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

Landmark/District:	Anacostia Historic District	(x) Agenda
Address:	1321-1325 Maple View Place SE	
Meeting Date:	February 2, 2017	(x) New construction
Case Number:	17-129	(x) Subdivision
Staff Reviewer:	Tim Dennée	(x) Concept

The applicant, property owner Chughtai Family Properties LLC (with architect Stephen duPont), requests the Board's review of a concept to subdivide two lots (976 and 877 in Square 5803) into four lots of record and to build upon them four two-story frame houses, each with an accessory apartment in the basement.

The two present 52-foot-wide lots would each be bisected. Because the south boundary line of the historic district jogs on Maple View, one of these two lots lays outside the historic district, meaning that two of the houses would as well. So, the subdivision of and construction upon that lot—Lot 977, or the two houses on the left as seen in the front elevation—are not subject to the historic preservation law or the Board's review. Still, the applicant wisely presented all of them together, especially as the project requires zoning relief for lot occupancy, lot width and side yards.

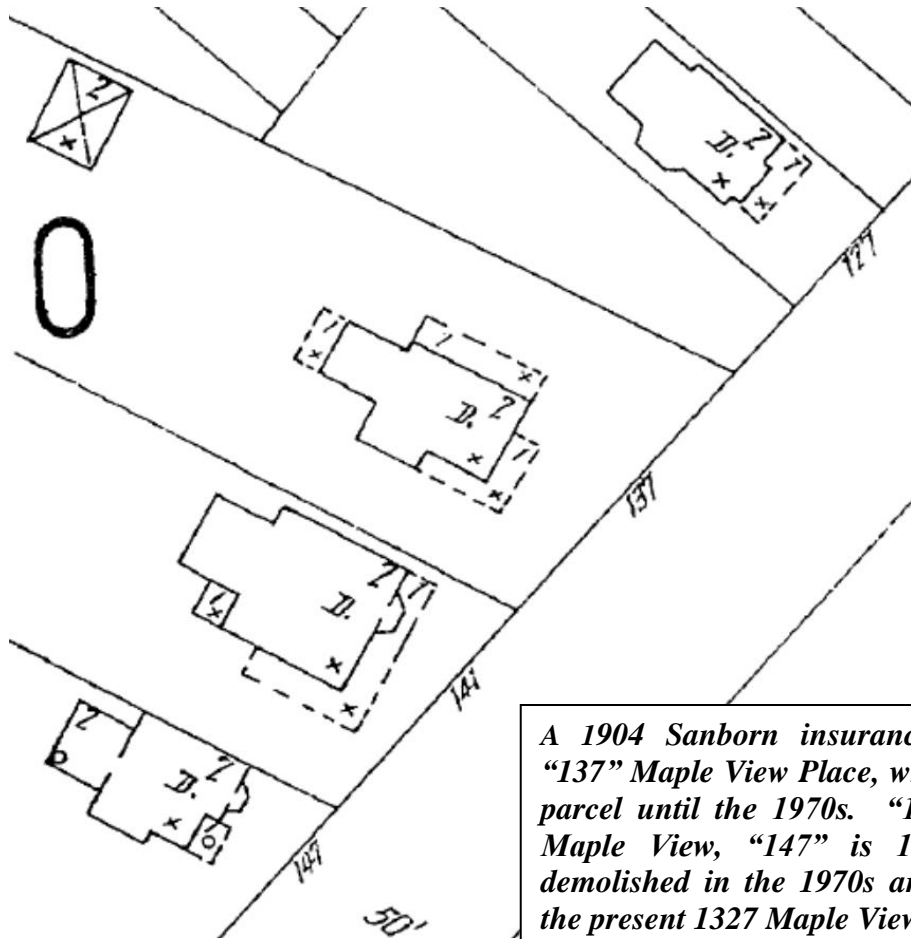
The houses would be almost identical, with some variety in the details of front porches and fenestration. Each would be 50 feet deep, from front porch to rear porch, and each would be two stories, plus an attic under a cross-gable roof.

The house form is compatible with this portion of the historic district. Nearly all the contributing houses in the district are two stories tall, with full front porches. The southern end of the district—Griswold's Addition to Uniontown, developed with the first streetcar line through the neighborhood—is characterized by homes with attics under gable and hip roofs.

There are several issues that merit discussion.

The preservation law does not require new construction to merely replace or copy old buildings. In fact, the new-construction guidelines encourage that buildings be seen as products of their time, not exactly duplicating or creating a false sense of history. New construction must not be incompatible, that is, sufficiently in harmony with the surrounding historic buildings.

Among the guidelines' principles of compatibility is that new buildings should respect the rhythm of their neighbors as well as that of the street. The presence of these vacant lots next to a noncontributing building allows some flexibility to re-establish a rhythm, not necessarily replicating the historic condition, but taking cues from groupings of homes on the street.



A 1904 Sanborn insurance map detail depicting “137” Maple View Place, which stood on the present parcel until the 1970s. “127” is the present 1319 Maple View, “147” is 1333. “141” was also demolished in the 1970s and was later replaced by the present 1327 Maple View.

The original (1886) subdivisions and early resubdivisions of Griswold’s Addition do not provide much guidance, as the lots were most often about 25 feet wide, although some were as little as 20 feet, and others slightly more than 30. In this particular location, a larger parcel was further subdivided in 1894 and 1903. 1319 Maple View and the houses to its west were placed on 22-foot-wide lots, although 1317 straddles two such lots. The land overlapping the subject lots were left large—40, 60 and 75 feet—and then resubdivided to their present extent when 1327 was built in 1991.

Many of the houses on wider or double lots leave little side yard, as at 1317. Indeed, the whole group of historic houses from 1309 to 1319 Maple View are closely spaced, although quite not as closely as these. If the east fence of 1319 Maple View is on the property line, then its side yard adjacent to this project is only about six feet wide, and it has a bay projection into that area.

Discounting the attached homes on the block, there is an even closer grouping of four detached ones across the street, at 1348 to 1354 (photos 4a and 4b on Sheet 0004.2). These are comparable in spacing to the houses now proposed.

At twenty-foot-wide each, the proposed houses are somewhat narrower than the historic ones, and more akin to the proportions of rowhouses or the boxy Italianate houses further north in the

district. Thus, four can fit on a less extensive parcel than can the four at 1348-1354 Maple View. Their narrowness makes the design of their gabled attics a trickier proposition, but the architect has hit upon appropriately steep gables commonly seen in streetcar suburbs.

On balance, three houses would be more compatible than four.¹ Three is nearer the former, more widely spaced pattern on this spot and would allow for slightly wider homes with more gently sloping front yards typical of this street. But closely spaced detached houses are more compatible with this context than would be the alternative of rowhouses or semidetached houses up to 26 feet wide.² These four houses are not incompatible if carefully designed.

1. As suggested by the new-construction guidelines,³ as a condition of approval of a concept or a permit, the front-yard setback for each house should be based upon and roughly the same as those at the historic houses on either side, 1319 and 1333 Maple View (and not copy the deeper setback of the noncontributing 1327 next door). A front yard is important if for no other reason than as a mediating space between the sidewalk and the basement window openings.
2. Air-conditioning condensers/compressors are not depicted, but they would presumably be set in the rear yards, as the roofs are too steep to accommodate or conceal them.
3. Neither are electric meters depicted, but because each house would accommodate two units and presumably two meters, their careful placement in inconspicuous locations becomes even more important. If they cannot be placed on the interior, then the meter boxes should be on the side elevations somewhat back from the front corners.
4. The porch piers should be of brick or be brick-faced.
5. The most problematic detail is that, in the interest of putting consistently sizeable windows in the basement, under the porch, the front yard becomes something of a flat areaway. At each end it is bounded by a retaining wall and, atop it, a protective fence (this is best seen in the front elevations). This sets up an odd relationship to the street's natural grade, places the porch on high spindly piers, and thrusts the retaining walls and fences intrusively into the front yards. Such a flat space forward of the porches would probably induce further paving there in the future for patios or walks. The most important revision to this proposal would be to slope the front yards more naturally with the street grade and to bring them to the face of the buildings. If any retaining walls are still necessary, they should be inboard of that point. If it helps, the main stairs and entry doors could be flipped to the higher end of the porch.⁴

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the project in concept, including the subdivision, and delegate to staff further review, with that review and revisions to address the items raised above and the detailed recommendations of the Board.

¹ And fewer than three seems unlikely given that half of this parcel is technically beyond the Board's jurisdiction.

² Frankly, it would be preferable for more new construction in Anacostia to go through the variance process for substandard side yards, as nonconforming yards are typical here, and the zoning regulations tend to induce too-wide rowhouse forms rather than the often narrow detached buildings that generally characterize the district. But without a large parcel for several houses at a time, the time and cost of the variance process may be prohibitive.

³ "[A] new building should respect the setbacks established by the buildings on a street. For example, the front of a new building should not extend beyond the line created by the fronts of existing buildings..."

⁴ The houses also might be shifted to their east lot lines, rather than their present placement on the west lines, in order to leave more space between them and 1319 Maple View. The noncontributing 1327 Maple View already has a substantial side yard with driveway.