

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

Property Address:	3312 Lowell Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Cleveland Park Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	January 24, 2013	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	13-104		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Anne Brockett	X	Alteration

Working with Seth Ballard of Ballard Mensua Architecture, owner Hans Wydler seeks concept review to enclose the side porch, add to the rear, and widen the driveway of a house in the Cleveland Park Historic District.

Property History and Description

Along with the house directly to the east, 3312 was designed by architect George Santmyers for real estate developer Robert Sanford. Sanford and Santmyers worked together on a number of residential construction projects across the city in the 1920s through the 1940s. Built in 1924 as one of their earliest collaborations, this house is a two-story brick Colonial Revival-style dwelling with a frame side porch over a 1-car garage opening. A rear stucco addition – likely an enclosed porch – spans most of the rear elevation. Because of the proximity of the adjacent houses, both sides of the rear addition are visible from oblique angles.

Project Description and Evaluation

Side Porch

The proposal would enclose the original side porch by infilling between the existing Tuscan columns with “shadow box” panels below alternating 6/6 and single pane windows. The roof, cornice, and fascia would remain.

Enclosing a side porch is a traditional method of adding additional space to historic homes. The HPRB has approved compatibly designed side porch enclosures in Cleveland Park where they retain the original dimensions, materials, and features. Recent approvals include 3420 36th Street, 3500 Newark Street, and 3429 Ordway Street, NW. In each case, the design allowed the porch to continue to read as such with a transparent bank of fenestration above a knee wall of beadboard, paneling, or other solid material. The proposal here is consistent with previous approvals, although the HPO would recommend the use of 6/6 windows for all openings, rather than the alternating 6/6 sashes with fixed, single pane windows.

Rear Addition

At the rear of the house, a third floor addition is proposed above the existing two-story addition. A 16 x 7' bump-out on the first floor would be situated at the southeast corner while a deck would occupy the southwest corner. The additional story is the same width as the two floors below, but the southwest corner has been notched out for a small deck.

The addition springs off the rear of the roof under a shed roof, transitioning to a hipped roof over the deeper half. The walls of the addition and the stucco of the existing addition will be clad with paneling between banks of windows on each floor.

The architect has made several changes in response to HPO comments to reduce the size and visibility of the addition. The proposal was scaled back at the southwest corner, replacing a solid wall with an open deck. The roof on the west side has been simplified and reduced in width, while the roof on the east has been altered to create a hip, helping the height to recede visually. However, the shed roof remains where the addition connects to the main roof, making the roofline wider than necessary and creating an awkward point of attachment. The HPO recommends a true hipped roof here and likewise would request consideration of the same on the more visible west side, where a hipped roof would further reduce visibility of the addition.

Regarding the back yard deck, the HPO recommends that it not engage the side porch in such a visible fashion to allow the porch to read as a freestanding element on three sides. Rather the deck should be set in at the rear porch wall, attaching between the two windows or between the window and door, rather than projecting out from the porch and engaging the column. The deck could then project to its proposed width at a distance of several feet back from the rear wall of the porch.

Driveway Alterations

Finally, the owners seek to widen the driveway from just under 8'11" to 12'6" wide. Because the garage is below grade, retaining walls on both sides of the driveway are necessary, but which make opening car doors difficult. The proposal would shift the western wall 3'6", reusing the existing brick for its construction.

Driveway widening (and creation) has long been an issue in historic districts and must be carefully reviewed for impacts to the architectural and streetscape character of the district. Keeping in mind that the Zoning Code requires a minimum width of 8' for compact cars and 9' for standard sized cars, the HPO strives to retain the open, green, and public qualities of front yards, as was intended when the city's Public Space provisions were established. Indeed, Cleveland Park (as its name implies) was intended to be a verdant, park-like suburb.

In 2011, the HPO studied driveway widths in Cleveland Park in conjunction with an application to widen the driveway at 3409 Woodley Road. In that case, the owners sought to widen a 7'9" driveway to 9'7", later reducing the width to 9'0" at the request of the ANC. At that time, the HPO determined that there are relatively few narrow driveways where walls of 12" or higher are problematic, and that the project at 3409 Woodley would not be considered as setting a widespread precedent.

While that project was approved at its reduced width of 9', it should be noted that on Woodley Road, the grade rises from the street (rather than descending as on Lowell), so that as the driveway flattens out, the walls decrease in height to the point where they do not impede car doors. On Lowell a width of more than 9' would be necessary to accommodate two open car doors, but would likely not need to be greater than 11' to allow for comfortable access. The HPO recommends that the proposed width be reduced to no greater than 11' in width and encourages the use of tinted concrete with exposed aggregate to help the widened driveway match the existing concrete and aged concrete characteristic of the historic district.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the alterations to be compatible with the character of the historic district and consistent with the preservation act, and requests delegation of final approval to staff with the following conditions:

- *6/6 sashes should be used in all window openings on the porch;*
- *the shed roof on the east end of the addition should be eliminated and consideration given to using a hipped roof on the west to reduce visibility;*
- *the rear deck should be set back in projection, as described above;*
- *the driveway should be no wider than 11 feet in width and reuse the existing bricks for the relocated retaining wall.*