

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

---

Property Address:	1427½ W Street NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	U Street Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	September 26, 2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
HPA Number	20-018	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Anne Brockett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration

---

On behalf of owners 5 Tree LLC, Teass/Warren Architects seeks concept review to demolish the side wall and rear ell of a 2-story brick rowhouse, widen it, flip the dogleg to the opposite side, and construct a 3-story addition that is approximately ten feet longer than the existing. The house is one of a pair built in 1885 for P.F. Lerner featuring Italianate details.

**Project Description**

The house was constructed about 2 feet back from the east lot line and the project proposes removing the full extent of the east wall and infilling to the property line. This side addition would be set back 2 feet from the façade and would be clad in a horizontally laid siding. The rear ell would also be removed and replaced with an addition that is set in from the side lot line on the east side, rather than the west, where the open court of the dogleg is currently located. The addition would rise three stories in height and provide access to a front roof deck. Basement windows are proposed below grade within wells in the front yard to provide light into a newly excavated basement.

**Evaluation and Recommendation**

In 2014, the HPRB reviewed a similar proposal for the twin building next door at 1429 W Street NW. The Board voted to support the staff report, which described that project and the HPO’s concerns:

“The additions would demolish a substantial portion of the exterior walls and probably most of the interior structure. The side wall demolition, in particular, does not appear to gain much in terms of interior space, yet removes much of the historic fabric and will result in an altered appearance of the façade. The façade will grow in width, affecting the building’s symmetry and proportions. The setback of the side infill piece, although increased from about 8 inches to 3 feet [*the proposed setback at 1427½ is 2 feet*] is still too shallow to retain the building’s original identity as one of a pair of buildings, both with side yard courts.

While the Board has allowed side infill construction in historic districts, it has often required that the new construction be set back to the rear of the main block. Because of the narrow width of the side court here, such an extensive setback is not necessary, but a much more substantial setback than the three feet proposed is needed, and the plan should be modified to retain a majority of the side wall.”

Ultimately, the owner of 1429 retained all of the side wall (and much of the dogleg) and excavated to the property line at the basement level. A third level was added, set back 3 feet at the rear from the wall below to give more breathing space to the surrounding historic properties, including the subject building at 1427½. A narrow window well was approved for new below grade basement windows.

As with its partner building, the side wall should remain at 1427½ in order to retain its appearance, proportions, and identity as a semi-detached twin house. In addition, demolition of the side wall and rear ell coupled with removal of one interior stair and construction of two new ones would almost certainly require demolition of all of the interior structure, despite the note on the demo plans to keep existing framing.

HPO has no concerns with removing the ell and replacing it with a three story addition, subject to confirmation of non-visibility. Nor is switching the orientation of the dogleg incompatible since the property is not part of a uniform row where doglegs contribute to a significant alleyscape. Because the alley has been compromised by the addition at 1429, it is not necessary to set the addition back at the third floor. For the façade, it is recommended that the window well be limited to 18” away from the face of the house due to the small front yard. Ideally, the original 2/2 windows could be restored beneath their carved lunettes, and new windows be fabricated to match only where they are missing. The front door should be a solid wood door below a restored transom. HPO does not support the addition of meters on the front of the building or in the front yard.

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the rear addition compatible with the character of the historic district, provided no part is visible from a public right of way; find the demolition and infill at the side of the property incompatible; and delegate final approval to HPO staff with the comments above.*

*Staff Contact: Anne Brockett*