

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

Property Address:	1432 Swann Street NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Greater U Street Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	December 18, 2014	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	15-093	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Anne Brockett		New Construction

The property at 1432 Swann Street is one of a row of five homes built as speculative housing in 1883 by George E. Emmons. Constructed of brick, the residences stand two stories tall with one-story brick bays and heavy Italianate cornices, window hoods, and door surrounds.

Project Description

Scout Motor Company Architecture seeks the Board's conceptual review to add a third story to this rowhouse, set back 16 feet from the front façade and 18 inches from the rear. The rectangular footprint of the addition would cantilever over the lower floors, which feature a canted corner. The project would also remove the rear two-level deck with spiral stair and rework the existing rear elevation with large expanses of glazing on each floor and a small balcony at the new third floor.

Evaluation

Although the designs have been revised per HPO comments to pull the addition in slightly from both the front and rear, additional setbacks should be considered. The Board's general requirements for this type of alteration are that 1) the roof addition not be visible from the public right of way; 2) the addition be set back so as not to sit on the original main block of the house; and 3) the addition be set back from the rear elevation where the existing alley scape features fairly uniform, lower scaled buildings.

In this case, the addition would not be visible from the front. However, the design does not sufficiently meet the Board's other standards or conform to previous approvals. This row was built with no doglegs and the subject house has been expanded only with a 7-foot addition to the rear sometime in the 1990s. Thus, the addition is proposed to sit on more than half of the original block of the building, incompatibly altering the mass of the underlying 2-story house and its row of identical mates.

The Board has reviewed a number of similar proposals in the vicinity. Roof additions were proposed at 1430 and 1436 T, but were withdrawn from Board consideration after negative community reviews and staff reports that recommended their denial. Both were eventually approved as two-story additions. An application for a third story at 1442 T Street was recommended for denial initially, but later approved when the addition was set back off the original block.

Similarly, at 1837 12th Street, a redesign after Board review resulted in the approval of a rear addition that allowed a third floor to sit comfortably on new construction and only slightly on the original main roof.

In instances where a row contains a relatively uniform height and massing along the rear elevations, the Board has also typically requested a setback of several feet for additions that rise above the established height. As demonstrated in the panoramic photo provided, there are no other roof additions in this two-story row and a third floor should be significantly set back from the rear elevation to help retain the sense of a 2-story alley. At 1451 and 1410 S Street, the approvals were conditioned upon a sufficient setback at the rear to alleviate an overwhelming presence in the alley; both resulted in 3-foot setbacks.

In order to be consistent with the standards established by previous Board approvals, the HPO encourages exploration of a rear addition in conjunction with its recommendation that any third story addition be set back from the front to a much closer proximity to the rear wall of the main block and that the rear setback be increased to at least 3 feet. As the plans continue to develop, unresolved issues include the design of the rear elevation, including how the cantilever over the canted corner will work; the use of what appear to be collapsible awnings; fenestration details, and railing design.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept incompatible with historic district and inconsistent with the purposes of the preservation act.