

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

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Property Address:	<b>1826 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Greater U Street Historic District</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>February 26, 2015</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>15-094</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Anne Brockett</b>		New Construction

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The five two-story brick rowhouses at 1826-1834 15<sup>th</sup> Street were constructed in 1878 as speculative housing. The sixth in the row, at 1824, and a large corner house at 1822 were demolished in 1910 for the construction of the apartment building at the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> and Swann Streets, against which 1826 15<sup>th</sup> rests. The row dwellings exhibit typical architectural features of the period, including one-story bays, projecting pressed metal cornices, and wrought iron stoops.

**Project Description**

Scout Motor Company Architecture seeks the Board's conceptual review to add a third story to this rowhouse, set back about 17 feet from the front façade. The addition would occupy the roof of approximately half of the original block of the house as well as the rear ell, maintaining the existing dogleg.

The project would also construct a rear two-car garage measuring 15 x17 feet and standing 13 feet tall at the roof peak. The garage would be clad in horizontal siding, while the addition would be stuccoed.

**Evaluation**

When reviewing rooftop additions, the Board's general requirements 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 significantly 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 be visible from 15<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, as demonstrated through a roof mockup constructed for HPO review. In addition, the height and setback of the addition are so close to the line of sight for a 5'6" person from directly across 15<sup>th</sup> that there is no room for error or the inevitable adjustments that take place during construction.

Regardless of its potential visibility, the proposed addition is not compatible in massing with the existing house or consistent with many Board approvals on similar two-story residences in the U Street Historic District. The Board has generally required that roof additions, when appropriate, be set back to the rear wall of the main block of the house. In some instances, additions can be considered compatible when they do not encroach onto the main roof to a point where the historic sense of scale and original massing are lost. Coupled with the addition's visibility, the

presence of this addition over so much of the underlying building does begin to compromise the building's scale.

Regarding the third standard for a setback from the rear face of the building, the HPO does not consider this a necessary requirement for this property, given the abutting apartment building, which provides a large mass against which a third story addition would not stand out along the alley.

The garage, while not incompatible in concept, may be driving the design of the addition in an upward, rather than outward, direction. Traditionally additions were put on the rears of homes, rather than on top, however, the presence of a substantial new garage in the rear yard would preclude a rear addition for zoning purposes. Rather than a roofed garage which contributes to lot coverage, and a roof addition which would be visible, the applicant could consider a roll-up security gate that does not count towards lot coverage and gain additional interior space with a rear addition that fills in the dogleg.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept incompatible with historic district and inconsistent with the purposes of the preservation act. The Board's decision should not be construed as endorsement or support for any necessary zoning relief.*