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

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Landmark/District: **Mount Pleasant Historic District** (x) Agenda  
Address: **1627 Monroe Street NW**

Meeting Date: **May 24, 2018** (x) Alteration  
Case Number: **18-314** (x) Permit

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The applicant, property owner Juergen Karl Zattler, requests the Board’s review of a permit for an alteration already made to the house’s façade.

The application calls for widening the front window opening on the first floor and the installation there of double-ganged Pella Architect Series six-over-six aluminum-clad simulated-divided-light windows. The work was complete when a Historic Preservation Office inspector cited the property for it in mid-March. A permit is required, not only for altering the home’s exterior appearance, but because such alterations must be approved and inspected as structurally sound.

The house is an end unit on a row of nine erected in 1937 by Meadowbrook Inc., composed in a vaguely Georgian-Revival five-part plan. Each of the units was designed with two upper windows on the façade aligning over a single window and entry door on the first floor. Meadowbrook built eight similar houses on Brown Street (that have been more altered), another eight on the 1600 block of Newton, plus hundreds of similar rows and semidetached houses all over the city from the mid-1930s to the early 1940s.

Because building facades are typically their most character-defining features, the District’s historic preservation design guidelines state that:

Creating a new opening or enlarging an existing opening in a primary character-defining wall for a window, door, through-wall air conditioning unit or other reason is almost never appropriate. If a new opening must be created, for example to make a building functional, it should be located on a rear, non-character-defining wall. The size, design and detailing of the new opening should be compatible with the character of the wall.

The window guidelines relating to primary elevations of historic buildings reinforce that “[e]xpanding or reducing the size of window openings, blocking up, or creating new openings on primary elevations of historic buildings is not appropriate.”

The proposal is not helped by the fact that the work has already been performed without review. The mortar was not as closely matched as it could have been, and there should have been a more substantial mullion between double-ganged windows. But the chosen windows are compatible

replacements—and the original bricks were retained, if it is necessary to restore to the original condition.

This case is a closer call than a similar alteration at most historic properties, because not all contributing buildings are created alike. There are mitigating factors here in that the porch overhang obscures some of the alteration and diverts attention from it. The mirror-image house is at the other end of the row, eight houses away—although the fenestration had been consistent throughout the complex. Further, this is a nondescript and late row,<sup>1</sup> a pale derivative of Mount Pleasant's earlier homes, and reproduced in abundance elsewhere. This proposal might have been the beneficiary of the Board's application of flexibility had the proposal preceded the work. One might ask whether the guidelines should apply with equal force universally. Broadly speaking, the answer is no, but it is the particulars that count. One *should* here ask whether all the Meadowbrook rowhouses could be adapted similarly without harming the character of the historic district. The answer is, perhaps. But unless the Board supports this alteration after the fact, HPO recommends following the direction of the design guidelines.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board recommend against approval of the permit application, as incompatible with the character of the house, the row and the historic district and, thus, as contrary to the purposes of the preservation law.*

*Staff contact: Tim Dennee*

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<sup>1</sup> The historic district's period of significance ends in 1949.