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

Property Address:	3215 Newark Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Cleveland Park Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	September 29, 2016	X	Permit Review
H.P.A. Number:	16-542	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

Owners Laurie Wingate and Mark Chandler, with plans prepared by Wyatt Thorpe of Prospect Solar, seek permit review for the installation of solar panels on the roof of their house in the Cleveland Park Historic District.

Property Description

This four-square house was constructed in 1906; the permit lists W. Essex as the architect and John Simpson & Sons as the builder. The house is clad in stucco on the first floor and shingles on the second, and features a full width Colonial Revival front porch. The hipped roof has recently been clad in dark gray asphalt shingles. Based on its date of construction and architectural character, the house is contributing to the historic district.

Project Background

In 2012, the Board reviewed a proposal for installation of black photovoltaic panels on the west-facing slope of the primary roof, and on two west-facing slopes of the roof of the rear wing. The panels were to have been mounted on a rack system sitting between 5” and 7.8” off the roof surface.

While the Board had no concerns about the panels on the rear wing, which would have very limited visibility from street views, it determined that the panels on the primary roof would be too prominently visible, and that their dark color and highly reflective finish would create such contrast with the existing roof as to result in an incompatible visual intrusion on the street.

Revised Proposal

The proposal, the property and the site conditions have been revised in an effort to address the Board’s concerns. The former light colored asphalt shingles have been replaced with a darker shingle to lessen the color contrast with the panels. The panels themselves would be frameless without a contrasting metal frame, and the applicants’ narrative describes the panels as matte in finish (HPO has not seen a sample of the panels to confirm its finish or reflectivity). The new “Invisimount” mounting system lowers the profile of the panels so that they would sit a maximum of 4” above the roof, and their placement has been revised to lower them on the roof, placed symmetrically and pulled away from the roof ridges. Evergreen trees on the neighboring property have also since been planted which partially obscure views of the primary roof from the west.

Evaluation

One of the primary purposes of the preservation act is to ensure that alterations of existing structures are compatible with the character of the historic district. In order to achieve this, the Board's *Roofs on Historic Buildings* guideline recommends that "on a flat roof, solar panels should be located so they are not visible from the public street. If located on a sloping roof building, they should only be installed on rear slopes that are not visible from a public street."

However, while the proposed installation is not strictly consistent with the treatment outlined in the roof guideline, it has been modified to respond to the specific concerns cited by the Board and the visual impact has been substantially reduced. The HPO recommends that the Board approve the revised proposal for the following reasons:

1. The roof material at 3215 Newark is not original or significant in defining the architectural character of the property and the installation would not obscure an original or character-defining feature;
2. Set flush with the roof and away from the ridges, the installation would not result in a perceptible change in the house's massing, height, or roofline;
3. The installation's flush mounting, symmetrical composition and complementary coloration with the roof finish would not result in a discordant or visually obtrusive feature on the roof;
4. The installation would not affect the front elevation and would not be visible from directly in front of the house; its visibility would be limited to a relatively narrow site line and would be further obscured by adjacent evergreen landscaping.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the permit as consistent with the preservation act based on the specific conditions cited above.



The dotted lines indicate the extent of visibility of the west roof slope of 3215 Newark from street views. The starred houses at 3300, 3218 and 3216 Newark Street are referenced in the photographs below.



View of west roof slope of 3215 Newark from sidewalk in front of 3300 Newark



3215 from intersection of 33rd Place



3215 from sidewalk in front of 3218 Newark



3215 from sidewalk in front of 3216 Newark