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

Property Address:	3512 Lowell Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Cleveland Park Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	May 28, 2020	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	20-234	X	Alteration
Staff Contact:	Steve Callcott		New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

Architect Anne Decker, representing owners Dawn Halfaker and Nancy Herman, seeks conceptual design review for replacement of an existing garage and construction of a guest house on a property in the Cleveland Park Historic District.

Property History and Description

3512 Lowell Street is a two-story Mediterranean Revival house built in 1916, designed by architect Davis Palmer. The large property consists of what were originally four 50' wide x 130' deep lots. The house occupies the middle two and has been combined with a third lot to the east; the fourth parcel to the west remains a separate lot. For the past 18 or so months, the house and grounds have been undergoing an extensive rehabilitation that was approved by the Board in 2018 (HPA 18-366).

The property contains a one-story garage located at the rear of the property which straddles the house lot and the western lot. The garage is clad in stucco and capped by a tile pent roof to match the house. Based on historic maps, a portion of the garage was built contemporaneous with the house and then expanded at a later date. The Board found the garage to be contributing to the historic district and denied a request to raze it in 2016 (HPA 16-292).

Proposal

The request to demolish and replace the garage is based on a more thorough assessment of the structure than was undertaken in 2016. A report and photographs documenting the building's construction and condition are included in the submission, prepared by Potomac Valley Builders. The structural deficiencies cited include a lack of structural footing below the building slab, the use of untreated lumber set into the slab, extensive rot in the sill plate and structural framing elements, walls that are out of plum and out of level, unstable exterior stucco separating from the wall sheathing, rotting wall sheathing, and roof framing that exhibits water damage.

The new garage would replicate the existing footprint and height but would be capped with a gable roof rather than a sloping roof and front pent. The garage would be clad in stucco and tile, and the irregularly-spaced door openings would be replaced with two equal-sized openings with traditional wood garage doors sized for modern cars. The asphalt driveway is proposed to be reconstructed in cobble pavers.

A two-story guest house is proposed on the separate western lot, cited to align with the front façade of the existing house. The entrance would be located on the east side and the street-facing façade would have a large multi-light projecting bay window. Its design would have the same vocabulary as the house, with stucco cladding and a hipped roof clad in tile. Due to a change in grade, the building would have a partially exposed basement to the rear yard. A low field stone retaining wall is proposed to extend in front of the guest house lot to continue the appearance of the wall in front of the house.

Evaluation

When demolition of the subject garage was proposed in 2016, no information on its condition was included nor was a replacement proposed, and the Board determined that the building's features and simultaneous construction with the house warranted a finding that it was contributing to the historic district. The current issue is somewhat different, which is whether the building's condition is sufficiently deteriorated as to make the case for it having lost structural integrity and needing to be reconstructed in order to be put back into useful service. Of the conditions cited in the applicant's submission, the lack of adequate footings, the use of untreated lumber and subsequent rot of the sill and wall framing elements make a compelling case for replacement of these elements, while the water damage to the roof framing appears more cosmetic than structural. While it would be technically feasible to demolish and replace the more compromised slab and walls while retaining the roof structure, this is a more extensive engineering and structural undertaking than the Board has typically required for a frame building of this condition, particularly for a secondary accessory structure. HPO believes that the extent of deterioration justifies replacement and that the reconstruction of the building to replicate the original size and materials of the garage will maintain the visual relationship between the house and garage that is characteristic of this property.

The proposed guest house is compatible in materials and architectural character with the property and the residential character of this block in the Cleveland Park Historic District. Like the garage, its design has been developed to closely relate to the character of the primary house, and in revisions made since initially submitted the entrance has been placed on the side in order for it to appear more deferential to the primary residence.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for replacement of the garage and construction of the guest house to be compatible with the property and historic district, and that final construction plan approval be delegated to staff.