

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

Property Address:	4435 Volta Place NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Foxhall Village Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	April 30, 2020	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	20-196	X	Alteration

On behalf of owners Shalini and Vipul Bhagat, Kendall Dorman of Wiebenson & Dorman Architects, seeks conceptual design review for additions to the house and garage at this property in the Foxhall Village Historic District. The residence was built in the second wave of Foxhall Village construction in 1931 by Waverly Taylor, following the English village plan and Tudor Revival style of the initial Boss & Phelps development. The garages on this row are original to the construction and are paired, each half measuring approximately 10' wide by 18' deep and standing 8' tall.

Proposal

The project proposes replacing the rear, two story, ¾ width screened porch with a full width addition that extends ten feet deeper into the rear yard. The yard would be partially excavated to provide an exposed basement elevation. The rear would be fully glazed on each floor with large expanses of glass and a door leading from the basement onto a new rear yard terrace. The material on the side walls is stucco.

There are two proposals for the garage addition. The applicant's initial – and preferred – option is to construct a 2-story addition adjacent to the garage on the yard side and allow the garage to remain intact. On the first floor, the addition measures 16' long and 13' wide – 3' wider than the existing. The second floor is cantilevered out to the full width of the lot, which is just over 18'. The addition would stand 20' tall at the rear yard grade, which is roughly 5' taller than the alley grade. The garage addition is finished to match the house addition, with large windows facing the yard, horizontally oriented windows on the alley side, a stucco finish, and a roof overhang.

At the HPO's request, the applicant provided a second option that places the second floor on top of the garage, or more likely replaces the garage with a new two-story structure. This option shows a building that is 13' wide on both floors and the same depth of 32'. The height would come down because of the alley's lower grade while the overall design approach and material palette would remain the same.

Context

The presence of garages along Foxhall Village alleys is quite varied. Only about half of the homes were built with garages, based in large part on the development plan for the neighborhood as well as which of the two developers was responsible for construction (Boss & Phelps or Waverly Taylor, Inc.). With its curved roads, divided parkways, and housing built to round corners rather than to end a row, the lots are unlike most rowhouse districts. Many are unusually shaped and/or quite deep. It appears that garages were included primarily on lots that offered a standard shape and ended in a perpendicular alignment to the alley. The houses on the north side of Volta Place form one such row and the paired garages are original to the 1931 construction.

Although the National Register nomination form identifies these garages as contributing, it is based

solely on their date of construction. In fact, these garages are described as having “a utilitarian appearance and are constructed of six-course American-bond brick or concrete block. The garages are covered by flat roofs with metal coping.” The subject garage is concrete block with stucco and is, indeed, utilitarian in appearance.

While there are many garages where flat roofs have been modified to gable or shed roofs to provide better drainage, there are few substantial alterations to the garages in Foxhall Village (perhaps less than five). Those with additions, including directly next to the subject property, have a Tudoresque appearance with gabled roofs and dormer windows.

Evaluation

While modern in design and details, the addition at the rear of the house meets the tenets established in the Board’s *Foxhall Village Historic District Design Guidelines*. These state that additions should be not visible from the street, subordinate to the main house in footprint and height, and not alter the primary form of the original roof.

Garage additions in Foxhall Village have been rare, particularly of the scope and massing currently proposed. However, more are anticipated and the HPO has approached this proposal with caution due to its nature as precedent setting for this historic district. The *Design Guidelines* are silent on garage additions but instruct that new garages should be “clearly subordinate in size to the house and should reflect other alley buildings in terms of height, massing, or materials.” However, HPO is not persuaded that these general guidelines are particularly valid for this alley or the National Register nomination’s finding that these garages are noteworthy. The HPO believes this alley can accommodate additions to or even replacements of its banal garages.

The initial proposal sets the addition back from the alley, allowing the alleyscape to retain its one story, modest character. However, a 2-story structure rising from the yard is an unusual massing and has the effect here of looking from the west like one very long addition off the house.

The staff requested the additional massing study because 2-story additions on top of garages are frequently proposed and approved in many historic districts. The staff envisioned the addition as 2 stories at the alley transitioning down to one, rather than a full 2 stories for the entire structure, as presented. The full 2-story building is not compatible with the district. However, a second story on top of the garage with a 1-story extension into the yard could be – especially with a more modest massing and scale for the second story. In particular, a steeply pitched gable roof could be considered – similar to the addition next door or to the original Boss & Phelps garages – that steps down to one story in the rear yard. This configuration would allow the view through the rear yard to retain more of its open character. The initially proposed design with the 2-story portion in the rear yard has the benefit of leaving the garage intact but presents a non-traditional massing and the HPO seeks the Board’s guidance on whether this option is compatible.

- *The HPO recommends that the Board find the rear addition to the house to be compatible.*
- *The HPO recommends that a full-length, two-story garage is not compatible in scale or massing.*
- *The HPO recommends that a two-story addition to the garage that steps down to one-story is compatible with the Foxhall Village Historic District and seeks the Board’s guidance on the appropriate massing and placement of the addition.*

Staff Contact: Anne Brockett