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

Property Address:	1612-1616 7th Street NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Shaw Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
		<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Permit Review
Meeting Date:	December 16, 2021	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	#21-038	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The applicant, new owner DKY Property Management LLC, seeks concept approval for a rear addition of three-stories plus penthouse at 1612-1616 7th Street NW, a group of three two-story buildings which contribute to the character of the Shaw Historic District. Plans were prepared by Rich Markus Architects. The Board declined to approve a four-story addition concept submitted by the previous owner in 2016 due to visibility impacts on the 7th Street NW right-of-way.

Property Description and Context

The site is in the far northeast corner of the historic district, just below Rhode Island Avenue. The three buildings were built as a group some time before 1874 based on tax surveyor records. The first-floor storefronts are not original. The second-floor facades are largely intact and exhibit historic materials and craftsmanship, including: cast iron window hoods with pendants and a wood cornice of brackets, modillions and arched spandrels. The awning-like contraptions above the second-floor windows are not original. The rear of the group is a conglomeration of small additions that have transformed the once recognizable rear wings and dog leg courts into a dense group of one- and two-story additions nearly reaching 100% lot coverage. While the front façade materials, ornament and dimensions still express the scale and character of a late 19th century historic district, the interior structural components and framing systems have been nearly obliterated by almost 150 years of alterations and additions.

Proposal

The applicant proposes to demolish the rear wings and their multiple additions and retain the front facades. On top of a full second-floor, a third floor would be setback from the front 28 feet and from the side property lines 5 feet. A penthouse would be setback further on all sides to 52 feet from the front, 13 feet from each side and 6 feet from the rear. The setbacks and hipped roof forms are laid out to not be visible from 7th Street NW.

The historic facades would be renovated by removing non-historic elements including the ground floor storefronts and contraptions over the second-floor windows. A series of three matching storefronts would be constructed with each consisting of a projecting show window two bays wide and an entrance to the south. Above the flat roofs of the show windows, a horizontal line of transoms and cornice would run across the facades and align with the openings below.

Evaluation

Adding on top of small historic building in a compatible manner has two fundamental challenges: how to avoid excessive demolition of the historic materials and how to add additional stories when the height and scale of the historic buildings is an important contribution to the character of the historic district. In this case, staff has inspected the interior of the existing buildings and reports that almost none of the original load bearing walls and floor systems still exist. The buildings have been combined for some time and generations of interior alterations have removed these historic components. The excessive demolition consideration cannot be applied to the existing conditions.

The concept design has been carefully calibrated to avoid visibility of the addition from the 7th Street NW right-of-way. By doing so the scale and size of the historic buildings will appear unchanged and not impact the historic district from any primary view. Staff can conduct flag tests prior to final approval to confirm this result.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept of adding a third floor and penthouse with setbacks compatible with the character of the historic district on the condition that no portion of the addition be visible from the 7th Street NW right-of-way and delegate final approval to Staff.

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