
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Landmark/District.	Dupont Circle	(x) Agenda
Address	1815 Riggs Place, NW	() Consent
		(x) Concept
Meeting Date	March 27, 2014	() Alteration
Case Number	14-250	(x) New Construction
Staff Reviewer	Kim Elliott	() Demolition
		() Subdivision

The applicant Walde Management, working with Square 134 Architects, requests conceptual review of a one-story addition to a two-story apartment building in the Dupont Circle Historic District

Property Description

The simple two-story brick apartment building with limestone entry was designed by architect James Baldwin and built in 1941. The building is non-contributing to the Dupont Circle Historic District¹, as it falls outside the district's period of significance (1791-1931). It is not otherwise listed or protected.

Proposal

The proposal calls for a simple, modern third story addition that encompasses about 2/3rds of the footprint of the existing building. The proposed glass and metal panel-clad addition is set back 6'-11' from the front façade and includes a metal projecting cornice. The metal railing is set back 1'-9" from the façade and is located behind the parapet wall. This narrow block of Riggs Place is made up primarily of 3 story + basement Romanesque Revival rowhouses, with several 2 story brick apartment buildings.

Evaluation

The Board has evaluated additions to non-contributing buildings using similar criteria as for new construction, which is for general compatibility with the context, streetscape and character of the historic district, rather than for their effect on character-defining features of the building or the potential to otherwise alter the appearance of a historic structure. While the Board has ensured that these changes be reasonably appropriate for the design of the subject property, the primary focus has been in ensuring that the alteration not result in an incompatible alteration to the property's context.

¹ The National Register of Historic Places defines a non-contributing building as one that does not add to the historic architectural qualities, historic associations, or archeological values for which a property [historic district] is significant because it was not present during the period of significance (*How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, p. 16).

The Board has allowed considerable flexibility when it comes to altering non-contributing buildings. The Board approved third floor additions to several buildings, including 1126 I Street, SE (HPA #10-263) and 524 8th Street SE (HPA #11-197), where the Board approved a visible rooftop addition to the non-contributing portion of a historic commercial building on Barracks Row.

In evaluating compatibility, the Board's guidelines on new construction and additions cite height as one of the important characteristics for consideration. That guidance recognizes that height must be evaluated with consideration of the particular context. Where there is a uniformity of height, new construction and additions should more closely adhere to the established height, when there is greater diversity, there can be more variation in the height of new construction and additions.

The property at 1815 Riggs Place is within a consistent row of 3 story + basement Romanesque Revival rowhouses. The proposed addition brings the height and scale of this building in proportion to the existing row. The horizontal of the projecting cornice aligns with the horizontal ornamentation of the adjacent row house and cleverly conceals the additional height of the flat roof behind the projection. The setback of the third story corresponds to the facade of the rowhouses, and the window rhythm of the addition references the existing masonry openings. The light appearance of the addition, both in mass and color, emphasizes the existing building and establishes it as a base for the modern top. The third story could benefit from further study of the size, color, and direction of the cladding, as well as developing details of the cornice profile and how the cornice terminates around the corner. Square 134 Architects has worked closely with HPO to develop the third story as a clean, light 3rd story to showcase the original straightforward 1940s building, instead of a heavier, historicist addition.

While the addition is clearly visible from the street, the addition is compatible with its context based on the setback, orientation, scale, proportion, massing, rhythm, and height of this block.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the proposed concept compatible with the character of the historic district and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act with the following conditions

- *Direct the architect to further study the metal panel cladding- both in color and pattern at the 3rd story,*
- *Further define the projecting cornice so that it is more integral with the addition;*
- *Encourage the applicant to include cleaning the limestone entry and brick façade as part of the scope of this project to further enhance the façade in this historic district*

The HPO further recommends that the Board delegate final approval to staff