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

Landmark/District: **Anacostia Historic District** (x) Agenda
Address: **1227 Maple View Place SE**

Meeting Date: **July 9, 2015** (x) Raze
H.P.A. Number: **15-416**

Staff Reviewer: **Tim Dennée**

The applicant, property owner Southeast Neighborhood House (SENH), requests the Board's review of a permit application to raze a two-story frame house.

In 2002, Project Shelter, acting on behalf of owner, Southeast Neighborhood House, requested a raze permit, arguing the poor condition of the property. A couple of members of Project Shelter ostensibly had a relationship with the SENH board¹ and had offered assistance to reconstruct and expand the building, and requested a raze permit to that end. The Board recommended against razing but in favor of demolishing the rear of the house—the portion most damaged and where Project Shelter had proposed to expand it—and the reconstruction of the floor assemblies and repairs throughout. The 2002 staff report and transcript are attached.

Historical background

The house was constructed *circa* 1889, possibly by Henry A. Griswold, the developer of the eponymous surrounding subdivision/addition to Uniontown and the builder of the first streetcar through Anacostia. Before the rationalization of (former) Washington County street addresses, this property was known as 27 Maple Avenue.² The home was possibly best described by its owner in 1903, prior to an addition, as a “6 Room Frame Cottage.” The building's cross-gabled massing, scalloped shingles and one-story projecting bay suggest the influence of the contemporary Queen Anne style, although it is a modest vernacular example.

In a sense, the property is a microcosm of historic Anacostia, a simple two-story frame Victorian residence, home to local business owners and to employees of the major government institutions nearby. Most of its inhabitants were D.C. natives. The first residents appear to have been the DeNeale family and Samuel and Mary Woods. Samuel Woods was a Civil War veteran and a laundryman at Saint Elizabeths Hospital. About two years after his 1895 death, the home was purchased by dry goods retailer and milliner Bertha C. Shreve.

Bertie Shreve, the widow of Anacostia druggist Samuel F. Shreve, appears to have rented out

¹ Historic Preservation Review Board hearing transcript for September 26, 2002, p. 364.

² There was another Maple street in Takoma Park.

rooms and acquired, subdivided and sold enough property to describe herself as a “capitalist” in the 1900 federal census. Among her earliest tenants were her cousin Bridget A. Grady Glennan and Bridget’s husband, Navy Yard machinist James J. Glennan. The increasingly crowded home prompted Mrs. Shreve to make repairs and improvements in 1903 and 1906, before constructing a two-story rear addition in the northwest corner about 1911-1912. At the same time, Bertie subdivided off the north portion of the parcel, intending to sell or develop it. It was not until 1923, however, that the brick house next door (1225 Maple View) was constructed, ostensibly by her sister, Bridget Glennan.

Bertie’s house itself was at some time subdivided into two apartments, one of which accommodated the family of her sister, Catherine “Kate” Gray. Most members of the Gray family were federal employees. Kate and her daughter Mary became part owners of the property in 1933 and remained after Bertie died, with Mary resident until 1959. At that point, Mary Gray put the place up for sale. The four-bedroom, two-bath house was described as having a beautiful fenced yard “abundant with flowers and shade trees.”

Purchasers Walter and Mary Smith immediately offered the property for rent in 1960, but it may have remained empty until leased by the Maple View Nursery School the following year. The school lasted no more than three years, and the Smiths sold the property to Episcopal diocese of Washington, which intended to use it as a parsonage for St. Philip the Evangelist Episcopal Church, then located on Shannon Place. From 1966 to 1970, the house was occupied by Rev. Samuel K. Frazier Jr., the church’s new assistant pastor and an activist for affordable housing. In 1972, the Episcopal Church conveyed the property to the Washington Welfare Association, a nonprofit corporation.

The WWA had originated as a charitable organization before the First World War. It distributed free milk to children at D.C. playgrounds and collected used clothing for the poor. It also sponsored children’s sports teams. To raise money for its programs, the association staged vaudeville-type performances, often featuring the children it assisted. The organization took on more of the character of a settlement house when a racially integrated branch was established in 1929 and became the recipient of Community Chest (and later, United Way) contributions. This branch soon opened its “Southeast House” in a historic building at 324 Virginia Avenue SE as a “community center and day nursery for underprivileged and neglected colored children of Southeast Washington.”

The Southeast House and the WWA became interchangeable³ as the original programs for white residents withered away. By the end of 1932 the Southeast House aimed:

to encourage colored children and adults to widen their horizons by offering new and constructive interests under trained leadership; through varied and interesting activities for every member of the family, including nursery school, arts and crafts, choral society, children’s theater, health clubs, social and athletic clubs, mothers’ clubs, Summer activity school; [and to

³ In the 1930s, newspapers mentioned it as “Washington Welfare Association (Southeast House)” and “Southeast House, Washington Welfare Association (colored).” The 1972 deed for the subject property gave the record owner as Washington Welfare Association, but “Southeast Neighborhood House” appeared as owner on property tax assessments from 1988 on. Court documents referred to the WWA as “doing business as Southeast Neighborhood House,” and SENH’s corporation papers state that it was founded on June 18, 1929.

give]... personal advisory service on problems of residents of [the] neighborhood; [and to train]... elder children to be big brothers and sisters to little ones.

Three decades later, known as the Southeast Neighborhood House (since about 1940), its mission was described in brief as “day care for children of working parents, parent education programs, programs for teen-agers and Golden Age Club for elderly residents.” But redevelopment forced the organization from its home in 1963, and it relocated to Anacostia, where need for its services was increasing. After a year in temporary quarters, the organization moved to a former residence, 2263 Mount View Place, which became the new Southeast Neighborhood House. In 1972, the organization expanded into the adjacent 1227 and 1225 Maple View properties.

By that time, SENH was had established a coffee house operated by and for teenagers; a Neighborhood Youth Corps; a summer vacation camp school, a free food and clothing center; and a model apartment in public housing for teaching household management skills. It also helped with job placement and provided emergency financial assistance. This was all in addition to its traditional daycare, children’s art programs, and counseling. Youth from SENH even took part in protests for social justice.

Unfortunately, SENH experienced a series of financial and legal problems from the late 1970s through the early 1990s, and in 1991 considered selling its properties. The organization continued by narrowing its scope somewhat, concentrating on its original mission of caring for children and youth in the guise of a new non-profit, founded in 1992, called Children of Mine, Inc., headquartered in 2263 Mount View.⁴ Money troubles did not disappear, however. Maintaining three properties on donations meant for the operations of Children of Mine may have become impossible. After housing an office of the Census Bureau for a few years in the early 1980s, there’s no evidence that 1227 Maple View was further occupied. It is said that there had been a minor fire in the building, and it was left to deteriorate thereafter, with no work but boarding openings and construction of a perimeter fence. The house at 1225 Maple View had been used longer, sometimes serving as the mailing address for SENH, but it too has been vacant and dilapidated for years.

In 2003, SENH’s three properties were purchased at tax sale by District TLC Trust 1996, a Delaware corporation apparently set up by the District of Columbia to sell tax-delinquent properties. Three years later, the trust conveyed them back to SENH for nominal consideration with the proviso that they be used “for charitable community purposes limited to pre-school and day care, or after school education, recreational, nutritional, residential and related services provided to children of school and pre-school age, including children of incarcerated parents who are in need of such services and who reside in the Anacostia neighborhood or elsewhere in the District of Columbia.” By the same deed, SENH was permitted to lease or sell the real estate to entities having the same mission, but the properties would revert to District government ownership if the conditions were not met. Yet, 1227 Maple View has since continued to remain vacant.

⁴ The director and registered agent for Children of Mine has served on the SENH board since at least 1998 and is currently its president.

Property condition

In 2002, the Board reviewed the report of structural engineer Suresh Baral on the condition of the house. The report concluded that 60 percent of the floors needed to be replaced. Only 25 percent of the exterior walls were said to need replacement, however, and those studs were concentrated in the rear, which was obviously collapsing, but was also the location proposed for expansion of the building's footprint. The Board therefore recommended for partial reconstruction rather than a wholesale raze. The applicant agreed.

The present applicant has not presented, nor has the staff yet requested, another engineer's report. The property has certainly not improved over the past thirteen years; it has understandably worsened. The collapse of the rear of the building, for instance, has visibly progressed, as has collapse of the roof. Portions of the latter look solid, but much has been lost; the lack of portions of the roof is now conspicuous from the front as one looks up the valley between the main roof and the front gable, undoubtedly aggravated by the lack of a functional drainage system.

With respect to properties in historic districts, the preservation law states as its principal purpose the retention and enhancement of contributing buildings and their adaptation to current use. The *circa* 1889 building is still substantially present, but it was more so thirteen years ago. As it was constructed a half century before the end of the Anacostia's period of significance, it should be considered contributing to the character of the historic district until proven otherwise. The house certainly retains its early form, fenestration, and the features of its exterior walls. It has integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, feeling and association, although the latter four aspects of integrity are suffering for the neglect of the materials.

If the Board wishes to know in detail the degree to which the building retains physical integrity, a new engineer's report could quantify what of the building seems salvageable at this point. And if the applicant wishes to demonstrate that the house has lost its historic integrity because too much historic fabric would now need to be replaced, then that is the applicant's right. But that may miss the point. Such a report may guide a party who is interested in salvaging the building. This owner simply wishes to raze it.

Demolition by neglect

The central feature of this story is the fact that Southeast Neighborhood House (under that name and as the Washington Welfare Association) has owned this property since 1972, with the exception of three years when it was lost to a tax sale. There are apparently no records of repair work at 1227 Maple View Place, or permits for the same, for decades. That the property is proposed for raze because of its condition is itself evidence that it is being demolished by neglect.

Whether a property is maintained is not at the discretion of a property owner; it is an affirmative responsibility, as much as is the payment of property taxes. The District of Columbia Property Maintenance Code is thorough and specific about what features of a property must be kept in good repair. And if a property has been allowed to deteriorate, then other statutes may apply, such as the insanitary buildings law, the blighted property law, and the historic preservation law. The longer that repairs are deferred, the higher the bill when it ultimately comes due.

No records of permits for this property are found in the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs' Accela permit database or in two databases maintained by DCRA's Records Room to track archived plans dating back to the 1980s.

There was an application for construction of the lot's perimeter fence in 2002, but that fence was first erected without a permit. The HPO cleared an application after the fact for the duration of one year, but it is not clear that a permit was ever issued. No other permit clearances for the property appear in HPO's logs, which date back to 2001 and contain some earlier clearances.

Accela and land records note inspections and violations at 1227 Maple View back to 1995. The property has been the subject of a case before the Board for the Condemnation of Insanitary Buildings since 2011. In February 2015, the BCIB finally issued an order of condemnation, which authorizes the city to enter the property to make repairs. The house was also determined to be a "blighted vacant building" pursuant to the Blighted Properties Abatement Reform Act of 2009 (D.C. Code 42-3131.05), probably first in 2010, but at least by November 2013.⁵ As of May 31, 1227 Maple View has an accumulated tax liability of \$508,348.47. It has gone to tax sale in 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2013, and it has received "tax sale and delinquency" notices for 2014 and 2015 as well. The amount owed will almost certainly prevent another private entity from purchasing the tax lien and then assuming responsibility for the historic structure. It also suggests the inability of SENH to address its repair or that of 1225 Maple View.⁶

The preservation law defines demolition by neglect as "neglect in maintaining, repairing, or securing an historic landmark or a building or structure in an historic district that results in substantial deterioration of an exterior feature of the building or structure or the loss of the structural integrity of the building or structure." (D.C. Code 6-1102(3A)) The slow collapse of the rear of the building is evidence enough, but so is the progressive loss of the roof, which is now apparent even from the front of the house, and the rotting of the porch and other elements, and vegetation on the roofs and in gutters. Substantial trees have been allowed to grow immediately next to the walls, one at the north corner and one at the southeast. When the trees are not ailanthus or paulownia, how much time must elapse for that to occur? Leaving aside any above-ground effects, their roots surely have penetrated the brick foundations.

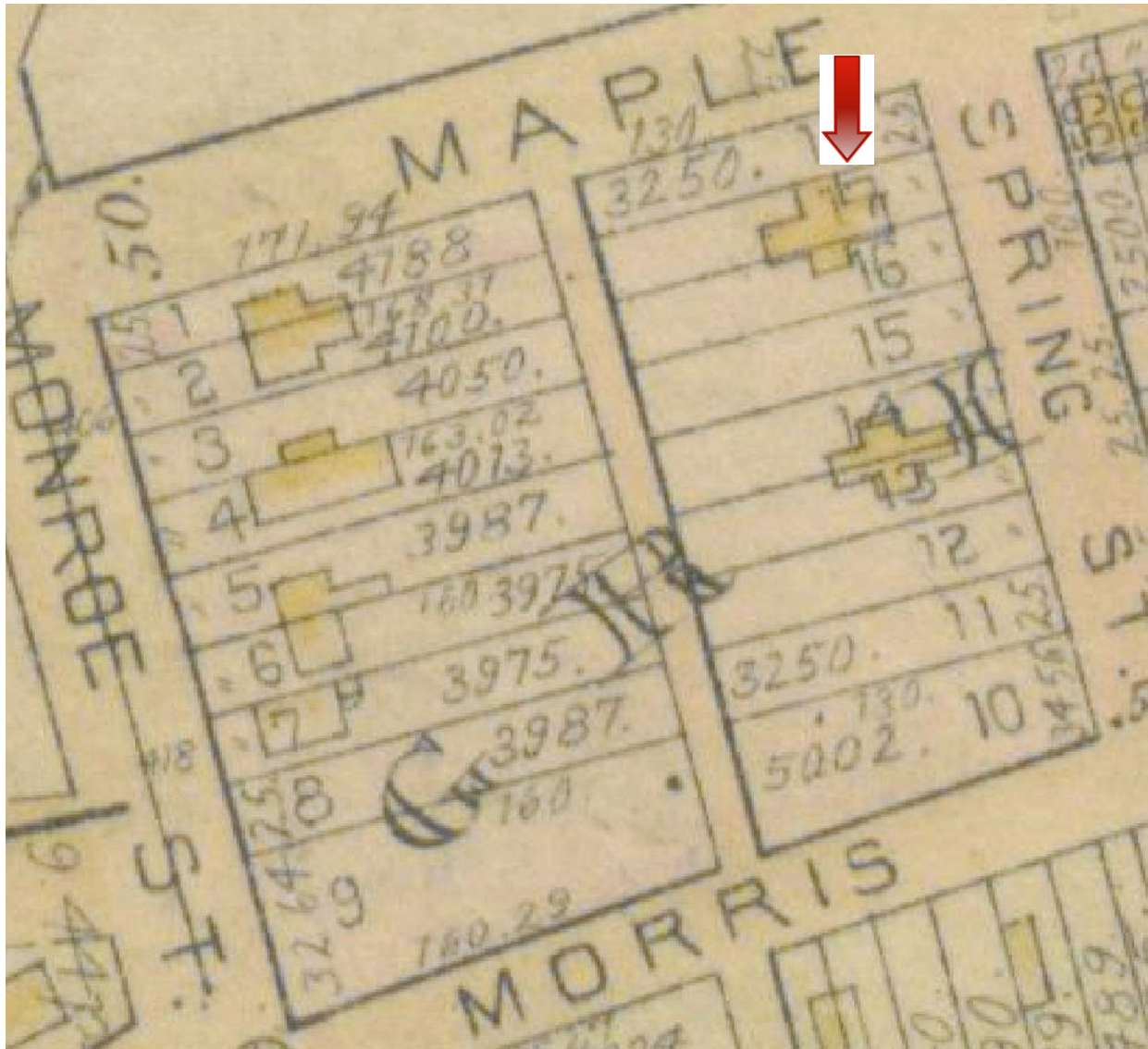
The appropriate response to a property owner who causes a property to be demolished *actively* is to require that that owner to rebuild it. The same is true for an owner that causes a building to be demolished gradually, by neglect. In fact, after a finding of demolition by neglect, the preservation law requires an owner to make repairs. (D.C. Code 6-1109.03) Of course, this requires a determination by the Mayor's Agent and an order of the D.C. Superior Court.

⁵ But rather than being taxed at the blighted-property rate, it is presently being taxed at the rate for occupied commercial buildings, despite being zoned residential and standing vacant for decades. The property has twice received hardship exemptions, although the blight law does not provide for exemptions.

⁶ 1225 Maple View is also deteriorating during its vacancy and has been designated a blighted property, with outstanding taxes of about \$190,000. It has a hole in its roof, and is missing the front porch, slates from the roof and dormers, siding from the rear porch enclosure, and glass from an unboarded window. The gutters need replacement, and wood surfaces need paint. The Board may have occasion to review this property in the future, but its brick construction has made it less vulnerable than its neighbor. As the sole occupied building, 2263 Mount View Place is in better shape but requires roof work and other maintenance.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board recommend denial of a permit to raze the building on the grounds that it would be inconsistent with the purposes of the preservation law, specifically the law's purpose to retain and enhance historic buildings. If the applicant wishes to pursue this matter before the Mayor's Agent, the HPO further recommends that the Board request a finding of demolition by neglect.



A detail of Griffith M. Hopkins's 1894 Real Estate Plat-Book of Washington..., Volume 3. The subject house is indicated by the arrow.

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Landmark/District:	Anacostia Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1227 Maple View Place, SE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
Meeting Date:	September 26, 2002	<input type="checkbox"/> Addition
H.P.A. Number:	02-482	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition
Date Received:	July 1, 2002	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Tim Dennée	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept

The applicant, Project Shelter, agent for owner South East Neighborhood House (SENH), requests the Board's conceptual review of an application to raze a *circa* 1890s two-story frame house to its foundation and then to reconstruct it with an addition.

Demolition

The subject property is visibly in poor condition, with a roof heavily damaged, and large openings in the bearing walls, especially on the rear and upper east side. The damage and deterioration to the wall and floor framing is much more apparent on the interior (where not obscured by the exterior siding) as a result of a fire and being open to the elements. The staff has observed that much of the second floor has collapsed. A structural engineer's report is attached.

Frame buildings are infinitely reparable, as each single structural or cladding element can theoretically be replaced, with varying degrees of trouble and expense. At some point, assuming that the *appearance* of the building is retained, the question arises as to what degree it *is* the *actual* building, as opposed to its appearance, that has been kept after a large amount of structure has been replaced.⁷ Clearly, the present structure requires a great deal of reconstruction. There is a choice as to whether the applicant should achieve that reconstruction piece-by-piece, or by a more wholesale demolition and reconstruction upon the present foundation. It is impossible to quantify exactly an acceptable amount of reconstruction—that is to say, to set an exact amount at which the existing structure does not have significant integrity to warrant concern about its demolition or wholesale reconstruction.

Based on site visits and photos, the staff was inclined to support demolition (subject to the issuance of a permit to reconstruct). However, despite the superficial appearance and the real costs involved in repairing the damage, the structural engineer's report suggests a somewhat better scenario than first imagined. The most troubling aspect of the report is the estimate that 60 percent of the floors need to be replaced. This is mitigated somewhat by the fact that only 25 percent of the exterior walls need replacement, suggesting that at least, with some work, there

⁷ In such a balloon-framed building, the wall studs run from the sills to the wall plate over the second floor. While studs can be left in place or reinforced, significant damage to a single stud would normally require new studs on both stories either replacing or reinforcing the original.

will be sufficient structural integrity to support new floor joists. The fact that an expansion of the building is proposed also makes the picture brighter, as the most deteriorated portions of the exterior walls coincide with the locations where the old house and the addition or expanded section would meet. The interior plan suggests that the proposed project would not retain the present location of the house's rear wall anyway.

Addition

As rebuilt or added to, the former residence would be substantially larger than at present, with a two-story "addition" at rear. The addition would be in keeping with the materials, massing and details of the rest of the house. For the entire house, it is recommended that the applicant retain and replicate the original details, such as the shingles in the gables, including by salvaging existing material.

While large, the addition is sympathetic to the existing house. The staff commends the applicant on its willingness to rehabilitate this property. The addition does not exceed a reasonable scale while serving a worthy use.

ADA ramp

The house is appropriately to be adapted for ADA access. The present drawings show a ramp adjacent to location of the existing north porch. The staff would like to work with the applicant to make the ramp as little visually intrusive as possible.

Curb cut/driveway

Finally, the submitted drawings show a proposed curb cut and driveway at the rear of the building, off Mount View Place. Aware of the longstanding planning principle of maintaining greenspace along D.C. streets; and aware of the Board's longstanding opposition to most curb cuts in historic districts; and because of the availability to the SENH of sufficient on-street and off-street parking, the applicant has withdrawn this aspect of the proposal.

The staff recommends that the Board approve in concept the repair of the present building with an addition of approximately the scale and massing shown in the drawings submitted—including demolition necessary to connect the existing and new construction.