

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address:	1819 15th Street NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	U Street Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	June 30th, 2022		Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	HP 22-087	X	Alteration Subdivision

The applicant, architect Nima Biabani, seeks on-going conceptual design review for façade alterations and construction of a three-story on a non-contributing building at the corner of 15th Street and Swann Street in the U Street Historic District.

Property Description

The building is located at the end of a row of four two-story Italianate houses. At 26 feet, the lot is wider than its adjoining contributing historic buildings. It was originally constructed in 1901 as a dwelling, however, the building's façade was removed and replaced with cementitious panels in the mid-20th century when converted to a church. The side elevation along Swann Street is relatively intact with brick cladding and traditional punched windows. Due to the total loss of its historic façade, the building does not retain sufficient integrity to qualify as a contributing building.

Swann Street is one of a number of narrow "minor" streets in the U Street and 14th Street historic districts with an intimate character, and do not have the generous public space greensward "parking" strip. Across the street is a three-story building with a mansard roof and Italianate features; constructed in 2007, the Swann Street elevation is a reconstruction of the original house on that site which was lost due to demolition by neglect and a fire.

Proposal

The revised proposal has reduced the size of the bay to be narrower. The arrangement of double hung windows has been revised to include double ganged windows on the bay with single punched windows on the front elevation. The third story would be treated as a mansard roof with dormers along the front and side elevations. The rear elevation would have sliding glass doors and balconies on each level. A roof deck is proposed on the top of the mansard roof, set back approximately 27' from the front and around 6' along the side.

Evaluation

While the general scale and massing are appropriate for the historic district, and the revisions made in the last round have improved the design, additional work is still needed to refine the design to bring it to an acceptable level of compatibility with the historic district. HPO recommends the following revisions:

- 1) Elongate the windows on the main block, including the bay, by raising the headers and convert them to 2 over 2 windows to provide them with a stronger vertical proportion.

- 2) Include a thicker mullion between the paired windows in the bay and the double window in the dormer.
- 3) Update the materials to show the bay as brick and the roof with synthetic slate.
- 4) Revise the front entry with a wider door surround and widen the front stairs to the width of the door surround.
- 5) Include additional details on the dormer framing, making them wider to reflect the necessary framing, and capped by a simple shed roof to provide drainage.
- 6) Develop a front yard site plan that includes removal of the paving, a landscape planting plan, a new lead walk, and a 36" high iron fence.

HPO is skeptical that the proposed roof deck will not be visible from 15th Street to the north and from Swann Street to the east. And as the third floor does not currently exist, there is no accurate way to conduct a flag test to determine its visibility. HPO recommends that the Board not approve the roof deck at this time but leave open the possibility for a deck once the third floor is constructed and an accurate mock-up can be conducted to determine whether the proposed deck is not prominently visible from street view.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept design contingent on the revisions above and the roof deck being removed, and delegate final approval to staff.

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