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

Landmark/District:	Anacostia Historic District	(x) Agenda
Address:	1328 W Street SE	
Meeting Date:	November 19, 2015	(x) Alterations
Case Number:	16-057	(x) Subdivision
Staff Reviewer:	Tim Dennée	(x) Concept

The applicant, Ronnie McGhee, architect and agent for the property owner, the D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), requests review of a concept to relocate the two historic houses from 2234 and 2238 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE in preparation for the anticipated residential and retail construction on the “Big K” site.

The application also involves the subdivision of the receiving parcel into a lot for each house and an alley to serve them, plus additional lots for future single-family homes. (A slightly amended site plan from the DC Department of Transportation is attached to account for the 90-degree turn of the proposed alley.)

The application proposes repairs and alterations to the two houses in order to ready them for occupation.

The plans also suggest additional single-family construction on the remaining lots to be developed by DHCD.

The accompanying narrative discusses a possible timeline, but it should be kept in mind that the houses must be relocated before excavation begins for the new construction on the avenue.

Background

In February 2014, the Board looked at a similar conceptual subdivision of this parcel and proposed sites for the two houses to be relocated. The Board recommended against the relocation of the houses and thus did not comment extensively upon the concept.

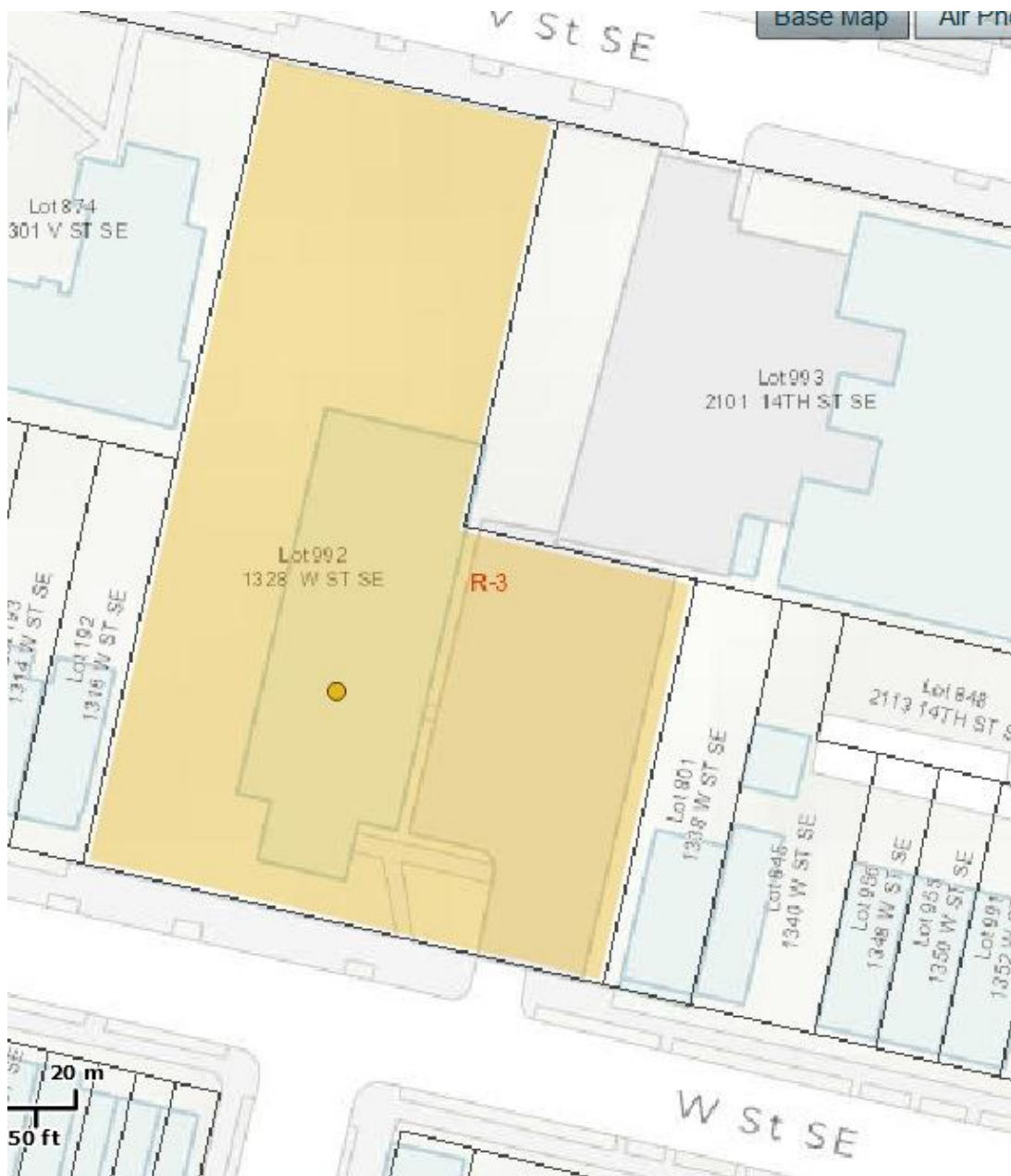
In an October 2014 decision, the Mayor’s Agent approved the relocation of the houses as an alteration whose adverse effects are outweighed by the promised benefits of the new construction on their site. Regarding previous cases of the relocation of historic buildings, the Mayor’s Agent’s decision quoted the State Historic Preservation Officer as saying that “The success of these [prior] examples has depended in large part on ensuring that the historic buildings remain in a setting of appropriate scale and character, similar to their original context.”

Evaluation

Site plan/subdivision

The February 2014 staff report on the initial relocation concept offered the following evaluation of the proposed sites for 2234 and 2238 Martin Luther King:

As a minimum requirement, the receiving sites have to be appropriate settings that help restore some integrity of feeling. Both DHCD and the HPO have looked at all the vacant sites in the historic district and concluded that the proposed lot is at least as good as any available. The applicant has provided two site-plan options, each of which depicts the houses in the locations recommended by staff in October.



V Street frontage for 2234 is preferable for a few reasons. First, the next-door neighbor would be Delaware Avenue Baptist Church and its parsonage, which sit well back on their lot. Setting back 2234 similarly, as depicted in both plans, would better recreate its original setting. Second, the grade rises from V Street to W, so a V Street site better resembles the present one, with houses on the side of a hill. Third, the buildings on the V Street frontage are unique, detached and larger,¹ in contrast to the array of similar modest, narrow, boxy, and typically abutting houses on W Street. Among those latter, 2238 could easily fit in, placed next to 1316 W, because it is similar in form and present setback.

The present site plan reflects this staff recommendation, with 2238 MLK to stand on the W Street side of this through-parcel, set back to align approximately with next-door 1316 W, and 2234 to stand on V Street, with a setback similar to that of the Delaware Avenue Baptist parsonage. The V Street house's lot would stretch from the Delaware Avenue Baptist property to a new alley separating it from the firehouse parking lot. The W Street frontage would likely be carved into four lots total, permitting zoning-compliant lots for one relocated house and as many as three new ones. An alternative to the proposed lot for 2238 is to flip it to the similarly sized lot next to the alley, so that the wraparound porch faces outward.

It will be necessary to create the lots for 2234 and 2238 MLK before their move. Two parking spaces would be created at the rear of each house, accessed from the new alley. The space left for the other lots on W Street would accommodate three houses, but only if two were semidetached, which is not incompatible with the context.

Alterations/repairs

The present drawings are conceptual and thus do not note every repair, yet they present a good idea of the intended finished state of the buildings to be moved. An attached narrative describes the repair work, including re-siding and painting; window and door replacement; roof replacement; landscaping; and, of course, interior structural, systems, and finish work to render the buildings habitable, with an eye toward retaining and restoring original trim inside and out.

Both houses would need new foundations, and both would receive modest rear additions. 2234 MLK would receive a two-story addition to replace the narrower one that had collapsed. The addition would accommodate a kitchen and dining room on the first floor and a bedroom and two baths on the second. The early rear addition at 2238 would be bumped out at the first floor to increase the size of the kitchen, terminating the rearmost end of the wraparound porch. Both additions are sufficiently compatible.

The proposed elevations for the 2234 MLK house do not take into consideration the rising topography of its site. Setting the foundation and the porches relative to the slope is probably the project's biggest challenge aside from the move itself.

It is unfortunate that one of the interior walls of 2238 would be removed, as it is likely a bearing wall. But it divides the stair hall from the parlor and dining room, and not removing it constrains the stairway to a ridiculously narrow dimension, a little over two feet wide.

¹ On V Street, 2234 would nearly face one of the oldest cottage-style houses in the neighborhood [1328 V Street].

A few more comments on the choices indicated for repair, replacement and expansion:

- The rear porch proposed for 2234 mirrors the front one. It is perfectly compatible, and some kind of porch or landing is desirable as access to the rear yard. Yet historically, a back porch would normally not be as elaborate as the front one and was most often smaller. The hip roof of the front porch should remain at its present pitch.
- The roofing materials on 2234 appear to be some kind of shingles on the principal roof and standing-seam metal on the porches. These, too, are acceptable, despite the fact that the present roofs are all metal. At least without some exploration under the present roofing, we cannot know the original materials for sure, as there appears to be no extant permit for this late 1870s house. Metal was widely available at that time and often used in rural contexts, as were wood shingles. Asphalt shingles have often been permitted in the formerly suburban areas (such as Anacostia and Takoma Park) as a substitute for the original wood shingles, but metal throughout would be a more compatible choice for an early cottage-style house of this caliber.
- The replacement door for the front of 2234 should be of a more Italianate sort, perhaps four-panel, or with some glazing replacing the upper panels.
- Because 2238 was expanded and renovated during its first few decades, it does not represent a pure example or even a vernacular interpretation of a style. The house dates to about 1885, but the front mansard roof and the wraparound porch probably date to a 1911 renovation. The drawings do not state that the mansard's slates would be replaced, but that roof requires repair at least, and replacements should match the original material. The ridge detail should be replaced or replicated, too.
- The appropriate profile and exposure of the siding of 2238 should be exposed when the stucco is removed. It should be replicated.
- The present porch reflects the 1911 renovation, and replicating it is a better approach than trying to evoke the house's 1880s appearance, which was lost with the alterations. Therefore, the Tuscan columns (presently boxed with plywood) atop piers should be retained or replicated, rather than replacing them with full-height columns.
- The porch on 2238 now has a nearly flat roof. On these, the water collected in a drain and was conducted into a downspout along the house wall or down a pier. The roof edge is not boxed and has no drip edge, but rather a molding. The drawings indicate a roof that would now shed outward. This is acceptable if the roof is low-pitched so the roofing is not seen, but it raises the need to incorporate a perimeter gutter against the roof edge.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the subdivision, site plan, additions and alterations and repairs in concept as consistent with the preservation act and Mayor's Agent order, and delegate final review to staff with the condition that the applicant address the comments above and that, at the time the houses are moved, they be placed immediately on their permanent foundations.