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

Property Address:	1127 5th Street, NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Mount Vernon Square	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
ANC:	6E	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	April 28, 2016	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	16-244	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Brendan Meyer	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The applicant, owner Kristina Kelly, seeks concept approval for a set-back, fourth floor addition to a three story contributing rowhouse in the Mount Vernon Square Historic district. Plans were prepared by Blackburn Architects, P.C.

Property Description and Context

The house at 1127 5th Street NW exhibits characteristics of an ancient house built before 1870 with a front addition added by 1887. An ancient house is best described as one built prior to building permit requirements (1876), the Parking Act (1870) and the Projection Act (1871). Such houses are occasionally found in this historic district and typically follow an agrarian frame vernacular and were setback from the street and side property lines. This hypothesis is supported by historic map research, which shows a frame building fronted with a brick addition in 1887. The frame section includes a side yard on the south and at the same setback and height above street level as the adjacent properties at 1125 and 1123 5th Street. In the 1870s the street was regraded and lowered. Subsequently, a front, three- story brick addition was added to the two story frame house. The short, disproportionate first story and door surround is indicative of a front addition chasing a lowered street grade.

Staff conducted a site visit to determine how much of the original ancient house might still be intact and assess the sight lines for the proposed fourth floor addition. The house has been altered dozens of times over the generations resulting in a near total removal of any framing original to the ancient frame house. The original side yard has been filled in by small additions. If the original house had a side gable roof, it has been obliterated by at least three efforts to reframe and reshape the roof as each addition altered the course of shedded water.

Proposal

The proposed concept (shown on the cover page of the submitted set of drawings) would add a partial fourth story with a front façade set back 14 feet from the front of 1125 5th Street. The addition would also be setback from the north side wall four feet. A flat slab roof would project forward towards 5th Street eight feet and rest on three posts mounted on the north party wall. The roof area over the 1880s front addition which is forward of the setback properties to the south is called out as a green roof that will not be occupied.

The south parapet along this area is stepped and dilapidated and will be rebuilt level with the front section.

Evaluation

Previous generations of alterations have removed essentially all remnants of the original ancient house, so the limited demolition required by this proposal will have no impact on any historic fabric important to the historic district. The cumulative effect of the height, setbacks and roofline of the addition is that it will have no substantial visibility from anywhere in the 5th Street right-of-way, and in this way be compatible with the historic district. The fully glazed west and north walls of the addition would be worth consideration if they were going to be visible, but the ample setback of these faces makes this a moot point. The stepped parapet on the south party wall is not an important character defining feature and restoring the parapet to a level height will be an imperceptible change that assists in screening what little new construction might otherwise be visible.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the partial fourth-floor addition at 1127 5th Street NW to be compatible with the house and Mount Vernon Square Historic District, consistent with the act, and to delegate final approval to Staff.