

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

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| Landmark/District: | Dupont Circle HD | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda |
| Address: | 1508-1512 21st Street NW | <input type="checkbox"/> Consent |
| | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept |
| Meeting Date: | February 25, 2016 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration |
| Case Number: | 16-148 | <input type="checkbox"/> New Construction |
| Staff Reviewer: | Kim Elliott | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision |

21 Dupont Condo LLC with Bonstra|Haresign Architects seeks conceptual design review for façade restoration, interior renovations, and rear and roof additions to three rowhouses in the Dupont Circle historic district.

Property Description

The row at this end of 21st Street is made up of 3-story (plus basement) rowhouses with projecting bays and a distinctive roofline, designed by Franklin Schneider and Louis Meline between 1889 and 1898. The site at 1508, 1510, and 1512 have had significant interior alterations and are multi-unit dwellings. The façade of 1508 has also been altered with the removal of the original first floor entry and stoop.

Proposal

The proposal includes restoring the historic façade at 1508 with a cast iron stair and stoop as well as restoring the original door location at 1512; combining lots at 1510 and 1512 to connect floors on the interior; complete interior renovation of all three rowhouses; a 4th floor addition to 1508 set back from the facade; and a new 5-story rear addition that also extends over the main block of 1510 and 1512 rowhouses stepping back from the façade elevation.

Evaluation

While there have been many interior alterations on these three rowhouses over the years; the proposed project keeps very little of the original structure. The proposed design combines the lots of 1510 and 1512 to create an internal connection, with core elements (stair, trash, elevator and egress paths) populating the area around and through the party wall. As a result, the party wall between the two houses is only partial maintained, punctured in many locations on each floor, and consumed by these core elements, and therefore eroding the legibility of the original footprint of each house.

At the rear, the 1- and 2-story doglegs will be removed and a large 5-story (plus basement) rear addition is proposed. The new construction is designed with terracotta rainscreen panels and larger window openings, and will project in a staggered footprint to the rear alley. While the addition to the rear is a significant length on the already very deep 72' length of the original house, the overall depth of the proposed project is not unlike the adjacent renovated building at 1514 21st Street and therefore the length is compatible in this context. The staggered footprint helps break up the mass of the building and add more light to the interior layout. Unfortunately, this breakdown with a 3-stepped footprint does not correspond to the 2 rowhouses that they are covering up masking the original width of the rowhouses.

This large 2-story addition continues over the roof of the original two houses at 1510 and 1512. At 1508, 1 new story is added to the top and is set back about 15'. In both cases a majority of the roofs of the original rowhouses would be demolished to accommodate the extra stories. At 1510 and 1512 the

additional 2 floors on top of the original block are stepped back between 14' to 35' from the façade, but still covers a majority of the original house. The amount that the addition overlaps the main block of the house along with the overall mass of the proposed addition completely swallows up the original rowhouses leaving no understanding of the mass and scale of this rowhouse typology.

A flag test was performed in June in the early stages of design that confirmed the addition was not visible from 21st Street. Visibility is one criterion we look at to evaluate a project, but it is not the only test of compatibility. In addition it is also important to assess if there is substantial demolition, how the mass of the addition relates to the original building(s), if the addition is subordinate to the original house, and if the character is compatible to the immediate context.

In reviewing this project I looked at numerous cases with large rear additions that the Board has reviewed and found compatible; however, many of these cases have different factors that define them—such as maintaining a large percentage of the structure and interior of the house, a smaller and subordinate addition, or an addition not touching the main block of the historic house – making them compatible in their context.

The cumulative nature of all of the proposed alterations on this project—large and tall rear addition, 2-story addition overlapping the majority of the main block of the historic house, and substantial interior and roof demolition—are too overwhelming and make the current design incompatible.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board find the current concept incompatible with the historic district and immediate context and recommend that the applicant return to the Board with the following revisions:

- *reduce the height of the addition by one story (on 1510 and 1512) and minimize the amount that the addition overlaps the main block of the house;*
- *Maintain more of the party wall and original structural elements;*
- *Conduct a new flag test when massing changes have been resolved;*
- *The Board's recommendation should not be constructed as endorsement for any necessary zoning relief*