when viewed against the goals and principles for basement entrances, including being very prominent visible from the street; not being especially appropriate for the context; and being permanent (i.e., necessary once the basement level is altered as proposed), in addition to projecting into the public sidewalk. It runs the risk of

¹ The first floor will have to be fire-separated from the basement use.

encouraging more such areaways. There are, however, several buildings nearby whose basements have received entrances and even display windows after commercial conversion. The subject property has been altered as much as any other, with the sidewalk already sloped down to the storefront, and the entrance sunk further. Only for the reason that the entire front of the basement has already been altered, HPO reluctantly supports the further excavation and construction of new stairs and rails. Any railing bounding the front of the areaway should stand no nearer the street than the ends of the railings on the next-door landings. At least the areaway would be tucked between the extended stoops of the abutting buildings.

Sinking the basement storefront provides a chance to patch and expose the brick knee wall at the front of the porch. There may be some challenges matching repairs to the old masonry (or replacing it with an open railing, as original and as still seen at 3116), but it is discouraged to paint the brick a presently fashionable black. Instead, the important principle is maintaining a visual relationship between the color and texture of the materials at the basement level and those of the building above. The basement storefront should rise all the way to the underside of the porch slab, simply filling the void beneath. The excavation will expose or require additional masonry at the bottom of the walls bounding the opening, and that too must sufficiently match.

This project offers the opportunity to perform a bit of restorative work to mitigate the demolition at rear and the excavation in front. Obviously, the best approach is a complete restoration of the front porch, especially suited to a conversion back to the building's original residential function. But if the main floor is to remain commercial and the front porch storefront infill is to be reconstructed, its south end should be realigned beneath the roof beam. The entire display window should be set back behind or at the rear edge of the porch piers, so that proper columns can return, matching those at next-door 3116 Mount Pleasant. Such columns can then obscure the corners of the storefront framing behind. (See next page for original elevations.)

The application calls for the replacement of all doors and windows, but they are so far unspecified as to product. The façade windows will have to be ones that meets the guidelines and regulations: one-over-one double- or single-hungs of compatible materials and profiles, to fit the original masonry openings, including arched upper sash at the third floor and brick molds to match the existing.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept and delegate further review to staff, with the conditions that: 1) the floor framing be mostly retained within the main block; 2) the replacement windows be compatible, as described above and in the guidelines; 3) the front porch be restored, or the reconstruction of its storefront infill be approached as described above, set back behind columns to match the lost originals; and 4) the porch masonry not be painted black, and not be painted at all if it is avoidable.



Elevation Three Houses
For Mr. H. Monte
100 West
Mt. Pleasant Street, N.Y.

Scale 1/4" = 1'-0"

H. L. Blinn
100 West
Mt. Pleasant