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

Landmark/District:	Georgetown Historic District	(x) Consent calendar
Address:	1728 rear 34th Street NW	(x) Subdivision/permit
Meeting Date:	September 28, 2023	(x) New construction
Case Number:	23-502	(x) Subdivision

The applicant, David Landsman (CAS Engineering-DC), agent for property owner Niloofar Howe, requests the Board’s review of a subdivision application to consolidate five small lots to create a new lot of record upon which to construct a two-story frame house or artist studio (designed by Overmyer Architects).

As the site is located on a public alley, a permit application is subject to review by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, pursuant to the Old Georgetown Act of 1950. The Old Georgetown Board reviewed an evolving concept for the building in March, April and May, and the Commission recommended approval of a permit this month. The Advisory Neighborhood Commission and the Citizens Association of Georgetown had opportunities to comment.

The Board is not required to take up a Georgetown project reviewed by the Commission, unless the Board finds that project to be incompatible with the character of the historic district or insufficiently retentive of the fabric and character of the subject property and its context. HPO did not object to the proposed building, despite it being larger than the average accessory structure, because of the presence of an adjacent contributing building of similar size and character, and because the new construction has been massed and detailed to read as a series of low accessory buildings in an alleyscape of low accessory buildings.

The Commission of Fine Arts lacks jurisdiction over subdivisions, but the review of the division and aggregation of lots is a matter for this Board under the District’s preservation law. The Board considers the likely consequences of subdivisions for any resources present, and it typically judges the compatibility of subdivision by that of the project proposed. The existing lots are tiny and by themselves unbuildable for anything but the garages for which they were apparently intended. In light of the compatible character of the project, the subdivision itself appears compatible.¹

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board support clearance of the subdivision and the permit.

¹ It is conceivable that these buildings could inspire still more to be built along this alley, but the alley lots are occupied by small garages in various ownership.