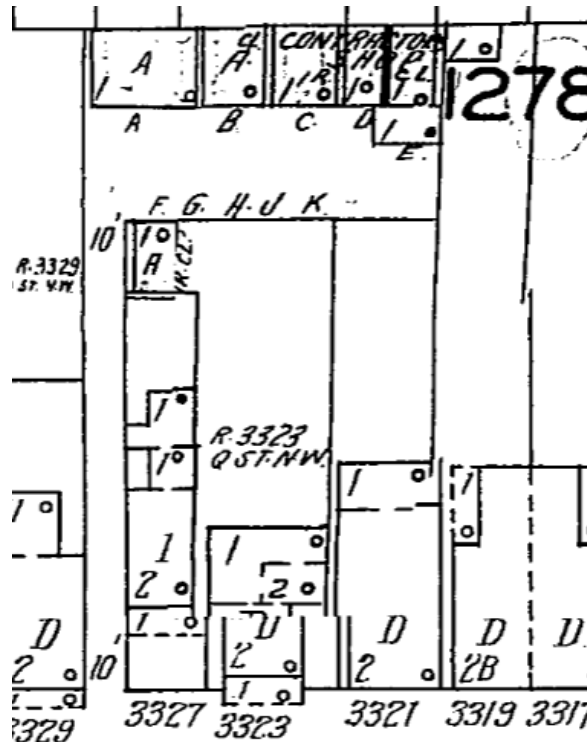

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District: **Georgetown Historic District** (x) Agenda
Address: **3321 and 3323 Q Street NW**
Meeting Date: **March 23, 2023** (x) Subdivision
Case Number: **23-162** (x) Alteration
(x) Concept

The applicant, architect Colleen Healey, agent for Simeon Djankov, owner of 3321 Q Street, requests Board review of a concept application to consolidate by subdivision that lot with much of the rear yard of 3323 Q Street, for which Mr. Djankov is a contract purchaser. The purpose of subdivision is to construct a swimming pool on the added property. The accessory structure at the rear of 3323 would eventually be renovated.

Background

The two-story frame house at 3323 Q Street was erected in 1869 and has later additions. Its neighbor at 3321 Q was built during the following decade and has its own additions. The depths of the lots are as they were originally, half the width of the square. By the mid-1930s a narrow alley had been constructed along the west side of 3327 Q, providing access to the rear of the lots, where the owners built garages and sheds. Those remaining at 3323 probably date to World War II and appear on the 1959 Sanborn map detail below.



Proposal

The subdivision would separate 60 feet of the rear yard of 3323 Q, plus an area that would allow pedestrian access around the rear wing of 3321. This would provide plenty of space for a 15- by 40-foot in-ground pool. Pools require fenced enclosures, so that would also mean a physical barrier between 3323 and its rear yard.

As the above map indicates, the rearmost portion of the yard was once truncated by the alley. While it is far from ideal to alienate a historic part of the property, the proposal does leave a significant amount of rear yard, because the house itself is shallow (and it would foreclose opportunities to add to that house).

However, the removal of this much land from the lot at 3323 would leave the remaining lot deficient relative to the lot area required in the R-20 zone (4,000 square feet for detached properties, 3,000 for semidetached; the lot is now 4,680 square feet). This suggests that it will be necessary to reduce substantially the amount of land to be combined with 3321, perhaps by pushing the pool northward and turning it 90 degrees.

An in-ground pool in a rear yard bounded by fences and buildings is not a preservation issue in itself, but the excavation raises archaeological issues.

Archaeology

Both addresses are part of an identified former nineteenth-century cemetery, designated as archaeological site 51NW272. Over the last 60 years, nearly 30 burials have been discovered during various construction activities along the 3300 block of Q Street. The most recent discovery, at 3317 Q, was a minimum of 21 individuals, interred in coffins, arranged in rows, with heads to the west and feet to the east. These were recovered by HPO staff and volunteers from a basement crawl space and beneath a floor during a renovation in 2020. It is now clear that the houses were built over a former cemetery whose full extent is unknown. More burials are still present, and the cemetery should be considered an archaeological site eligible for listing.

The cemetery name and affiliation are currently unknown, but some of the recovered individuals are of African descent. Historic newspaper accounts reveal that the cemetery was already present in 1832, used for emergency burial of cholera pandemic victims. Mr. Delande Justinvil, a doctoral student at American University, is conducting bioanthropological analysis of the previously excavated individuals, with support from the Smithsonian Institution and Dumbarton Oaks fellowships. In addition, Mr. Justinvil is researching the cemetery's origins in search of any descendant communities and to identify appropriate locations for reburial.

While an eligible site, the subject properties are privately owned. Since the pool installation project has the potential to disturb additional burials, HPO recommends that the property owners conduct an archaeological reconnaissance survey and testing prior to starting ground disturbing activities associated with construction. This work would entail using three types of remote sensing (geophysical survey) techniques: ground-penetrating radar, magnetometry, and electrical resistivity/conductivity. The analysis and interpretation of these results would then be subject to ground-truthing by limited excavation. The goal is to determine whether there are detectable indications of burial shafts, coffins, metal coffin hardware, or other cemetery objects present in the yards. If the results are positive for burials, and the owners cannot avoid them, then disinterment and analysis by experienced anthropological professionals would be needed. The

full methodology of any survey, and subsequent disinterment, and bioanthropological analyses will be conducted in consultation with the D.C. HPO Archaeologist, in accordance with the District's *Guidelines for Archaeological Investigations* and federal and District statutes regarding human remains. The project would entail following a work plan approved by the District Archaeologist and standard archaeological documentation and reporting of the results. Coordination with the Metropolitan Police Department, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and Forensic Anthropologist, and other District agencies will occur as required. Ultimately, reinterment elsewhere would occur after completion of bioanthropological and analyses. HPO has discussed the archaeological issues that this site raises and the potential scope of work with the owners.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve in concept the subdivision as compatible with the character of the historic district and sufficiently retentive of the character and fabric of the subject property, with the following conditions: 1) that, at the applicant's expense, an archaeological survey be conducted with disinterment and analysis of any identified human remains; 2) that further review of the subdivision and construction is delegated to staff, including if the subdivision is reconfigured to reduce less the rear yard of 3323 Q Street.