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

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Property Address:	<b>3000 Tilden Street, NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Cleveland Park Historic District</b>		Consent Calendar
		<b>X</b>	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	<b>January 28, 2021</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>21-052</b>		New Construction
			Demolition

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Tilden Gardens Inc., with plans prepared by P.B.S. Inc. (The Window Man), seeks permit approval for removal and replacement of 1,483 windows in three buildings at the Tilden Gardens apartments in the Cleveland Park Historic District.

**Property History and Description**

Tilden Gardens is a complex of six Tudor Revival style apartment buildings located on a five-acre site bounded by Connecticut Avenue, Sedgwick and Tilden Streets at the north edge of the Cleveland Park Historic District. The complex was built by brothers Monroe and Bates Warren between 1927-1930 and is one of the city's most notable examples of the suburban style of apartment building that became fashionable in the 1920s. The five-story buildings, designed by the local firm Parks and Baxter and Harry L. Edwards, feature cross and double cross plans to maximize natural light and air (all of the units have at least two and many have three sides exposed) which are spaciouly arranged on the steeply sloping landscaped site. The picturesque, medieval-inspired buildings feature rough tapestry brick, Flemish gables, brick corbels, half-timbering and stucco. The windows are primarily six-over-six double hung sash (eight-over-eight and four-over-four are also found) used individually, paired or grouped in gangs of three. As discussed in the National Register nomination for the Cleveland Park Historic District:

The most spectacular feature is the extensive landscaping provided by landscape architect Henry Bauer. Three of the five acres of the site are covered with pathways, fountains, pools, pergolas and terraces as well as extensive plantings made all the more dramatic because of the hilly site. The plantings literally cascade down the paths like a waterfall. And all of this is placed beneath the umbrella of very large old trees which were left untouched during the building process. They supply desirable shade and coolness during the summer months as well as increasing the amount of privacy for the residents. As [author] James Goode has said "After fifty-five years of growth and proper care, its grounds have become the most spectacular of any apartment house in the city." (Best Addresses)

Tilden Gardens is also historically noteworthy an early example of cooperative apartments, a form of ownership that was less popular in Washington than in New York and other cities. Two of the single cross-shaped buildings on Tilden Street (A and B) were developed and sold at the outset as individual cooperatives. The other buildings – the single cross at 3000 Tilden (C) and the three double cross-shaped buildings along Sedgwick and Connecticut (D-E, F-G,

H-I) – were rented out upon completion due to the slowdown of sales at the onset of the Depression, and were converted into a single cooperative – Tilden Gardens Inc. - in 1939.

### **Proposal**

The plans call for comprehensive replacement of the double hung sash windows in buildings C, F-G and H-I with Marvin Ultimate double hung aluminum-clad wood windows with a custom-milled brick mold to match the original profiles and pane configurations. The few special windows – casements with leaded glass – would be retained and repaired, as needed. The existing double hung windows in building D-E would also be retained and refurbished and are not included in this application.

Several on-site mocks were prepared to refine and customize the installation to achieve a close visual match to the original windows. The windows would be custom sized to minimize the frame and sash dimensions (which are often slightly thicker in modern double-insulated glass windows) and will have screens and jams in the same color as the frame. The final mock-up of the proposed replacements, located on the front elevation of 3900 Connecticut Avenue just south of the lobby entrance, is pictured below.



*Existing Windows*



*Proposed Replacements*

### **Evaluation**

The treatment of windows on historic property is regulated by the Board's window regulations (DCMR 10-A, Chapter 23, Standards for Window Repair and Replacement, adopted 2010). Broadly stated, the standards reflect several basic ideas: that windows are typically an important part of the character of historic buildings; that retaining and repairing original windows is a better preservation approach than replacement; that the effect of proposed changes need to be evaluated in the context of the affected building's architectural and

historical character; and that stricter standards for repair and replacement may be appropriate for special windows, primary elevations, and buildings of greater architectural/historical importance and more flexible standards applied to standard windows and secondary elevations:

2305.1 Replacement of historic windows should be considered only if the preferred option of preserving historic windows is not feasible, given the facts and circumstances of each particular case.

#### 2309 WINDOW REPLACEMENT: CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS (LARGE BUILDINGS)

2309.1 For the purposes of these standards, a “large building” in a historic district shall be defined as a building of five (5) or more stories in height, or a building of less than five (5) stories with a street frontage of one hundred (100) feet or more on any single frontage.

##### 2309.2 Principal Facades

(a) Replacement windows shall be approved if they match the historic windows in terms of configuration, operation, profile, dimensions, and finish. However, matching the material is encouraged and may be required if deemed appropriate by the staff.

Of the two issues raised by the application – whether the windows should be replaced or retained and whether the replacement windows are compatible – the second is the easy one. Through careful attention to dimensions, profiles, installation and detailing, fine-tuned through several mock-ups and customization, the proposed replacement window is an extraordinarily good replica of the originals and consistent with the design standard that replacement windows match the historic in terms of configuration, operation, profile, dimensions and finish.

Whether the windows should be replaced or whether preserving the historic windows is “feasible, given the facts and circumstances of [the] particular case” is a more subjective determination. However, HPO is persuaded that replacement is a reasonable and compatible approach for the following reasons:

- 1) As was typical of apartment buildings in the 1920s, the windows at Tilden Gardens are standard, mass-produced units that do not display extraordinary craftsmanship, detailing or special design qualities. The primary architectural and historical significance of Tilden Gardens lies in its site plan, landscape and the Tudor Revival styling of its buildings, and this significance and the complex’s integrity would not be compromised by the replacement of its windows.
- 2) As outlined in a November 25, 2020 letter from five of the seven directors of Tilden Gardens Inc., the co-op has spent over a decade evaluating a variety of approaches to addressing the buildings’ deteriorated windows. In 2010, Engineering and Technical Consultants, Inc. (ETC) was hired to assess window conditions and in 2018 Thomas Downey LTD Consulting Engineers (TDL) conducted a representative window survey.

Both studies documented a variety of problems associated with old windows, including failing paint and putty, isolated examples of wood rot or broken wood elements, and some loss of operability. While these conditions would likely not be un-repairable for the majority of windows, the co-op also considered life-cycle costs, energy efficiency, sound attenuation, ease of cleaning, and the preference of the buildings' shareholders. The owners' decision to replace rather than restore was arrived at after careful study, with community in-put, and after considerable efforts to ensure a compatible replacement, taking into account all of the facts and circumstances of the particular case.

- 3) HPRB and HPO have routinely approved replacement windows on similar buildings with similar windows. As documented in the applicant's presentation, numerous near-by contributing apartment buildings in the Cleveland Park Historic District and several neighboring landmarked apartment buildings along Connecticut Avenue have been permitted to replace their original windows with compatible replacements without a loss of integrity or important character-defining features.

**Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Review Board approve the permit for window replacement as consistent with the preservation act.*

*Staff contact: Steve Callcott*