

---

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

---

Property Address:	<b>220 N Street NW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Mount Vernon Square Historic District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
ANC:	<b>6E</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	<b>March 23, 2017</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>#17-240</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Brendan Meyer</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

---

Owner Dr. Stuart Davis seeks concept review for adding a third story to 220 N Street NW, a two-story brick rowhouse that contributes to the character of the Mount Vernon Square Historic District. Plans were prepared by Aggregate Architecture + Design.

### **Property History and Description**

The 200 block of N Street NW is composed of two- and three-story rowhouses built around 1900 in four distinct groups. 220 N is part of a group of five two-story, bay-front rowhouses built in 1892 which are brick on brownstone bases with short mansard and turret slate roofs. Two story wings extend from the main blocks of the houses and have small hexagonal bays in the side of each dogleg court.<sup>1</sup> To the east towards Kirby Street is a group of seven two-story, porch-front rowhouses built soon after in 1910 with Flemish bond brick, Tuscan columns and metal cornices in Classical styles. To the west on the corner of New Jersey Avenue is a group of five three-story, bay-front rowhouses built in 1893 where the third floor is a slate mansard articulated by dormers coordinated with the two-story projecting bays. The interior of the square is an intact collection of two- and three-story rooflines, wings and sleeping porches.

### **Proposal**

The plans call for removing the roof from the front ridge to the rear wall and adding a brick third floor and roof deck to the top of the rowhouse for the purposes of converting the residence from one to three units. The front wall of the addition would be set back 18 feet from the mansard ridge with the space between the addition and mansard filled with a roof deck, stair run and cooking station. The side and rear of the addition would extrude the existing footprint up 10 feet. A mechanical enclosure would sit on top of the addition and an existing chimney would be extended above the new roofline. A dilapidated, non-original garage would be demolished and replaced with a mechanical roll-up vehicle gate. A two-level deck with spiral stair would be attached to the end of the existing rear wing.

### **Evaluation**

Adding 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. This is especially true for small houses where small dimensional changes have proportionally large impacts. As a general rule, a rooftop addition that is set back off the top of the main block of a rowhouse could successfully address both of these challenges by reducing the amount of demolition and hiding the addition from primary street views. The same consideration should also be applied to rear views when the house is part of a significant alley context expressed by historically intact massings, courts, and rooflines. The rigor of these

---

<sup>1</sup> The row was originally six houses, but 226 N Street NW was demolished before the historic district was designated in 1999 and the existing 3-story building was built in 2010 (HPA #10-034).

assessments should be calibrated to the integrity of the context. If the context has a high degree of integrity or uniformity, additions that might result in a conspicuous change should be reviewed guardedly; conversely, where the context is more varied or lost integrity, the addition might fit inconspicuously into its surroundings.

In this case, with few visible or sizable alterations behind 220 N Street, the character of this part of the historic district is intact, and the addition as proposed would incompatibly alter that character. The addition would increase the height of the roofline of the house from 25 feet to 35 feet and stand prominently out from the rest of the row. The most compatible way to add to the house would be to leave the roof and height of the building intact and extend the rear wing or partially fill the court. Alternatively, the roofline of the row might be preserved if the third floor addition was set back substantially enough from the rear wall. While this would not eliminate visibility of the addition entirely, setting back would preserve the perceived height and roofline of the row and reduce the addition to a secondary, insubstantially visible component of the historic district.

The front of the addition has been dimensioned to fit a line-of-sight diagram with little margin for error. A flag test has not been conducted and is pending the Board's determination of whether a roof addition of any size would be compatible with the house and historic district. Regardless of a future flag test, roof decks on the fronts of historic houses often result in the intrusion of fixtures and furniture that accompany decks; this is particularly problematic on two story houses such as the subject property which have lower sight lines for roof features. For that reason, decks should ideally be located in the rear rather than the front. The interior stairs are being demolished and relocated to the front entrance to accommodate the multi-unit program but results in a stairhouse projection in front of the rooftop addition. Since relocation of the stairs is already part of the program, positioning them within the addition, rather than in front, would simplify the massing of the addition and reduce the risk of unintended visibility of the addition from N Street.

### **Recommendation**

*The staff recommends that the Board withhold concept approval a third floor addition to 220 N Street NW, advise the applicant to reduce the size and prominence of the addition, and return to the Board for further review.*

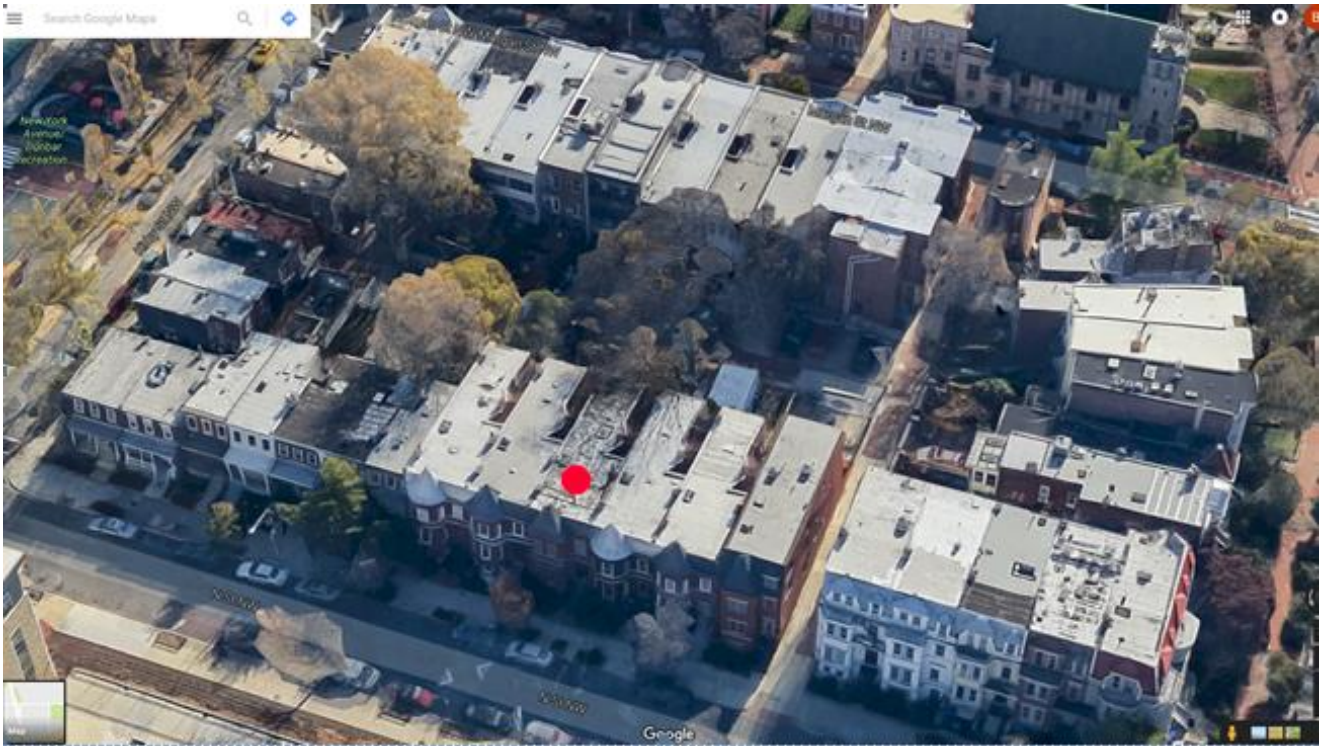


Figure 1. 200 block of N Street NW, looking south. Location of 220 N Street NW marked.



Figure 2. Row that includes 220 N Street NW