

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address:	2123 Twining Court, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Spencer Carriage House and Stable		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	April 25, 2013	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	13-210	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Kim Elliott		New Construction

The architect, Yoko Barsky, and builder, Federalist Builders, on behalf of owners Lew Hages and Gerard Boquel seek conceptual design review for restoration and alteration of the landmarked Spencer Carriage House and Stable in Twining Court. Twining Court is within the square bounded by O and P Streets and 21st and 22nd Streets, and includes the two alleys intersecting the block.

Property Description

The Spencer Carriage House and Stable was constructed in 1905 to serve as a carriage house, stable, and servant's quarters for the residence of railroad executive Samuel Spencer.¹ The building is a free-standing, two-story brick structure measuring 35' wide by 110' long, set upon a raised brick foundation delineated by a brick water table and capped by a shallow hipped slate roof, topped by two picturesque vented cupolas. Designed by master builder John McGregor, the two-story brick structure is imposing in size and scale, and displays handsome proportions and detailing. This building was designated a landmark in the DC Inventory in 1995 and listed in the National Register in 1996.

While many of the original features of the carriage house are still present – the narrow stable windows, hay bale loft opening, slate hipped roof, and cupolas – the building shows years of neglect and lack of maintenance. In addition, the interior of the building has been heavily altered since its conversion to its use as a nightclub/bar.

Proposal

The proposal calls for a full renovation of the interior of the property to a private residence, restoration of the exterior maintaining the original characteristics of the building, construction of a small one story addition for garage extension, and altering the roof to accommodate a roof top deck and mechanical equipment. The applicant has developed two options for the roof alteration (Options B and C).²

Option B includes removing a portion of the roof on the longer north and south slopes to create a roof deck set within the mass of the building; a third portion of the roof would be removed on the west slope to allow mechanical units to be set within the roof. Option C includes removing a portion of the roof only on the longer north side of the building for a deck and mechanical unit storage. In each proposal, the framing, sheathing and slates on the portions of the roof to be opened up would be removed.

The scope of restoration will include cleaning and repointing the brick facades, replacing and restoring the windows and window openings, reopening the hay bale door, replacing the doors, light fixtures, downspouts, and gutters with historically appropriate materials, restoring the retained portions of the roof, and rebuilding the deteriorated metal cupolas. The existing alteration and addition at the north end of the building will be replaced with a new one-story projection clad in stucco that provides an entry to the garage.

Evaluation

This building is a significant example of the stable and carriage house typology, one of a dozen of this size and character remaining in the city, and therefore merits special care and preservation. The architect and builder

¹ The Spencer residence, which remains extant, was located a block away at 2012 Massachusetts Avenue, NW.

² The applicant is no longer pursuing Option A, which included an enlarged cupola and a greater loss of the roof form.

have been working very closely with HPO, the ANC, and DCC to develop their concept, and the proposal is laudable for its efforts to restore the exterior of this landmark. The scope of interior and exterior restoration and the small garage addition are consistent with preservation guidelines. The main question before the Board in this case is the proposed roof alteration.

The Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act states that the goal of reviewing alterations to historic landmarks are:

- (A) To retain and enhance historic landmarks in the District of Columbia and to encourage their adaptation for current use; and
- (B) To encourage the restoration of historic landmarks.

The Board's guideline "*Roofs on Historic Buildings*" outline that roof alterations "must be undertaken with extreme care to ensure that the character of the roof is retained." The guidelines also point out that the addition of rooftop elements (or in this case, subtraction of rooftop elements) "should be located on non-character-defining slopes and be compatible with the character of the building" or "not visible from a public street."

In Option B, the proposed design carves away an area of the hipped roof area on the west end of the building—opening up a space from north to south—to create an open air roof deck, and at a smaller scale carves a slot into the east hip to create a space to store and conceal mechanical equipment. The carved out portion of the roof would be visible from the alley system, resulting in a noticeable void in the roof, and leave one of the restored cupolas resting only on the retained ridge beam.

In Option C, most of the north slope of the roof would be carved away for the deck space and the mechanical equipment, and a railing projected above the roof line to expand the deck space. In this option the cupolas sit more comfortably on the ridge of the roof and the cut-out would not be visible from the surrounding alleys. While the building is free-standing and built in the round, this solution would limit the alteration to the least visible of its elevations.

Option C is not entirely inconsistent with alterations that the Board has recently approved on another landmark building. At the Embassy and Chancery of Italy (December 2010), the Board approved a proposal to modify the rear roof slopes of a 1930s addition to the building to create small outdoor terraces at the roof level. The changes affected rear roof slopes on secondary elevations that had very limited public visibility, allowing small incisions while maintaining the roof form and mass.

However, while Option C would be the least impactful of the two, it still raises concerns in the extent of roof being removed—a majority of the north slope—and in the new profile that would be created by the projecting railing. If the Board is inclined to approve any alteration to the roof, the HPO recommends that Option C be revised to reduce the extent of removal of roof, with greater retention at each end closest to the ridges, and pulled back from the outside wall of the building to eliminate the need for the projecting railing that would project above the original roof form.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board:

- *Find the scope of exterior restoration and one-story garage addition consistent with the purposes of the preservation act;*
- *Encourage the applicants to develop a variation of Option C that pulls the proposed roof deck further in from the sides and pulled back from the outside wall to eliminate the projecting handrail.*
- *Encourage the applicants to consider the amount of roof removal such as a different type of HVAC system (e.g. ductless mini-split system).*