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

Landmark/District:	Anacostia Historic District	(x) Consent
Address:	1648 U Street SE	
Meeting Date:	December 15, 2016	(x) Partial demolition
Case Number:	17-073	(x) Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Tim Dennée	(x) Permit

The applicant, Craig Moloney, agent and architect for the property owner, the District of Columbia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), requests the Board's review of a proposal to demolish approximately the rear half of this two-story frame house, stabilize the remainder and lay a new foundation within the existing. In addition to the foundation, bracing, repointing and boarding, stabilization would include a temporary membrane roof over the retained front portion and over the foundation at rear, to keep water from collecting within the structure.

Background

The frame dwelling is said to have been erected in 1908 for W.H. Grimes, but its design was retardataire, as similar homes were built in the neighborhood in the 1880s. One of the property's residents of the 1930s was John Edge, a Weather Bureau employee and an Army veteran of the Spanish-American War, the Boxer Rebellion and the Philippine Insurrection. By the 1970s, the home was being rented, advertised particularly to veterans.

Eventually, the building went vacant, and the District of Columbia government acquired the property for back taxes in 2004. In 2011, DHCD proposed a comprehensive rehabilitation of the property, the HPO staff wrote a scope of work for exterior repair, DHCD had an architect prepare drawings, and a permit application was submitted. The project did not proceed further.

DHCD has released a request for proposals (RFP) from prospective purchasers of this and three other dilapidated Anacostia houses and two vacant lots. At the same time, the D.C. Council is considering legislation to convey the four homes to the L'Enfant Trust for its historic properties redevelopment program.

Evaluation

DHCD had a conditions assessment (attached) prepared in January. It is compelling insofar as it shows extensive interior deterioration from fire, water and termites. A cursory inspection of the exterior alone provides a sufficiently compelling illustration of the issues with the structural framing and the several openings in the envelope. At this point, the proposed demolition and stabilization seems unavoidable.

The question is, what becomes of the building if and when the stabilization is complete? One hopes that the structure will not languish as 1326 Valley Place has done since it was largely demolished at the end of 2010, but that it will be rehabilitated quickly, either by the L'Enfant Trust or another private entity. One concern would be any entity's capacity to handle four rehabilitation projects (plus perhaps two simultaneous new-construction projects) expeditiously. If 1648 U is well buttoned up, however, the structure could be stable enough to withstand the weather while such an effort is organized.

We would recommend two revisions to the stabilization plans. First, the openings should be boarded on the *outside*, so that it better prevents water seeping into the walls at the openings. Second, while temporary porch supports are appropriate, it should be specified that the two remaining turned posts be retained so that they can be matched when it is time to rehabilitate the house.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that, with the two conditions suggested in the paragraph above, the Board recommend clearance of the permit application as consistent with the purposes of the preservation law because the work is necessary to retain the rest of the historic building.