

---

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

---

Property Address:	<b>3603 Norton Place, NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Cleveland Park Historic District</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>December 15, 2011</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>12-040</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Kim Elliott</b>		New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

---

Greg Gardner (Landis Construction) on behalf of home owner Valcoulon Ellicott requests concept approval of a roof alteration and rear attic shed dormer addition at 3603 Norton Place, NW in the Cleveland Park Historic District.

**Property History and Description**

3603 Norton Place is a modest one-story clapboard bungalow, constructed in 1921. The architect is unknown. The 1213 sf house has a typical bungalow square foot print, a low pitch, asphalt-shingle gabled roof, and a double pediment centered over the front door. It is set back from the street and sits up on a small slope about 8' above the sidewalk and street elevation.

**Proposal**

The project calls for reconstructing the ridge of the roof, raising it 1'-11", and adding an attic shed dormer on the rear roof slope in order to create a useable 2<sup>nd</sup> floor living space. On the east elevation, a new window would be added on the first floor, matching the other existing six-over-six windows.

**Evaluation**

Altering the form, pitch, or profile of a contributing building in an historic district is not typically a compatible preservation treatment. Such changes are generally not compatible with the character of a property, as they result in alterations to the proportions and façade composition and/or result in removal of important characteristics or features. In the HPRB's guideline, *Roofs on Historic Buildings*, it is stated that "roofs are one of the most important features of historic buildings" as "their shape, elements, details and materials can significantly contribute to the appearance of buildings." The guideline advises that "altering roof shapes, materials, elements, and details will affect their design. Thus, any alterations must be undertaken with extreme care to ensure that the character of the roof is retained." Roof form is so important that the guideline concludes that "rarely is it appropriate to change the shape of an existing roof. To do so almost always drastically alters the character of a historic building. If, for compelling functional or economic reasons, the shape of the roof must be changed, it should be done in such a manner as to retain the historic character of the building."

However, the proposed project at 3603 Norton Place represents one of those relatively rare instances in which altering the roof form will not adversely affect important characteristics or features of the building.

The proposed roof alteration on Norton Place would maintain the shape, pitch, and materials of the existing roof, and would not result in the loss of any distinctive architectural features. The roof's low pitch and modest expansion, coupled with the fact that the house sits well above the street grade, would ensure that the change in roof elevation would be imperceptible and not change the proportions of the building or its façade composition.

The change respects the integrity of the original bungalow design and does not change the fundamental character of the house. This simple bungalow, while contextual with the neighborhood, is not of great architectural significance, and the proposed design changes are quiet and within modest proportions – still maintaining a relatively smaller scale to its neighbors.

Recent cases that have been presented to HPRB where roof alterations were denied differ from the proposed 3603 Norton Place project, because they significantly altered character-defining roofs. At 1909 12<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, where the roof ridge was raised during construction after the review process had taken place, the Board denied the alteration, finding that the change in roof pitch and height dramatically changed its form. In its review of a proposal at 2930 Porter Street, NW, the Board denied a proposal to alter a distinctive terra cotta tile roof on a one-story bungalow, finding that the alteration of the original clay tile roof changed the scale and proportions of the house.

The rear attic shed dormer is appropriate in form, scale, and detailing. It is not visible from the street, is designed with compatible materials, and evokes the style of dormers typical of early 20<sup>th</sup> century bungalows. The additional window on the east elevation adopts the same scale and style of the existing windows, and is compatible in placement with the composition of this side elevation.

### **Recommendation**

The HPO recommends that Board find the proposed roof alteration, rear roof dormer, and new side window compatible with the character of the historic district, and delegate final approval to staff.