

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

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Property Address:	<b>5520 Connecticut Avenue NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Chevy Chase Arcade</b>		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>February 25, 2016</b>		Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>15-233</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Anne Brockett</b>		New Construction

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Working with architect Outerbridge Horsey, owner Mike Abbariki seeks the Board's review of a permit application to install doors at the entrance to the Chevy Chase Arcade. The HPO inspector had issued a stop-work order in January 2015 for the installation of doors without a permit. Those doors were removed.

The singular importance of the Chevy Chase Arcade was recognized its exterior and interior designation as a District of Columbia landmark in 1988 and listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 2003. The Arcade was built in 1925 in a classical Beaux Arts style by real estate developer Edward Jones. It features a limestone façade with a slightly projecting entry bay and arched opening flanked by fluted pilasters with urns above. The entry has double cast-iron gates that attach to the inside face of the entry arch, leaving a deep reveal when the gates are closed and remaining undetectable when they are open. Inside, the two-story arcade is characterized by a barrel vaulted ceiling, clerestory windows, original storefronts, the black-and-white marble floor, and classically derived bas relief frieze and panels.

The gates themselves are not historic as evidenced by an HPO inspection and information from a long-term tenant who recalls their installation in the 1990s. The fact that the gates were not mentioned in the 1988 landmark designation, but were described in the 2003 National Register nomination, is corroboration of their installation in the 1990s.

As documented in the National Register nomination form, the Chevy Chase Arcade is unique in the District of Columbia as the city's only extant shopping arcade, a building type that rose in popularity in the mid-nineteenth century, providing an early version of interior shopping, which ultimately evolved into the shopping mall.

**Project Description**

The project would install glass doors and an arched transom within the opening of the Arcade. Both transom and doors would be frameless, and the transom would be notched to fit around the keystone. The divider between doors and transom would be approximately two inches in height and painted, along with the hardware, to match the existing storefronts. The glass proposed is a highly non-reflective (eight percent) Pilkington Optifloat clear glass with a thickness of a half inch.

Unlike the previous unpermitted installation, where the doors were flush with the face of the building, the current proposal sets them at the rear of the arch, to take the place of the current gates.

### **Evaluation**

The Chevy Chase Arcade was not designed with gates or exterior doors, and determining the appropriateness of the latter now must be carefully considered. The Arcade is an individual landmark and the only example of its type in the District of Columbia. Arguably its most notable character-defining feature is the open void of its entrance, as it defines its purpose as a shopping arcade. Other than substantial signage and the addition of the gates, the building retains a high degree of integrity.

Although the Arcade is not within a historic district, it is worth examining it in its context of low-scale Connecticut Avenue commercial buildings and, perhaps more importantly, the broader context of buildings of its type. The neighboring properties were built at different times by different architects and exhibit a variety of door styles and types. That they all have doors sets the Arcade apart and points to its intended purpose.

Because there are no comparable buildings in the District, HPO conducted a thorough search of historic arcade buildings in the United States and Europe, which indicates that many, if not most, were originally designed with doors. They were generally paired doors, constructed of wood with half or three-quarter-light glass panes. An element that remains constant in all examples is the location of the doors at the *rear* of the entryway, whether under a rounded arch or a post and lintel opening. Where doors appear to have been added later, they have followed this principle, allowing the depth of the opening to remain expressed on the exterior.

Looking at the proposal in a more specific sense, the HPO's draft design guidelines for door *replacements* states that doors or doorways "are typically one of the principal ornamental and architectural features of historic buildings. They are often a primary focus of a building's front elevation and provide an important sense of scale, craftsmanship, proportion and architectural styling." New doors "should display an awareness of and response to the specific aesthetic qualities of the property."

HPO believes that the proposed doors do respect the design of the Arcade in their minimalistic construction and use of clear, non-reflective glass and do not alter the doorway's scale, proportion or style. Because they are pushed to the rear of the opening, they will continue to allow the entrance to feature a recess. The doors also meet the requirement that "doors on primary elevations should properly fit and fill historic openings. New installations should not result in a noticeable increase in the size of the exterior framing or blocking down the opening with panels or additional framing." Unlike the previous installation, the proposed doors are frameless and require no infill.

Adding exterior doors to this building will alter its historic character as an open arcade but the proposed doors are compatibly designed. Initially, the HPO had concerns that introducing a new interior climate to what has been a natural or minimally enhanced, passively heated and cooled

space could do more harm to the building. But the doors and transom would not be sealed or weatherstripped, and would allow continued (albeit reduced) airflow through the building.

Finally, the proposal is reversible (as demonstrated by the high quality repair work completed when the unpermitted doors were removed) and is important given the egress needs of the building.

The HPO has considered possible alternatives to the proposal, including setting the doors further back into the Arcade. But because of the decorative crown molding and interior storefront locations, both focuses of the interior landmark, this would prove impossible. Similarly, an exterior canopy to provide weather protection would also prove too damaging to the historic limestone façade.

Options that could reduce the impact of the proposed doors would be to eliminate the transom and horizontal piece that holds it in place, leaving this space open, or to install doors with arched tops that fill the opening without the need for a transom.

### **Recommendation**

Adding doors to a landmark building that is unique in the District of Columbia and that possesses a high degree of integrity must be considered in light of the proposal's sensitive design, its reversibility, its compatibility with the Board's policies for replacement doors, and historic precedents. With these considerations in mind, the HPO *recommends that the Board find the installation of doors compatible with the character of the landmark with consideration of the options above and delegate final approval to staff.*