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

Property Address:	424 M Street NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Mount Vernon Square Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
		<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Design
Meeting Date:	February 23, 2012	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	12-129	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The applicant, R. Michael Cross Design Group on behalf of owner 424 M Street LLC, seeks concept review for a 4-story rear addition to 424 M Street NW, a 2-story rowhouse which contributes to the character of the Mount Vernon Square Historic District. Plans were prepared by the applicant.

Property Description and Context

The subject property is a 2-story brick rowhouse with a projecting bay built in 1887 on the south side of the 400 block of M Street NW. The block overall is an eclectic mix of 2-, 3- and 4-story residences built from 1850 through 1920. This house is flanked on either side by taller modern three- and four-story buildings. Many lots on this side of the street are very deep and accommodate large three- and four-story rear additions approved by the Board. The alley at the rear is dominated by the 11-story tall Yale Laundry apartment building which is immediately behind 424 M Street.

Proposal

The applicant proposes to demolish the rear wing of the house to accommodate a new four-story rear wing. The main block of the rowhouse and its load-bearing walls, floor systems and roof will be substantially retained. The addition would be 46 feet tall which is within three feet of the adjacent building at 426 M Street. It would be 57 deep and generally match the footprint of the existing rear wing so that it remains twelve feet short of the adjacent house at 426. The new addition would be clad in fiber cement panels with a random arrangement of casement windows for fenestration.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The size and scale of an addition are important criteria when evaluating compatibility with the historic building to which it is being added and with the surrounding historic district. These principles generally result in additions that are the same height, or perhaps one story taller than the main block of a rowhouse. However, in this case the proposed addition should be treated as an exception because of the context and sight lines of property.

The height and setback of the addition will result in only marginal visibility from the M Street right-of-way. This is because the short rowhouse is bracketed by two taller modern buildings such that the view above 424 M Street is narrow and restricted. Only a sliver of the rear addition will be visible above the house, and due to perspective appear to nestle next to the cornice line of the projecting bay. As viewed from the alley, the four-story addition will be overshadowed by

the very tall Yale Laundry apartment building directly to the south and will essentially match that of its neighbor to the west. The size of the addition would not change the character of the alley and would not be substantially perceived from the street.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for a 4-story, 57-foot deep rear addition to be compatible with the character of 424 M Street NW and the historic district, and consistent with the purpose of the preservation act.

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