

<p style="text-align: center;">HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION</p>

Property Address: 927 N Street NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District: Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
	<input type="checkbox"/> Permit
Meeting Date: February 4, 2021	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number: #21-104	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
	<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The applicant, agent James Foster on behalf of the ownership group 927 N Street LLC, seeks concept design review for a three-story rear addition to the three-story rowhouse at 927 N Street NW, a contributing building the Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic District. Plans were prepared by Arcadia Design.

Property Description and Context

The existing property is a short, flat-fronted three story rowhouse bracketed by two taller buildings. The house is not attached on its east side leaving a very narrow (2''6'') keyhole view through the site. Its diminutive size is partnered with a simple elevation of unornamented arched windows. The best historic feature of the front façade is the cornice of console brackets and floral metopes. The rear of the lot is a paved featureless void separated from Naylor Court by a chain link fence. Its immediate neighbors are a rich collection of historic resources including stables and workshops lining the brick paving of the alley giving the space intimate dimensions and scale which are critical to the alley character of this historic district.

Project Summary

The proposed three-story rear addition would present itself to the historic district as a new alley building. The existing rear wing would be demolished and replaced with a hyphen connecting the main block of the house to the new alley building, the remaining space left as an open court. The alley building would span the full width of the lot and sit at the rear lot line directly on the edge alley right of way. Its elevation calls for brick and includes a wide vehicle opening of carriage doors and a pedestrian door, and two large window openings at the second floor. The elevation is terminated by a brick cornice and with the third-floor setback behind and above it.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The concept design would be a welcome addition to the Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic District. It is compatible with many of the Board's main principles for new construction, including setback, material, roof shape, rhythm and ornament.

Most crucially the project would replace a yawning gap in the Naylor Court alley wall. Critical to the character and scale of the historic district is how alley structures sit directly on the alley without setback. The brick buildings engage and blend with the brick paving of the alley, entry thresholds are at the alley edge, giving the whole a rich sense of place. The staff recognizes the extra effort the applicant will have to expend in order to get the zoning relief necessary to build

without setting back from the centerline of the alley. The historic district will benefit greatly by this effort to align with the other buildings of the alley. The zero setback from the alley is an important enough historic characteristic that it should be a condition of the Board's approval.

Minor concerns in the design fade upon study. When narrow spaces exist between otherwise attached building, the Board considers the importance of the gap and whether filling it with building takes an important characteristic away from the historic district. In this case the gap is extremely narrow and not fundamental to the building type. It is also not filled in on its street side. While the long view of narrow daylight would be dimmed by the addition, the gap itself would remain illuminated because of the court.

On the alley side, what is rendered as a visible third floor will not be visible due to the narrowness of the alley because the point of view is not in the alley right-of-way. The fenestration of the second floor is large and industrially scaled and not the best choice in many cases, but the industrial character of the stable and garages of this part of Naylor Court provide enough flexibility on this point. During any subsequent building permit phase staff can assure that the roof decks and their contents will not be visible from any right of way.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for a three-story addition rear addition to 927 N Street NW, to be compatible with the character of the historic district on the condition that it not be setback from the alley edge, and delegate final approval to Staff.

Staff contact: Brendan Meyer