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

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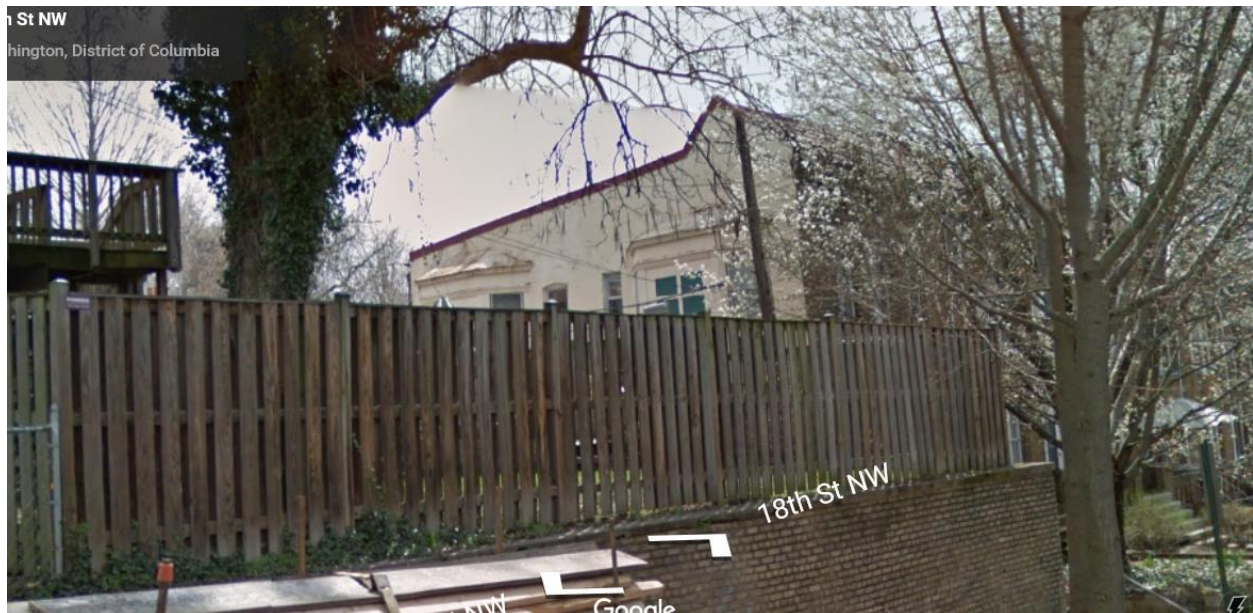
Landmark/District:	<b>Mount Pleasant Historic District</b>	(x) Agenda
Address:	<b>3109 18<sup>th</sup> Street NW</b>	( ) Consent
Meeting Date:	<b>August 4, 2016</b>	(x) Addition
Case Number:	<b>16-527</b>	(x) Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Tim Dennée</b>	(x) Concept

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The applicant, property owner Jon Cooper, requests (with Anthony Group Architecture) the Board's review of a concept to construct a roof addition atop a 1914-1915 end-unit rowhouse.

Like many rowhouses in Mount Pleasant, this one has a pent roof in front that covers only a small attic space, with the principal roof sloping down to the rear from its ridge. On houses in the middle of such Mount Pleasant rows, several roof additions have been approved and constructed with the intention of obscuring them behind these pent or mansard roofs. In this case, however, the roofline beyond the ridge—that is, the north-side parapet—is visible from various vantage points, including 18<sup>th</sup> Street and the alley that bounds the property.



*A Google Streetview image of the side of the building in April 2014.*

It is suggested that the addition would not be visible from the street, because there is a substantial tree in the front yard. Unfortunately, the Board cannot overlook the fact that the tree could die or

be removed, or that it is bare for several months a year. It does not screen views from all points either. The house's rooftop solar panels (which were installed contrary to what was proposed and approved last December<sup>1</sup>) can be seen down the alley, because they are elevated above and rested upon the side parapet.



The proposal offers two options, one an incongruous contemporary treatment intended to be distinguished from the underlying building, and the other an upward continuation of the brick side wall. One option would extend the rear porches upward another level. It is unclear what would happen to the solar panels in either scenario. With the height limited by the existing roof ridge over the low attic, sloping the roof for drainage provides a challenge to simultaneously attaining a comfortable ceiling height within.

The Board's guidance to applicants for roof additions includes the following:

Adding vertically to a historic building is generally discouraged as such additions typically alter significant features, such as its roof line, height, relationship with surrounding buildings, and overall form and mass. Additions on top of a building can sometimes be achieved when they are not visible from street views, do not result

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<sup>1</sup> The solar panels were proposed to be flush-mounted to the roof, but have been elevated to catch more southern sunlight. If not moved nearer the center of the roof so as not to be seen over the parapet, they will become the subject of an enforcement action.

in the removal or alteration of important character-defining features of the building or streetscape, and are compatible with their context.

The historic preservation design guidelines for roofs state that:

Altering roof shapes, materials, elements and details will affect their design. Thus, any alterations must be undertaken with extreme care to ensure that the character of the roof is retained.... Rarely is it appropriate to change the shape of an existing roof. To do so almost always drastically alters the character of a historic building.

The Board has approved roof additions even on end units in Mount Pleasant, on the condition that they not be visible from the street over the side of the building. A possible alternative approach here would be to forgo so large an addition and construct instead a dormer-like extension of the attic space opening onto a roof deck, assuming that both can be set back sufficiently from the north side of the building.

Recommendation

*HPO recommends that the Board deny the concept as incompatible with the character of the subject property and of the historic district and therefore inconsistent with the purposes of the preservation act.*