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

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Landmark/District:	<b>U Street Historic District</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>2228 13<sup>th</sup> Street NW</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>April 22, 2021</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>21-264</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Applicant James Foster (Arcadia Design) seeks concept review for renovation and construction of a three-story addition on the rear of a two-story rowhouse in the U Street Historic District.

### **Property Description**

The property is a two-story contributing rowhouse built in 1874, consisting of a 31' deep main block and a small, non-original rear dogleg constructed of concrete block. As shown in the submission, the interior structure has been extensively reconstructed over time and retains very little original framing.

The house is situated within a row of identical two-story porch front rowhouses atop a raised berm along 13<sup>th</sup> Street. The row includes one three-story rowhouse at 2232 that was built in 2006.

### **Proposal**

The plans call for adding a basement level with a new exterior stair in front of the porch and a front entry door under the porch. The existing dogleg wing would be removed and replaced with a three-story rear addition that would extend 30 feet off the back wall of the house; the floors of the addition would be set lower than the floors of the house to reduce its height. The third floor of the addition would extend three feet over the existing main block of the house, set back 28' from the front façade; the proposal also includes a front-facing roof deck that would be set back 15' from the front façade.

### **Evaluation**

The first floor of the house and its front porch sit very close to grade, and the proposed areaway stair in front of the porch would result in an adverse and incompatible change to the relationship of how the house and porch are grounded to the site. The proposal is not consistent with the Board's guidelines for basement areaways, which state:

Porch front houses typically did not have basement entrances, and they can be difficult to accommodate compatibly.

3.3 It may not be possible to provide an exterior stair on properties where the first floor is close to grade, where the building is close to the sidewalk, or where the basement stair would be exposed at eye level from the sidewalk. In such instances, the extent of excavation may alter the relationship of the building to grade, overwhelm the site, or become such a prominent element that it detracts from the property's character.

While this house is set back from the sidewalk and the proposal includes plantings that could partially obscure the stair, the introduction of a full run stair in front of this at-grade porch is incompatible and would set an unfortunate precedent for the other houses in this row (none of which currently have basement stairs and retain their original relationship to grade).

The rear addition and roof deck are generally compatible in size with the house and other additions on this row, however, they will require a flag test to confirm that they will not be visible from the street. Pulling the third floor portion of the addition back three feet so that it aligns with the back wall of the house would reduce the extent of demolition to the original portion of the house and likely help reduce or eliminate visibility.

**Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board direct the applicant to revise the plans to eliminate the basement areaway stair in front of the front porch, revise the proposed addition to pull it off the main block of the house, and conduct a flag test with HPO to determine whether the third floor and roof deck are visible from street view. The project should return to the Board with revised and more developed plans when ready.*