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

Property Address:	1112-1114 5th Street NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Mount Vernon Square Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
ANC:	6E	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	February 1, 2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	#18-134	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision
		<input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology

Owner, D Con Group LLC, seeks concept review for an 8-unit apartment building that would combine the existing rowhouse at 1114 5th Street NW with a new rowhouse on the vacant lot at 1112 5th Street NW and include a partial fourth floor addition. 1114 5th Street is a contributing building in the Mount Vernon Square Historic District. Drawings were prepared by Rich Markus Architects.

Property Description and Context

1114 5th Street, along with all of the rowhouses of Square 482, was built for noted real estate developer T.F. Schneider in 1890. A total of 53 rowhouses were built, an unrivaled number of houses for a single project at that time. The rowhouses share a common language of materials and forms, but alternating arrangements of different projecting bays, gables, dormers and roof forms provides variety to the ensemble. A prominent variation is at the roofline where three-story hexagonal bay projections with turret roofs alternate with two-story square projections capped by setback gables or covered porches.

At the time of designation in 1999, several of the original rowhouses had been totally or substantially lost.¹ Since then all vacant lots except for 1112 5th have been rebuilt with compatible new construction. These modern rowhouses include three story front facades with projections and rooflines that fit compatibly with the streetscape, but also four story rear additions on the alley side. The character of the alley has been substantially altered by the number of large rear additions built on this square.

Proposal

The existing house at 1114 would be partially demolished to remove most of its roof and rear wing, relocate interior stairs, and open the south party wall in order to connect with the new construction at 1112. The original components and features of the front façade would be retained, except for the masonry steps and piers at the front fence which are not original. The new construction at 1112 aims to substantially replicate an 1890s rowhouse consistent with its neighbors. Its design features masonry, fenestration, stringcourse and cornice lines, mansard, dormer and turret roof forms all borrowed from houses in the row.

The lots and buildings would be combined and share a common interior vertical circulation. The rear wing of 1114 would be mirrored by the rear wing of 1112 and the court between the wings would be filled in with a rear addition. A one-foot reveal--also mirrored to the other side of the rear façade--would remain between the original rear wing and the in-fill addition. The brick and panel rear elevation would be three stories tall with balconies at each unit and spiral staircases on both flanks

¹ 1119 6th Street, 1123 6th Street, 1127 6th Street, 1133 6th Street

from grade to parapet. The roof plan would include an uncovered deck at the rear, a partial fourth floor addition across the width of the combined buildings, and another deck and mechanical equipment behind the front mansard. The fourth floor addition would be set back 10 feet from the rear and 21 feet from the front with the intent of not being visible from 5th Street.

Evaluation

The design for the new building at 1112, by itself, raises few concerns. It successfully replicates a rowhouse that matches the row, but this conclusion is conditional on the details of the elevation being constructed as shown without omission or substitute. However, the addition on top of 1114 and the amount of demolition in general requires closer assessment by the Board.

Adding on top of a rowhouse has two fundamental challenges making it difficult to do in a compatible manner. First, demolition must be limited in order to avoid the definition of what constitutes demolition of a historic building.² Second, any additional height must not significantly change the perceived height and scale of the historic house and how it contributes to the character of the historic district. As a general rule, a rooftop addition that is set back away from the street and off the top of the main block of a rowhouse could sufficiently reduce the amount of demolition and hide the addition from incompatible views.

In this case the demolition of the roof and rear wing to accommodate the additions is exacerbated by the large areas of party wall and floor assemblies that would need to be removed in order to build a central stair shared by 1112 and 1114. The concept drawings do not delineate how much of the floor assemblies will be removed as a result of relocating the stairs, but it is assumed that joists from all floors adjacent to the new stairs will be removed and leave little existing framing in place. Moving the stairs to the other side of the party wall to fully fit within the new construction could leave the framing of 1114 largely intact. Absent that, the applicant must show or clarify to the Board how the amount of demolition proposed for 1114 is limited and consistent with the Act.

Regarding the appearance of the partial fourth floor addition, views from the front are primary and views from the rear are secondary. A flag test with staff will need to be undertaken to confirm the addition will not be visible from 5th Street. From the rear, several rooftop additions similar to the this one already exist on the interior of the square and have effectively eroded much of the historic context of the alley. This condition allows a flexible standard of compatibility to be used and a conclusion that the rear and rooftop additions would not be incompatible with the historic district as it exists today on the presumption that the roof addition is not seen from street view.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept for a new three story rowhouse at 1112 5th Street NW and rear and partial roof-top additions on 1114 5th Street NW to be compatible with the character of the historic district, consistent with the purpose of the preservation act, and that final approval be delegated to staff on the condition that the amount of demolition at 1114 is reduced to comply with DCMR 10C, 305.1.

² District of Columbia Municipal Regulations Title 10C Historic Preservation, Section 305.1 lists several permutations of work that shall be considered demolition under the act, "Work considered demolition under the Act shall include, but is not limited to, any of the following, as determined by the Mayor's Agent:...(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; and (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"

