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

Property Address: **1225 11th Street NW**
Landmark/District: **Shaw Historic District**

Meeting Date: **April 25, 2019**
H.P.A. Number: **#19-210**

Agenda
 Consent Calendar
 Denial Calendar
 Concept Review
 Permit Review
 Alteration
 New Construction
 Demolition
 Subdivision

Potomac Construction Group seeks concept review for a one-story addition on top of the three-story rear wing of the three story rowhouse at 1225 11th Street NW. The existing building is a contributing property in the Shaw Historic District. Plans were prepared by AFA Studios.

Property Description and Context

1225 11th Street is a three-story bay-fronted brick rowhouse that hides an interesting anatomy behind its façade of peculiar details. The front façade is part of a front addition built in 1903. An older house predates this structure and appears on 19th century maps as a small brick house set twenty feet back from the street and five feet off the south property line. The 1903 addition extended the building to the front property line and projected a round bay into public space. The addition also extended the front façade to the south property line, a clue to which is the second entrance next to the main entrance. This second entrance opens to a through passage to the rear yard. Only the second and third floors attach to the neighbor, as can be seen in the unusual—but accurate—diagonal hatching on the section drawing on sheet A0201.

Proposal

The property has been undergoing extensive interior work as part of a general rehabilitation. A third-floor addition to the original two-story rear wing was approved for permit by HPO under delegated authority.¹ In the course of the work a fourth floor was also added, exceeding the scope of the approval. It was starkly visible from 11th Street because of the low one-story grocery building to the north of the site. Inspections and enforcement actions compelled removal of the extra floor. With the illegal construction matter mitigated, the applicant now seeks concept approval for this extra floor.

The current concept calls for an addition lower than what had been attempted. While the unpermitted construction was a full story above the existing roof, the concept has reduced its floor-to-ceiling heights to affect a height of 2'-8" above the existing roof.

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. 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 challenges by reducing the amount of demolition and hiding the addition from primary views. This standard is easier to achieve within an intact row of houses because the continuous facades usually block

¹ DCMR10C, Section 320.1(a)

important sight lines. This standard is harder to achieve, as in this case, where rows of houses are not intact or include much shorter adjacent buildings.

The concept has been revised so that the addition will be 2'-8" above the existing roofline. This alteration to the side elevation of 1225 11th Street would be minimal and not alter the character of the rowhouse or this part of the historic district. Though visible from 11th Street, the new construction would be insubstantial. The unattached condition on the north side of the house allows for a narrow view of the addition from the front of the house, but the addition is set far enough back, and the view is narrow enough that its visibility would be insubstantial.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept to add a fourth floor of these dimensions to the rear wing at 1225 11th 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.

Staff contact: Brendan Meyer



Figure 1. Unpermitted construction, February 14, 2019. Height difference of 8 feet; now removed. Current concept would produce a 2'-8" height difference.