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

Property Address:	3427 Wisconsin Avenue, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Cleveland Park Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	January 27, 2022	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	22-078	X	Alteration
		X	New Construction
			Demolition

10Square Development, with plans prepared by Studio MB, seeks conceptual design review for a project that includes relocating an existing house and garage and constructing a three-story plus penthouse apartment building in the Cleveland Park Historic District.

Property History and Description

3427 Wisconsin Avenue is a two-story brick four-square house constructed in 1926, designed by architect Jesse Bunch for owner William Clarke. The house occupies a mid-block lot located on Wisconsin Avenue between Norton Place and Ordway Street. It has a large undeveloped corner side yard to the south with frontage on Norton and is adjacent to a vacant side yard lot to the north associated with 3433 Wisconsin Avenue. Character-defining features of the house include a full-width front porch, deep overhanging eaves with supporting brackets, and green tile roof. The property includes an original garage at the rear of the lot, also capped by a green tile roof. Based on its date of construction, architectural characteristics and integrity, the house and garage are contributing to the Cleveland Park Historic District.

Proposal

The project calls for relocating the house to face Norton Place with the garage relocated behind it. A non-original exterior vestibule and addition to the rear sleeping porch would be removed and the house restored for use as a single-family house.

A three-story plus penthouse apartment building with an at-grade entrance would be constructed fronting Wisconsin Avenue. Other than the entrance, the building would be located within and retain the existing raised topography with light provided to the cellar level through windows wells. The building’s mass would be comprised of a primary three-story central block with angled side walls clad in a dark color brick flanked by two-story wings clad in lighter colored brick. Windows would include multi-light and single-light units, organized in a stacked and symmetrical arrangement on the front elevation and with some greater variation on the side and rear elevations. A curb cut on Norton would provide vehicular and service access to both the relocated house and the apartment building, with seven parking spaces in the rear yard.

Evaluation

While moving an historic building is not standard preservation practice and is discouraged by the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, there have been

limited instances where the Board has found building relocation to be an acceptable preservation treatment. These have been situations where the building's historic context has been compromised by the loss of surrounding historic buildings and/or incompatible adjacent new construction. In such cases, the Board has approved projects if the building's new siting is compatible for the building and improves its setting, results in a high-quality renovation of the building, and the associated new construction is found compatible for the historic district. In recent years, the Board has approved two relocations of houses along Wisconsin Avenue in Cleveland Park: at 3211, the house was pulled forward on its lot to permit construction of a mid-rise apartment building behind, and at 3219, similar to the present situation, the house facing Wisconsin was swiveled 90 degrees to face Macomb Street, improving its setting and allowing construction of an apartment building facing Wisconsin Avenue.

In applying those principles and considerations to the subject site, the house's context and viability as a single-family house would be improved by its relocation and is preferable to retaining it in place and attempting to insert a small apartment building between it and the houses on Norton Place. The proposed treatment of the house is consistent with the Board's rehabilitation standards, retaining original character-defining features and removing later alterations.

The proposed low-rise apartment building is compatible in height, mass and materials with the district and its context, and is comparable in size and scale with the low-rise apartment buildings, such as those along Porter Street, that contribute to the district. The design has evolved and improved since initially submitted in response to HPO and community comments but could benefit from some further refinement. HPO recommends attention to the following areas:

1. Further study of how detailing and articulation (around windows, doors, belt courses, cornice) could provide greater depth, shadow and scale;
2. Evaluating whether the open corners at the second floor would be visually improved with a more substantial support than the proposed thin columns;
3. Reconsideration of the proposed masonry colors, which appear a little cold and austere by comparison to the warm earth tones typically found in the historic district;
4. Increasing the area for trees and green space between the house and apartment building, such as by reducing the size of the rear areaways or the number of parking spaces; and
5. Developing a landscape plan that provides screening for the basement areaways and, if possible, the opportunity for supplementing the surrounding tree canopy.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for relocating and restoring the house and garage, and the height, mass and materials of the new building to be compatible with the historic district, and that further refinement of the design be undertaken as outlined above.

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