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

Property Address:	1128 6th Street, NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Mount Vernon Square Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
		<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	April 25, 2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	#19-215	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Brendan Meyer	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The applicant, owner 1128 Sixth Street LLC, seeks concept approval for a four-story rear addition to a two-story contributing rowhouse in the Mount Vernon Square Historic district. Plans were prepared by Axis Architects.

Property Description and Context

The 1100 block of 6th Street is characterized by two- and three-story rowhouses built between 1880 and 1900. The houses feature projecting bays and corbeled brick cornices. The west side of the street includes a temple-front church and the east side of the street is the T.F. Schneider block with features cornices and rooflines articulated with turrets and mansards. 1128 rests on a tall basement and is the northmost house in a group of five houses built in 1881. At the rear the house still possesses its rear wing and enclosed sleeping porch, and the alley is dominated by a post-war garden apartment complex occupying the west half of the square.

Proposal

The applicant proposes to demolish the rear wing and twelve feet of the roof to accommodate a four-story, 42-foot tall rear addition. The third floor would extend on top of the house and have a 20-foot setback from the front and a partial fourth floor with a canted back front elevation would set back 42 feet from the front. The rear elevation would be 5 feet taller than the building to the north and 20 feet taller than the rest of the row to which 1128 belongs. The addition would be clad in metal panels with a large fixed window with sidelights at each floor. An eight-foot wide exterior stair would project 16 feet off the rear elevation.

Evaluation

The addition, which doubles the number of stories from two to four and increases the height of the house from 22 to 42 feet, is incompatible with the house because it substantially changes its dimensions, massing and scale and how the house contributes to the historic district.

Adding to the rear and on top of a rowhouse has two fundamental challenges making it exceedingly difficult to do in a compatible manner. First, excessive demolition must be avoided. Second, any additional height must not significantly change the perceived height and scale of the historic house because it is in those basic aspects that the house contributes to the character and scale of the historic district. As a rule, a rooftop addition that is set back off the top of the main block of a rowhouse could successfully address both challenges by reducing the amount of demolition and hiding the addition from primary views. The more a rooftop addition extends on to the top of the main block of the rowhouse, the more potential it has to be visible and result in

excessive demolition. These assessments should be calibrated against the context of the addition. If the context has a high degree of integrity, additions that might produce a conspicuous change should be reviewed guardedly, but if the context has eroded integrity the addition could fit inconspicuously into its surroundings.

A flag test conducted with staff exhibited that the addition would have minor visibility from the 6th Street right-of-way (sheets 13-14). Slight adjustments to the dimensions of the addition (increased setback and/or lowered roof heights) could make the addition nonvisible from 6th Street. Despite this, adding four stories to the back of a two-story house fundamentally alters the character of the house and how it relates to the surviving houses of its row and the historic district in general. A three-story addition or an addition arranged to emphasize the roof height and rear wing widths of the row of five houses could produce a compatible addition.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board advise the applicant to reduce the height of the concept design for 1128 6th Street NW to a three-story rear addition and return to the Board for further review.