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

Landmark/District:	Grant Road Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	4543 Grant Road NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
Meeting Date:	September 22, 2016	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alterations
Case Number:	16-621	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Addition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition
Staff Reviewer:	Tim Dennée	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept

The applicant, Moore Architects PC, architect and agent for property owners Adam Schwartz and Sara Kropf, requests the Board's review of a concept for additions and alterations to this two-and-a-half-story frame house, a building contributing to the character of the historic district and commonly referred to as the Admiral's House after longtime occupant Admiral Hunter. Specifically, the demolition of a garage, a shed, and a rear porch enclosure are proposed to make way for the construction of a rear addition, deck and shed. A stair tower is to project from the north side of the building. There are to be a couple of changes to window openings on the side elevations. The chimneys are to be removed. The front entry overhang and steps are to be replaced with an entry porch. The roof is to be re-clad with similar shingles, and the aluminum siding is to be removed so that the old wood siding beneath may be restored.

The home was constructed between 1887 and 1891, likely as a modest two-bay-wide Italianate building, similar to others on the street. It received a perpendicular south-side kitchen wing and wraparound porch in the 1920s, and it was encapsulated by a new roof and another two-story addition at the southwest corner in the 1940s.¹ Among other alterations during the mid-twentieth century were the construction of the present partially enclosed rear porch, the siding of the building with aluminum, and the construction of the pediment roof over the entry. There are a few more recent (but pre-designation) alterations, such as skylights and a dormer.

Demolition

As it is to be removed to make way for the rear addition and storage structure, the first question is whether the demolition of the garage is consistent with the purposes of the preservation law. The nomination makes mention of only a single garage (at 4426 Grant Road) and long-demolished stables within the historic district, without identifying any extant accessory structures as contributing to the character of the district. The house that became 4543 once had its own stable or sheds at the very rear of the property, constructed in 1913-1914 and probably demolished when 38th Street began to be subdivided. The present garage was built in 1942, postdating the historic district's period of significance.

¹ In his reminiscences, Admiral Hunter took credit for "squaring up" the house with the addition at the southwest corner, but an earlier owner, Gerald C. Gross, obtained a permit for a two-story addition there in 1941.

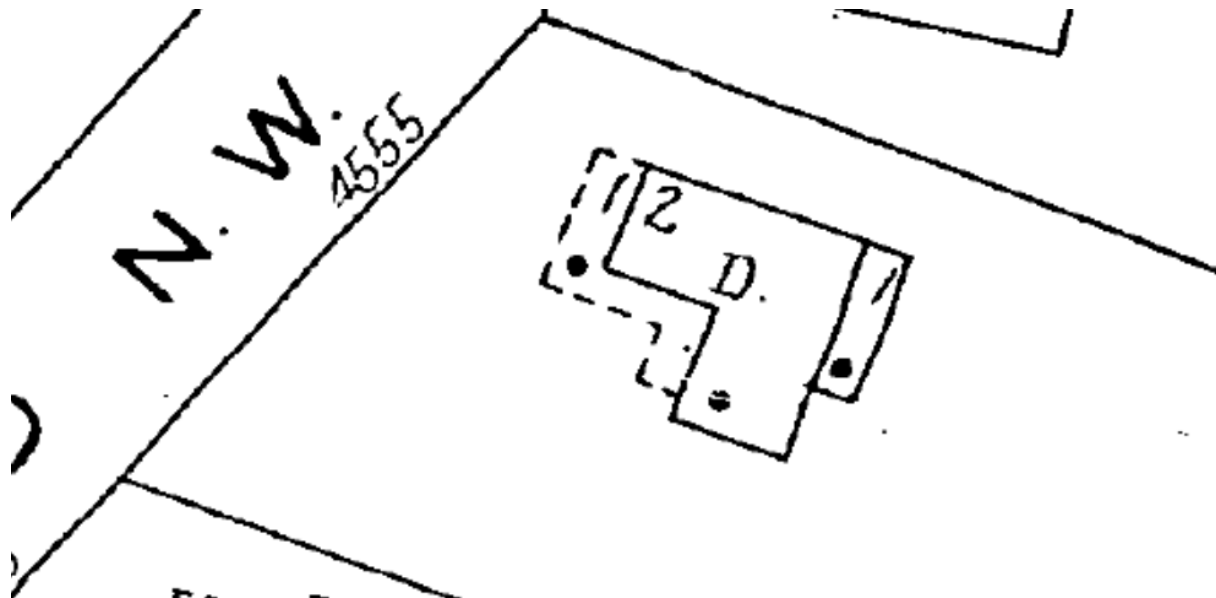
Removal of a still-later greenhouse foundation and shed are also compatible with the character of the historic district, as is the demolition of the house's mid-century rear enclosure.

Within the house, structural demolition appears to be limited to the first-floor portion of the front wall of the 1920s kitchen addition—which is now the rear wall of the living room. The now-encapsulated south side wall of the original house is not proposed for additional demolition. There are to be additional openings at the first floor rear, for connection to the new addition(s) and a couple of new window openings on the side elevations.

It is also proposed that both chimneys be demolished. As the gable roof had to have been constructed higher than the original roof, at least the exposed portions of the chimneys must date to the 1920s, a date that is consistent with the chimneys' dimensions. That is within the period of significance, and it would be preferable to retain at least the more prominent of the two.

Accessory structure

To construct a sizeable storage shed, a smaller structure than the garage it would replace, does not seem out of place for an exurban property that had a succession of accessory structures. The materials are consistent with those proposed for the house addition.



A detail of the 1927 Sanborn atlas depicting the house as it then stood, and lacking a garage immediately behind.

Addition

The proposed rear addition is clearly contemporary, which is generally not discouraged by the Board, and of frame construction with wood siding. It is more common for a rear addition to run parallel to the axis of the house, rather than perpendicular, but this house never had a rear wing. Even with its somewhat complicated massing, the addition telescopes down in width and is similarly subordinate in height. A metal roof is consistent with roofs of many traditional exurban homes.

Other alterations and repairs

The substantial additions to and alterations of the property in the 1920s and 1940s rendered the finished house a product of the second quarter of the twentieth century, in form and appearance. One has to design alterations to be suited to the present massing; it is more problematic to attempt restoration to 1890. Ultimately, the whole cannot be purely of one time or style or the other.

The aluminum-sided gable overhang over the door seems expendable in terms of compatibility with the district's period of significance. A larger shed-roof entry porch is more in the spirit of a full-width front porch of circa 1890, without literally extending it across the face of the wider 1940s house. The steps and landing are to be concrete, which is a common material for walks and steps and even porch slabs in the historic district, although there are few porches that are so elevated.

Removal of the aluminum siding and restoration of the underlying wood siding will be a substantial preservation benefit, although the condition of the old siding is not known.

The alterations to side window openings are fairly minor and consistent with alterations the Board has allowed for secondary elevations, although moving a window to the center of the living room's interior elevation seems unnecessary.

What is also unnecessary, and constitutes the truly problematic piece of the project, is the stair tower projecting from the north side of the house. Shifting the stair would not substantially change its footprint. Its demolition and recreation a few feet northward does not expand the adjoining rooms, it merely opens up the approaches to the stair on each floor. But that advantage does not justify the adverse effect of adding a prominent and discordant projection to this, one of the circa 1890 exterior walls. The degree of projection also requires more height, as the farther outward the stair extends, the more headroom must be gained relative to the down-sloping roof.

A dormer is shown surmounting the stair tower. The addition of a dormer is not preferable as the most compatible alternative, but it is conceivable if needed, and if it is designed to be more in keeping with the character of the house's main block. The contemporary flourishes are appropriate to the addition only.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept if it is revised to eliminate the stair tower and to retain the house's north wall and the main block's overall massing. Any proposal for a revised dormer, however, must return for at least staff review.