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

Landmark/District: **Georgetown Historic District/
Lydia English's Female Seminary** (x) Consent calendar
Address: **2929 N Street and 1305-1315 30th
Street NW**

Meeting Date: **June 22, 2023** (x) Subdivision
Case Number: **23-362** (x) Concept

The applicants, N Street Trust and Colonial GEG LLC, the property owners of each of the two adjoining properties, request the Board's review of a conceptual subdivision application to adjust the boundary between the properties to transfer four parking spaces from 1305-1315 30th Street to the 2929 N Street, a parcel measuring roughly 20 by 40 feet in the southeast corner (rear) of 1305 30th.

The multi-unit residential building at 1305-1315 30th Street is a historic landmark, making up most of a circa 1820 complex once known as Miss Lydia English's Female Seminary, an institution that was commandeered for use as a Union hospital early in the Civil War, only to become one of the District of Columbia's first apartment conversions in the 1870s. The property was among those designated by the Joint Committee on Landmarks in 1964.

Even if a minor subdivision, the Historic Preservation office staff is not delegated review if its purpose is to divide property within a landmark (10C DCMR §§ 104.4 and 320.3). In fact, a hearing of the Mayor's Agent is required.¹

While it is never ideal to alter what appears to be a historic boundary of a landmark, there are factors that mitigate harm and make the proposal consistent with the purposes of the preservation law. The landmark is a large property, extending over a second lot to the north of 1315 30th. As with that lot, 1319 30th Street, subdivision does not actually remove land from the designated landmark or alter its boundary. Although there could be eventual consequences, such as a fence or wall proposed within the transferred area, the property remains subject to review under the District of Columbia's preservation law as both a landmark and a property contributing to the Georgetown Historic District. It also remains subject to the Old Georgetown Act and Commission of Fine Arts review. In the meantime, the small parcel is to remain a portion of a surrounding parking lot and, being within side and rear yards, it offers little potential for construction.

¹ This is also not an instance of a subdivision necessary to implement a project reviewed by the Board; a rehabilitation project was reviewed by staff and by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, but this subdivision and the transfer of the parking spaces is not necessary to effectuate that project.

Still, it would be wise to respect the Advisory Neighborhood Commission resolution on this application, that there be no “further break-up of this property.”

Putting a property boundary right behind a wing of the landmark building can have practical consequences, such as constraining emergency egress from adjacent windows. But this may be more of a problem on paper—that is, in the building code and on the plat itself—as an only-two-foot-wide path is anticipated, but the subdivided piece is to remain an open parking lot for the foreseeable future.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the subdivision in concept as compatible with the character of the historic district and sufficiently retentive of the character of the landmark, because it offers no physical alteration of the properties and admits only limited potential for it in the future, subject to robust preservation review.

30TH STREET, N.W.
60' WIDE PUBLIC STREET

