

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

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Property Address:	<b>3215 Newark Street, NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Cleveland Park Historic District</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>May 31, 2012</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>12-342</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Anne Brockett</b>		New Construction

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Owners Laurie Wingate and Mark Chandler seek the Board’s concept review to install solar panels on the roof of their Cleveland Park home. The house is a 1906 stucco and shingle four-square with a full width front porch. In 2010, the Board approved the shingled rear addition that is now nearing completion.

**Proposal**

The project would install 21 black photovoltaic panels each measuring 31.42” x 61.39” x 1.81” on the west-facing roof. Eight panels are proposed on the original hipped roof of the house and 13 on the upper and lower roofs of the addition. All panels would be mounted on a rack system with a maximum height of 5” between the roof surface and the bottom of the panels (7.81” to the top of the panels).

**Evaluation**

One of the purposes of the Act is “to assure that alterations of existing structures are compatible with the character of the historic district.” The Board’s adopted Guidelines *Roofs on Historic Buildings* states 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.” The guidelines go on to specifically address solar panels by stating that “on a flat roof, solar panels should be located so they are not visible from the public street. If located on a sloping roof building, they should only be installed on rear slopes that are not visible from a public street.” The guidelines similarly restrict antennas, satellite dishes, and skylights to non-visible portions of the roof.

While the selected panels are black, rather than those edged in shiny metal, their presence would create a visual intrusion on the house and into an intact historic streetscape. The panels are highly reflective and visually distracting from the form and finish of the house’s roof. While the panels on the roof of the addition are supportable – the visibility would only be through the rear yard of another property, and the panels would be located on what is clearly a secondary wing of the building – additions on and alterations to visible portions of the primary original roof of the house are not consistent with the Board’s guidelines and would not be compatible with the character of the historic district.

Since 2009, HPO has approved solar installations at over 230 properties across the city, including landmarks and buildings in historic districts. In each case, the approval was conditioned upon the Board’s standard that the system not be visible from the street and that the installation not alter the appearance of primary roof forms. In the few instances where panels

were installed at variance with approved plans and have been visible upon installation, the HPO has worked with owners and, if necessary, taken enforcement action to rectify the condition.

While the number of panels proposed has been reduced to address staff comments, they should be eliminated from on the main roof altogether. Other types of solar installations, such as photovoltaic roofing shingles and roll-on applications, which have been installed on other properties in the District, may be a possibility here and should be investigated as an alternative. It is also possible that the panels on the main roof could be relocated to any portion of the addition roof by eliminating the skylights and adjusting the panels up to the top of the roof ridge and down to the roof edge. The HPO recognizes that north-facing panels are not optimal in any situation and that east facing panels on this property would be partially blocked by foliage, but would support increasing the number of panels on the addition roof to compensate removing the eight panels from the main roof. It is also possible that the panels could be placed on freestanding mounts or on the roof of an auxiliary structure (i.e. pool house, pergola, etc.) in the rear yard.

### **Recommendation**

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the placement solar panels flush on any part of the roof of the addition or on other non-visible portions of the property and direct the applicants to restudy other types and locations of solar installations, as necessary to achieve solar efficiency, and to delegate permit approval to the HPO.