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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Mount Pleasant Historic District</b>	(x) Consent
Address:	<b>1656-1658 Park Road NW</b>	
Meeting Date:	<b>April 25, 2019</b>	(x) Subdivision
Case Number:	<b>19-208</b>	(x) Alteration
		(x) Revised Permit/Concept

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The applicant, property owner 1656-58 Park LLC, requests the Board's further review of a permit application to construct a second story atop a detached garage, as well as a concept to subdivide to consolidate two house lots. There have also been recent alterations to the property without prior permits.

The Board first reviewed this case in March. It did not recommend approval of a permit for the garage addition as proposed, but expressed support for a second story if the plans could be revised for a more compatible massing and the materials and details can be improved and clarified. The Board also expressed support for a combination of the lots and buildings, if it can be shown that the connection between the buildings is minimal, and the total demolition of structure within the buildings is less than what constitutes "demolition in significant part" of each. Finally, the Board expressed support of the staff recommendations to address the alterations and repairs made without permits.

### **Background**

These properties contain two three-story semidetached houses that were originally single-family dwellings. They were two of a dozen—1644 to 1662 Park Road—erected in 1906 by Osterman and Butler to designs by prominent D.C. architect Appleton P. Clark, Jr. The Colonial Revival/Free-Classic Revival homes were collectively designated a historic landmark in 1984 and were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

Housing demand during the Great Depression and World War II induced conversions to two or more units in every house before 1960.<sup>1</sup> Much of the block is now zoned for apartments. The present owner purchased the two subject properties in January 2018 and has redone the condominium documents confirming each house as six units.

### **Garage addition**

An additional condo unit is proposed as an accessory apartment in a 1928 brick garage in the rear of 1658 Park. A frame second story would be added to the garage.

The addition was initially proposed at approximately the same area as the garage below, but offset, in that it was to have setbacks from both the side and rear yard to address zoning and code issues. To accommodate for this loss of area, the drawings had shown projections in the two

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<sup>1</sup> 1656 Park then contained two units, and 1658 had at least three.

directions opposite the setbacks. In March, the Board requested that this unusual massing be addressed.

The applicant has responded in two ways. First, the eastward projection, over the side of the garage, has been eliminated, leaving only the projection toward the house. Second, the west setback has been filled in visually by continuing the addition's front and rear walls to the side property line, but having those wall extensions support no roof. Although unusual, to the casual observer, the addition will look more conventional than before. It will still be set forward of the alley, but this will appear akin to a roof deck—and the setback will obscure the large scupper at the base of the extended south wall.

The infill of the vehicular opening now looks more door-like, but it requires specification of the products so that we may see whether the parts will indeed come together to look like a door.

The addition's fiber-cement siding should be specified as to its exposure, and that should not exceed six inches, to give the thin material has a little more texture, and a scale more similar to that of pre-1930s lap siding.<sup>2</sup> It should be smooth-faced and be of an earth tone complementary to the color of the brick below. The brick of the addition's supporting piers should reasonably match that of the garage. The window openings could use some wider, more traditional casings.

### **Subdivision**

The existing lot of 1658 Park has insufficient available unoccupied lot area to allow the cantilevered garage addition. To obtain sufficient space, this lot is to be joined with that of the attached 1656 Park. For zoning and code reasons, the combination of the two lots means that the primary structures on both must be connected, even if the interior program does not necessitate it. No plat has been submitted, but the approval of the subdivision must precede approval of a permit for the project.

The historic preservation law gives the Board the authority to review subdivisions for their potential implications. By regulation, HPO staff may clear subdivisions of historic property only if said subdivisions are “minor or insignificant lot changes compatible with the character of the property...” or are “required to implement a rehabilitation or construction project approved by the Board.”

The Board reviews consolidations of lots in part to anticipate whether such a combination may add to the development pressure on the properties. Another important consideration is how much demolition is proposed to effect the connection of the buildings and to carry out the anticipated project. For these reasons, the Board typically reviews subdivision applications simultaneously with the projects that necessitate the subdivisions. Drawings have been requested to depict any intended demolition of the houses' structure, particularly related to connecting the buildings. These have not yet been received. It is said that the houses were previously connected by the former owner, and presumably without a permit.

If drawings of the current conditions depict a minimal connection between the buildings and not much structural demolition, then that aspect of the project, including the subdivision, is compatible.

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<sup>2</sup> It is not clear where the second-story bathroom's waste pipes would run, from the shower at least, given that they would have to cross the direction of the proposed floor joists.



*The garage addition would be somewhat visible from Mount Pleasant Street, over the Heller's storefront.*



*The addition would be set forward enough from the alley to be invisible from the mouth of the alley.*

### **Alterations**

The current ownership has undertaken some exterior work without permit. Most significant, the slates on the mansard roofs were replaced with fake slate, front and rear. This is something HPO would not have supported or cleared on the front of the building, because the roofing is so prominent, and the faux slates can be easily picked out in comparison to the real ones next door, for differences in color, finish and dimension. There is not so much roof surface at the front of the building that the use of real slate would have been cost-prohibitive in comparison. The applicant has since obtained a permit to replace the front roofing with slate that matches the original. Because it is corrective work, approval was conditioned on the replacement being carried out within 60 days of permit issuance, i.e., by May 28.





***The garage addition would obviously be visible from the alley at rear, and now about the rear wall of the one-story Samber Market building. The three-story construction at the far left is an addition to 1660-1662 Park Road.***

The other major item is the paving of the front yard. It had had straight-run concrete lead walks and steps, consistent with the rest of the row, bisecting grassed yards. The previous owners, rather than repairing or replacing the century-old walks, had stuck flagstones over them and had installed similar stepping stones as a walk around the buildings. The latter is consistent with the design guidelines, the former is not, in this instance. But now, nearly the entire surface of the yard has now been covered with flagstones, limiting the green areas to planters bounded by the paving and the curb at the public sidewalk (see photos, page 7). This requires a public-space permit and would not have been supported by HPO, because the Board's policy has long been to minimize front-yard paving, consistent with the published preservation design guidelines, the planning history of the District of Columbia, and recent comprehensive plans.<sup>3</sup> Staff is awaiting

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<sup>3</sup> L'Enfant's plan for the federal city envisioned broad streets flanked by trees, monuments and greenswards. This idea was enshrined in the 1870 Parking Act, which allowed the city government to set aside parts of the street rights-of-way as parkland "to be adorned with shade-trees, walks, and enclosed with curbstones." After the consolidation of the District of Columbia government, these green "parking" areas were partly given over to private maintenance and even enclosure, as long as fences were low and open in character. Such "parking" was extended to the inner-ring suburbs and later promoted in the farther ones by the establishment of building-restriction lines. The *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital* (Policy HP-2.5.4) addresses landscaped yards in part, by promoting

a permit application to reduce the amount of paved area—and preferably to restore the concrete walks.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board recommend approval of the permit for the garage addition as alteration compatible with the character of the landmark and the historic district, subject to the conditions that:*

- 1. the infill of the garage's vehicular opening be done with what looks like a vehicular door compatible with a circa 1930 garage, but with integral glazing as necessary, and with the applicant to add to the ProjectDox application, for HPO review, the products proposed;*
- 2. the fiber-cement siding be smooth-faced, with an exposure not to exceed six inches and of an earth-tone color complementary to that of the brick; and*
- 3. that the brick of the piers reasonably match that of the garage.*

*HPO further recommends that the Board approve the subdivision concept to combine the lots, subject to the conditions that:*

- 4. drawings be produced to show the current or proposed connection between the buildings; and*
- 5. that this connection is minimal, and the proposed demolition of structure within the buildings is less than what constitutes "demolition in significant part" of each.*

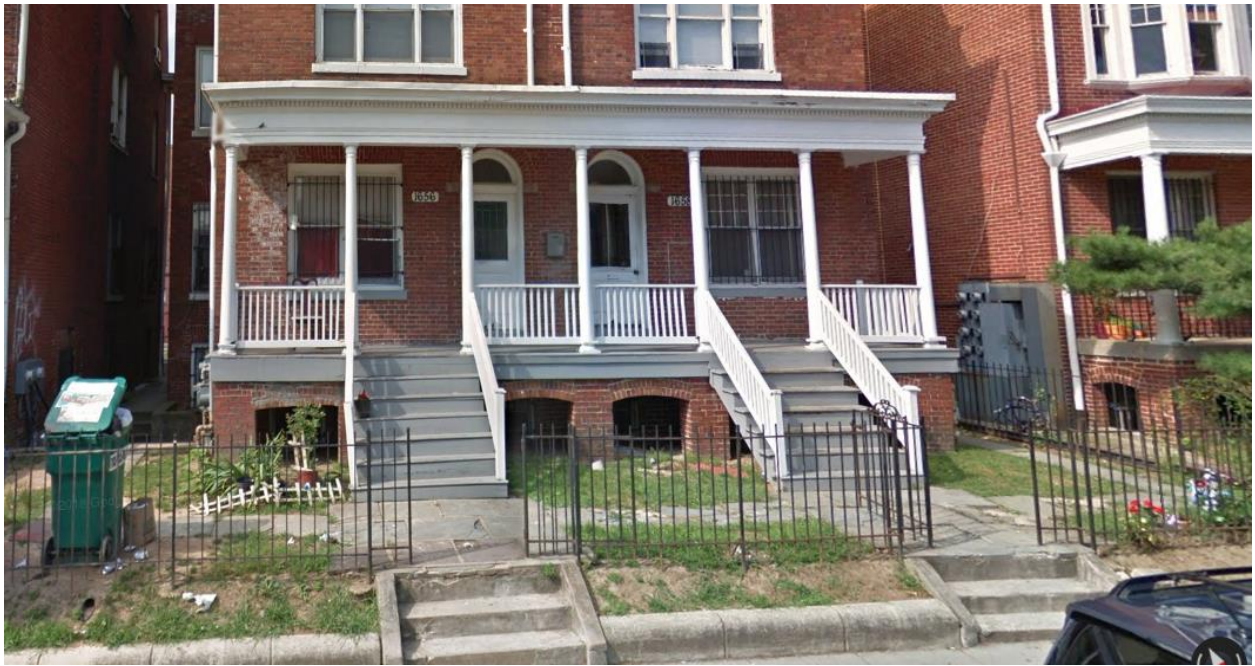
*Finally, HPO recommends that the Board require, as a condition of the above approvals, that the unpermitted work at the properties be corrected, specifically that:*

- 6. the restoration of true slate to the front roof—to match the color, cut, dimensions and coursing/exposure of the original slates—be carried out by May 28 or be subject to HPO enforcement action; and*
- 7. that the removal of the new paving from the front yard be carried out under a separate permit, to be cleared by HPO before or concurrent with the clearance of the subdivision and the addition permit.*

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the preservation "of the continuous and open green quality of landscaped front and side yards in public space. Take special care at historic landmarks and in historic districts to protect this public environment from intrusions, whether from excess paving, vehicular access and parking, high walls and fencing, or undue disruption of the natural contours or bermed terraces."





*Above: The houses' front yard prior to the recent paving/repaving.  
Below: The front yard "after."*

