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

Landmark/District:	Georgetown Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1246 and 1250 27th Street NW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
Meeting Date:	November 17, 2016	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision
Case Number:	16-589	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alterations
Staff Reviewer:	Tim Dennée	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept

The applicants, property owners Fiona E. Greig and Paul Kihn, request the Board's review of a subdivision application to combine two lots in order to combine internally the two late-nineteenth-century residential buildings thereon.

There is associated interior and exterior work, but that work is presently being reviewed by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts in accordance with the Old Georgetown Act. The nature of the exterior work qualifies it for HPO staff-level review, as it is relatively minor and largely restorative.

Subdivisions, however, are not subject to CFA review, and the regulations reserve to the Board the review of subdivisions that are beyond "minor or insignificant."¹

The Board reviews subdivisions to consolidate lots in anticipation of their potential consequences. One pertinent question is, does combining the lots allow more development potential that puts pressure on the historic buildings? In this case, the potential increase in bulk contemplated by the zoning regulations for the combined properties would appear to be equal to the sum of that for each of the two constituent lots. Given their contributing status within a National Historic Landmark district, it is very unlikely that either or both would be approved for large additions in any case, as going up is probably precluded, and the rear yard appears to be too shallow to accommodate any addition without a variance. These are the likely reasons for the combination of the two small houses.

The other important considerations here are, how much alteration happens to the exterior when two buildings effectively become one, and how much demolition must or will occur in order to combine the buildings functionally? In general, the Board and staff have tried to minimize the demolition of party walls and connected structure, and have striven to maintain the buildings' separate identities as read from the exterior. In this instance, more structural demolition was initially proposed, but the amount was reduced during the CFA review process, to a level that does not constitute demolition of the houses "in significant part."²

¹ Or subdivisions that are merely incident to the implementation of a project already approved by the Board (10C DCMR § 320.3).

² D.C. Official Code § 6-1102(3) and 10C DCMR § 305.2. Initially, most of the party wall and the bearing walls bounding the hallways would have been demolished.

Without more structural demolition or more dramatic exterior changes anticipated, the combination of the two lots and buildings is sufficiently compatible with the historic character of the properties and of the historic district.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the subdivision to combine the two lots as compatible with the character of the historic district and therefore consistent with the purposes of the preservation law.