HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Landmark/District:	**Anacostia Historic District**	(**x**) Agenda
Address:	**2231 Mount View Place SE**	( ) Consent
		(**x**) Concept
Meeting Date:	**July 11, 2019**	(**x**) Alteration
Case Number:	**19-292**	( ) New Construction

With plans prepared by Bjorn Faulk and certified by electrical engineer Timothy Rumford, the owner of 2231 Mount View Place seeks concept review for installation of solar panels on a house in the Anacostia Historic District.

Property Description
2231 Mount View Place SE, built in 1907, is a two-story, free-standing wood frame house located at the corner of Mount View and Pleasant Street. It has a steeply-pitched attic story topped by a front-facing gable roof clad in dark gray asphalt shingles. The building is clad in stucco and has double hung one-over-one windows. The front of the house faces east; the Pleasant Street side faces north.

Proposal
The plans call for installation of eighteen solar panels, each measuring 3'5" x 5'1", on the south side gable roof. The panels would be mounted approximately 4"-6" inches above the roof plane and set approximately 1'5" off the edges of the roof at the ridge, the drip edge, and front edge at the façade. The panels would be seen from Mount View Place looking north.

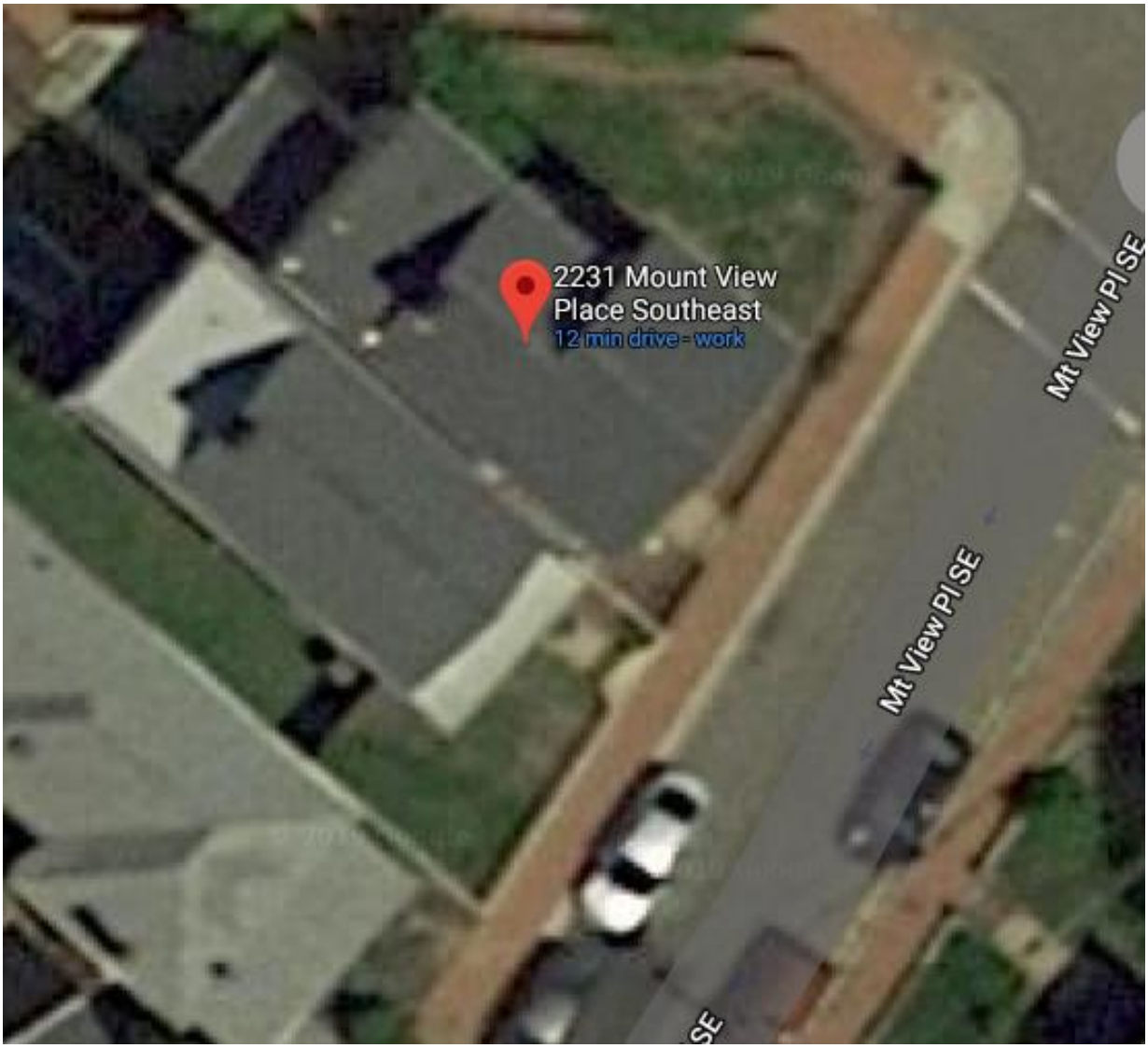
Evaluation
The Board has developed and applied standards for solar panel installations that take into account the character of the building and its context. For flat roofed buildings, the standard has been relatively simple: panels should not project above or interrupt the building's roofline as seen from public streets. For sloped roofs, the standards include: limiting installations to secondary (non-street-facing) elevations, ensuring that character-defining roof features and finishes are retained, not projecting panels above the roof ridge, installing panels tight to the roof slope to minimize their profile, and ensuring that the panels are not prominently visible from public street views. If the underlying roof is scheduled to be replaced prior to installation, replacement roof materials that are similar to the coloration of the panels has been encouraged to minimize the contrast of the panels with the roof. In occasional instances, the Board has accepted proposals that don't meet all of these standards if the overall visual effect was not discordant with the building or streetscape.[1]

[1] For instance, in two recent cases in Takoma Park, the Board approved solar installations on a front elevation (6824 5th Street) and a side elevation (500 Dahlia Street), each of which faced public streets, but determined that the installations met the other standards and that the extent of visibility was sufficiently unobtrusive due to the conditions of each property.

The proposed installation is not consistent with the Board's standard that solar installations be not prominently visible from street view. Set essentially out to the front façade, it would be a prominent element on the building and on the streetscape. As an alternative, if the panels were set back to the middle of the roof slope, they would be much less prominently visible from Mount View Place and seen primarily in oblique views from limited vantage points that would not be discordant or incompatible with the building or streetscape. Maintaining the mounting system to a maximum height of 4" - which is commonly achieved in new installations – would also ensure that the system remains tight to the roof plane. Adding panels on the rear additions to the house, not currently proposed, could also be accommodated compatibly without visual impact on the historic district.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the proposed installation of solar panels to be prominently visible from street view, and that the panels be pulled back to the middle of the roof to reduce their visual impact. It is recommended that final approval of the permit consistent with this recommendation be delegated to the HPO.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