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

Property Address: 1413 Columbia St NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District: Shaw Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
	<input type="checkbox"/> Permit Review
Meeting Date: May 27, 2021	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number: 21-319	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
	<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The owner, Rebecca Flynn, seeks concept review for a three-story rear addition and reconstruction of the front bay on the two-story house at 1413 Columbia Street NW, a contributing building in the Shaw Historic District. The concept design was prepared Trout Deign.

Property Description and Previous Board Review

The house is one of a group of five matching rowhouses built in 1871. They are brick, two-story houses, each with a one-story wood bay. Wood cornices and front door surrounds are ornamented with wood millwork to match the bays. The bay of the subject property has been reconstructed partially with brick and has lost its original millwork, but the bay and front façade of 1421 Columbia Street are intact and a suitable reference for reconstruction. The rear wing of 1413 is two-story frame construction, non-contributing, and bracketed by two larger rear additions.

Proposal

The applicant proposes to demolish the rear wing and eight feet of the rear of the main block and construct a three-story addition. The foot print of the addition is 32 x 14 feet and its front would set back 24 feet from the front façade of the house. A ten-foot deck would occupy the roof in front of the addition. The rear elevation of the addition would be clad if fiber cement clapboards and fenestrated with a full-width glazing system at the first floor and traditional punched openings at the second and third floors.

Evaluation

Adding height to a rowhouse raises two potential concerns. 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 of these challenges by reducing the amount of demolition and hiding the addition from primary views.

Due to the continuous historic cornice and roof line shared by the group of five historic houses, the addition should not be visible above any part of the entire cornice. Staff has inspected a flag-test of the proposed dimensions of the addition (Fig. 1). This showed a slight amount of visibility that should be eliminated by lowering the height of the addition or setting it farther back. Small adjustments of approximately two feet should accomplish this with only a negligible impact on

the program of the addition. Staff can conduct further flag tests during permit review or during construction to assure the addition does not result in any visibility above the roofline.

Reconstructing the front bay is the most positive aspect of the proposal. The current bay is not original. Reconstructing the bay, and restoring other front façade details, based on the example at 1421 is a very sound approach because 1421 is intact to an incredibly high degree. As the model it clearly shows the paneling, millwork and brackets that should be used for the front bay and door surround and the mixed two-over-two and one-over-one window configurations.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the 3-story rear addition and front alterations proposed for 1413 Columbia Street NW in the Shaw Historic District to be compatible with the historic building and historic district on the condition that the addition not be visible from Columbia Street NW and delegate final approval to Staff.

Staff contact: Brendan Meyer



Figure 1. 1413 Columbia Street NW, flag test.