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

Landmark/District:	Anacostia Historic District	(x) Agenda
Address:	2249 Mount View Place SE	
Meeting Date:	July 27, 2023	(x) Alteration
Case Number:	HPA 23-370	() New construction
		(x) Concept

With plans prepared by Brendan Welsh of Advanced Solar, owner Daouda Lawrence seeks concept review for the installation of solar panels on a house in the Anacostia Historic District.

Property Description

2249 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 cross-gable roof topped by a front facing gable roof clad in light brown asphalt shingles. The building is clad in stucco and has double hung one-over-one windows. The front of the house faces southeast.

Proposal

The plans call for installation of 21 solar panels, each measuring 44”x 68”. The majority (11) would be located on the rear roof and will not be visible from the street. There will be one panel installed on the east facing side gable roof, and 9 panels on the western side and front gable roofs. The panels would be mounted approximately 6” inches above the roof plane and set 18” from the roof ridge in all locations; some would be set flush with the outside edges of the roof, while others would be offset 36”. The 9 panels would be seen from Mount View Place looking north.

Evaluation

The Board has developed and applied guidelines for solar panel installations that take into account the character of the building and its context.¹ 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 guidelines encourage the location of panels on secondary elevations that minimize their visibility from street views if possible. If panels are necessary on visible elevations, the guidelines encourage using a low-profile mounting system, pulling panels away from roof edges and ridges, using panels and panel frames that match the color of the roof, compositionally balancing the panels, and avoiding irregular “saw-tooth” compositions. 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. For instance, 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.

¹ The design guidelines for solar installations are contained with the Board’s *Sustainability Guide for Older and Historic Buildings*, adopted in 2019.

The proposed installation is not consistent with the Board's guidelines for visible solar installations. The panels would stand 6" above the roof; HPO has regularly seen installations that have a low-profile mounted no more than 4" off a roof. The color of the light color shingles and dark panels contrast with each other, the composition of the panels is unbalanced on the two elevations of the front gable and are not pulled away from the roof edge. In 2019, the Board found neighboring property, 2231 Mount View Place SE, HPA 19-292, proposed installation of solar panels to be prominently visible from streetview, and that the panels were to be pulled back to the middle of the roof to reduce their visual impact.

As with other projects review by the Board, the installation at 2249 Mount View Place may not be able to meet all of the guidelines. However, the proposal could be modified to improve its compatibility. Eliminating two panels on the west gable and relocating those to the east gable could provide a more balanced composition, provide an equal offset from the edges of the roof, and eliminate the saw-tooth composition. This alternative would be less prominently visible not as discordant with the building and streetscape. Similarly, lowering 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.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the installation as reasonably consistent with its standards for solar panel installations if the front panels are arranged in a more composed pattern, set back from the roof edges, and mounted lower to the roof plane as outlined above, and that final approval of the permit be delegated to the HPO.

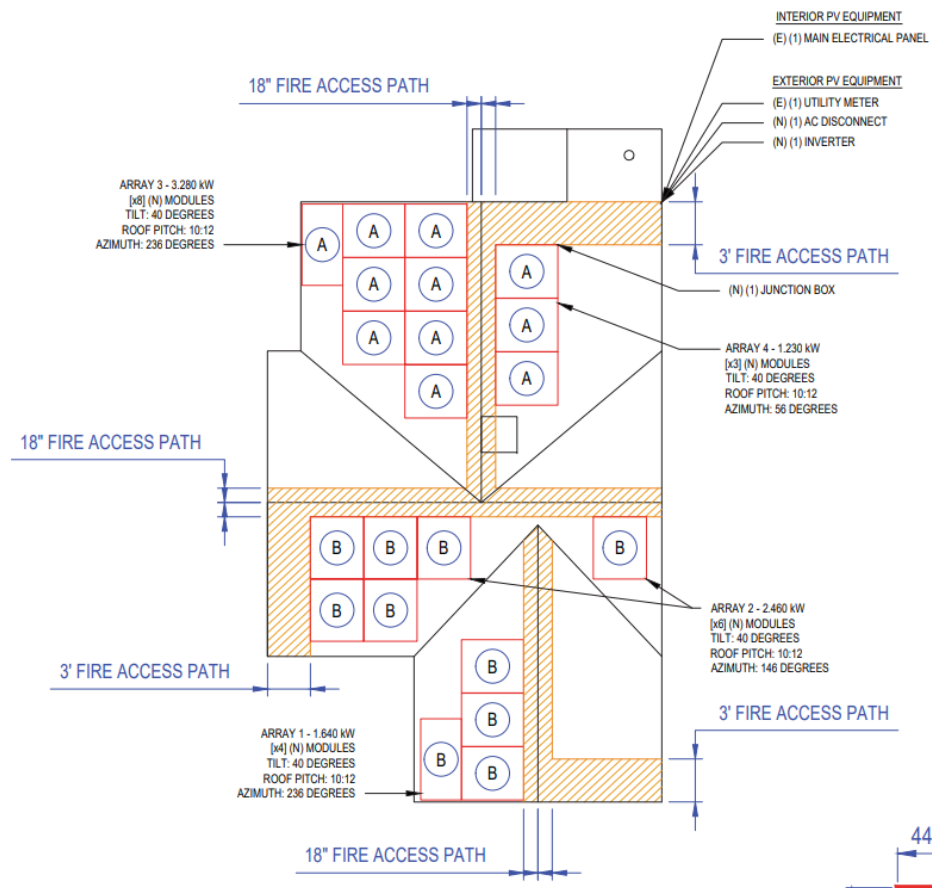
Staff contact: Imania Price



1: Street view of front and side SW gables



2: Street view of front and side SW gable roofs



01 ELECTRICAL PLAN
 1/8" = 1'-0"
 0 4 8

