

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

Property Address:	944 Westminster Street, NW		Agenda
Landmark/District:	Greater U Street Historic District	X	Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	March 24, 2016	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	15-630		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Anne Brockett	X	Alteration

Redwood Ventures, with plans prepared by Ram Design, seeks conceptual design review for a third floor addition with rooftop deck with exterior stair on an existing two-story rear ell, stair access piercing the roof of the main block, a new fenestration plan on the south (rear) elevation, window and door replacements, and at 944 Westminster Street, NW, a contributing building in the Greater U Street Historic District.

Property Description

Constructed in 1892, this three-story, two-bay, single-family rowhouse was one of a row of eight similar buildings designed by architect/owner M.D. Hensey. A one block street, Westminster developed in a single period at the turn of the twentieth century, with a majority of the buildings designed by Hensey, Thomas M. Haislip, and T. Franklin Schneider. As a result, the street presents a cohesiveness of materials, forms, and massing reflective of the period of construction. Architectural detailing of the Hensey buildings include rhythmic full-height projecting bays with recurring roof forms, sill string courses, decorative brick panels and window molding, and corbeled cornices with brick dentils.

The façade (north elevation) of 944 Westminster Street, NW has replacement 1/1, double-hung wood sash set on rock-faced sills with segmental soldier brick arches. The single-leaf main entry is located in the western bay and holds a paneled wood door with light and transom. Concrete steps with metal railing provide access up to a small stoop outside the entry. The full-height projecting bay has square corners and is capped by a front gable with an open cornice. A two-story ell (original) is located on the south (rear) elevation.

Proposal

The plans call for the construction of a third story addition on the existing two-story rear ell. The addition will have the same footprint as the existing ell with a brick veneer and flat roof extending the plane of the main block roof. In conjunction a roof deck with railing will be constructed on top of the addition, as well as part of the main block. Access to the roof deck will be via a proposed access stair enclosure with sloped roof located on the main block in addition to an exterior metal stair located in the dogleg extending off the east (side) elevation of the third-story addition. Further changes to the rear elevation include establishing a new fenestration pattern with wide segmental arches and 1/1, double-hung wood sash, replacement in-kind of the windows on the rear of the main block, and a new stair extending up to the first-story rear door

opening. The basement door will be replaced in-kind. The applicant also proposes two parking spaces in the backyard, along with brick pavers and the repair of existing fencing.

Efforts on the façade (east elevation) include the replacement of windows and main entry door.

Evaluation

The replacement of the façade windows and door does not raise preservation concerns as these alterations positively affect the building's integrity. This also applies to the replacement of the windows and door on the rear elevation of the main block, which are not visible from the street.

The proposed rear addition sits atop the existing two-story rear ell rather than on the original main block. The alley-scape surrounding the rowhouse is not uniform in terms of building heights or depths, with multiple examples of third story additions atop existing ells. Submission page A005 details in section the height of the proposed roof access stair enclosure and roof deck in relation to the existing roof line of the main block. Due to the fact that Westminster Street is a narrow road lined primarily with three-story buildings with minimal setback, and that the front of the roof stair enclosure will be set back from the front of the façade projecting bay approximately 31 feet, the proposed roof and rear elevation alterations will not be visible from the street. The new fenestration plan introduces continuity on the rear of the building, though it will not be visible from the street.

In form, massing, scale, and materials, the proposal is compatible with the historic district.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff provided any roof appurtenances are not visible from public space and with the condition the applicant work with staff on the retention of historic fabric, detailing, and the final selection of materials.