HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Landmark/District:	**Anacostia Historic District**	(**x**) Agenda
Address:	**1350 Valley Place SE**	
Meeting Date:	**July 23, 2015**	(**x**) New construction
Case Number:	**14-667**	(**x**) Subdivision
Staff Reviewer:	**Tim Dennée**	(**x**) Revised concept

The applicant, owner District Properties LLC (Mohamed Sikder), requests review of revised conceptual plans to construct a two-story frame house on a vacant lot. The house would be sided with fiber-cement lap boards and roofed with asphalt. It would have a full-width front porch. The foundation would be painted concrete (presumably tip-up panels) formed to look like brick. The building would stand between a house newly constructed by the same firm and semidetached homes built in 1968.

The Board first reviewed the concept in October and found it to be incompatible with the character of the historic district, because the proposal was then a boxy Italianate-style house. The Board encouraged the applicant to restudy for more compatibility with the cottage-type houses in the immediate neighborhood. The building has been redesigned with a front gable.

The building is historicist and is generally compatible. Parking would be at the rear, as would a wood privacy fence. A lower, open, solid-steel fence would stand in front. There are some minor trim details to work out,[1] and the placement of the electric meter at rear (or alternatively, inside) will be a permit condition.

The applicant also requests the Board's review of a resubdivision. The Board previously approved the subdivision of the 53-foot-wide parcel into two lots, for the construction of two houses. This lot was to have a nine-foot side yard to separate the two buildings. That meant that the side wall of the other house, 1352 Valley sits on the present common property line. But the applicant put windows into the side of 1352, an element that is not incompatible, but that had not been depicted in the approved drawings. It presents a violation of the building code, because a wall within three feet of a common property line should have no openings for fire separation, and the code official will not approve a final inspection until the issue is rectified. So, the applicant now proposes to shift the lot line so that 1352 owns the nine-foot side yard, and 1350 is face on line.

That would mean that the new house at 1350 would have to have both side walls blank, and the eave of its front gable would project across the new property line. This last condition would at least require the granting of an easement to 1350 for its encroachment over 1352's lot. It would be preferable if an easement for the whole side yard could prevent any construction there in perpetuity, so as to avoid the fire separation issue. If that's not possible from a code perspective, it would be better if 1350, rather than 1352, were the building to have the side windows, because it is trying to be more like the cottage-type homes that typically have side windows. However, if there's no way to avoid it, there is not too much difference in having the side of 1350 blank, as opposed to 1352.

[1] The rake board in the gable should be somewhat broader than the corner trim. The profile of the fascia and molding of the porch is not entirely clear, and the roof should probably be brought in a few inches from the corners of the house so that the profile can return around both sides.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept for new construction as not incompatible with the character of the historic district and recommend approval of the subdivision as compatible, and delegate further review to staff.

Above: Houses to the east. Below: Houses to the west.

The buildings across the street.