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

Property Address:	1120 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:	July 22, 2021	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	#21-362	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Brendan Meyer	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The applicant, Galbraith AMC Zion Church owner of 1120 6th Street NW, seeks concept review to convert a front window to a door, install metal steps and to construct a two-story rear addition to this two-story contributing rowhouse in the Mount Vernon Square Historic District. Plans were prepared by MWB Architects.

Property Description and Context

The property is the end unit of a row of five houses built in 1881. All of the houses are two-stories plus basement with hexagonal bays, brick corbelling, and metal steps. 1120 is exceptional though because its lot is narrower than the others. With a lot width of only 12'-6" the front projection of the house takes up nearly the full width of the front façade so there is no room for a normal door next to the projecting bay. At the same time, the grade of the street slopes down so much towards 1120 that it intersects with the basement slab of the house. As a result of these two factors the front door is not at the first floor out of necessity and in the projecting bay at the basement out of convenience.

The house is unattached on the south. The open space on this side of the house is part of the lot on which Galbraith AMC Zion Church sits. The church is a stucco temple front church with a broad pediment on four giant-order Corinthian pilasters. The church is fenestrated with large stained-glass windows on the front and matching clerestory windows on its north and south sides. At the rear of the church a two-story 20th century addition wraps the northwest corner of the church without attaching to the subject property. At the rear of 1120's lot is a one-story brick garage.

Proposal

The applicant proposes to remove the rear wing and garage of the house and build a full width rear addition, 32 feet deep. The height of the addition would match the height of the house. The sides of the rear addition would not be fenestrated because the materials are unlabeled but rendered as skim coated foam panels. New window openings would be made in the south wall of the house for new double hung windows at all floors.

On the front façade, the first-floor window in the north facet of the projecting bay would be expanded into a door. A set of new metal steps would be installed at this new entrance. Public space regulations limit steps to a maximum projection of ten feet from the property line. These steps would meet that limit after only three treads and then turn to complete the run necessary to climb the 10'-3" height from grade to first floor.

Evaluation

While the historic conditions found at 1120 6th Street are unusual, the Board's guidelines regarding front alterations are clear. Expanding the size of window openings on primary elevations is not appropriate, and this alteration would be necessary to convert the first-floor window to a door.¹ Creating new door openings on primary elevations is not appropriate except at the basement level.² The unusual narrowness of the front façade and positioning of the projecting bay, though original, warrant some flexibility on the part of the Board for the purposes of adapting the building to a modern use. However, the steps proposed by the applicant are not a subtle or inconspicuous change to the row of houses. The tall height from grade to first floor and the projection limits imposed by public space regulations result in a complex intrusion onto the front façade that is not consistent with the simple steps in the rest of the row.

Other components of the concept are less concerning. Creating new openings on the south elevation, which is a secondary elevation, are allowed by the window guidelines because they are compatibly designed and do not affect important character defining features.³ The windowless north wall of the rear addition and its stucco panels would be a very prominent massing on the rear if it were not backdropped by the adjacent church. Brick veneer cladding for the rear addition would be a more compatible material choice.

If the applicant took advantage of the common ownership of 1120 and the church, then a new straight stair along the south elevation of the house--combined with the new window openings already proposed for this party wall--would be a compatible solution.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find that only the two-story rear addition part of the concept to be compatible with the character of 1120 6th Street NW and the historic district, and that final approval be delegated to staff; and that the Board find the proposed front window alteration and stair to be incompatible..

Staff contact: Brendan Meyer

¹ *Window Repair and Replacement Preservation and Design Guidelines*, Section 2.4, adopted 2011.

² *Door Repair and Replacement Preservation and Design Guidelines*, Section 2.7, adopted 2018.

³ *Window Guidelines*, Section 3.2