

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

---

Property Address:	<b>1504 Swann Street NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>U Street Historic District</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>April 30, 2015</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>15-128</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Anne Brockett</b>		New Construction

---

Owner and architect Lucrecia Laudi of Hunt Laudi Studio seeks the Board’s conceptual review of a proposal to add a separate apartment that rises two stories above the existing one-story ell on this corner residence. The proposal also includes a roof deck, stair tower, and new window openings on the side elevation.

**Property Description and Context**

The house is one of four brick houses facing 15<sup>th</sup> Street that were built in the 1870s, each standing two-stories in height and originally featuring one-story front bays. The bay at the subject house has been removed and a large, modern window system installed. The internal floor heights have also been rearranged to create an at-grade entrance on the front and an interior mezzanine level.

The project seeks to continue this modern aesthetic on the existing brick side wall as well as onto the rear addition. New window openings in the historic wall include ganged awning windows on the first floor, ganged casements and fixed units above, and two narrow windows on the second floor. For the addition, which faces onto Swann Street, two floors clad in Viroc panels are proposed above the existing brick ell. Windows on the existing brick portion will remain, with casements and large fixed windows above.

On the roof, a new deck will cover the addition and part of the original building. Access is through a small penthouse enclosing a ship’s-ladder type staircase. The deck is set back about 8 feet from the side wall atop the main roof and is flush with the wall on the addition. A parapet topped with a horizontal wire railing would surround the deck.

**Evaluation and Recommendation**

Because this property is located on a corner, all of the proposed work will be visible. In general, the placement and scale of the addition is compatible with the house and is consistent with previous Board approvals for similar corner properties. In consultation with HPO, the design has resulted in a reduced stair tower which is set 3 feet further toward the rear, revisions to the fenestration, and relocation of rooftop HVAC equipment to a less visible location. However, some aspects of the proposal warrant further refinement as the design progresses.

The use of a modern aesthetic is not inherently incompatible, and does allow changes to the building over time to remain clear. However, the use of either overly large or underscaled

fenestration should be restricted to the new construction, while the historic building should be treated in a manner more sympathetic to the historic district. Single punched openings or paired sash windows with a thick mullion are the character-defining window types in historic rowhouses. Modification of both the sizes and operability of the windows should be considered for the original brick wall. On the addition, a single window type, compatibly scaled with the historic district, is recommended to simplify and unify the façade.

The existing side wall features a stepped parapet, which does not appear in the drawings, but should be maintained. The addition ideally would sit lower than the rear of the existing roof, but it is unclear if this is proposed. It may be possible to lower the ceiling height in the existing non-historic brick ell, so that the entire addition becomes lower.

A simple deck with a minimal railing on the rear addition only may be a compatible introduction, given the contemporary design of the addition and particularly if it can be integrated into the design so that no visible railing is necessary (while also keeping the height to a minimum). Alternately, the addition could be lowered by a floor to provide access to a deck through the rear of the second floor. The latter suggestion would also eliminate the need for a visible rooftop stair tower, which is not an alteration generally approved by the HPRB. The HPO has also suggested a roof hatch, which would provide non-visible access to the deck.

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept for a rear addition to be compatible with the historic district, with the following conditions and to delegate further review and approval to staff:*

- *The height of the addition should be lower than the existing rear roof.*
- *The window sizes and their operability should be revised.*
- *Access to a roof deck should not result in a visible roof addition.*
- *Board approval shall not be construed as approval for or endorsement of any necessary zoning relief.*