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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>3143 19<sup>th</sup> Street NW</b>	
Meeting Date:	<b>September 27, 2018</b>	(x) Alteration
Case Number:	<b>18-605</b>	(x) Concept

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The applicant, Janet Bloomberg, architect and agent for property owners David and Hannah Muse, requests the Board’s review of a concept for a third-story addition and roof deck; a one-story addition in the side court; demolition of a two-story enclosed porch and a 1920s garage; a rearward projection of the second story; door and window replacements; and sitework at rear.

**Third-story addition**

The two-story building, one of fourteen in this 1911 row, has both an attic and a basement. The third-story addition would be constructed atop and behind the partial attic, set back far enough that it would not be seen from 19<sup>th</sup> Street. Any permits would, of course, be conditioned on it meeting that standard.

The setback makes challenging the drainage from the roof surface between the existing roof ridge and the addition. The addition should also have a few inches of parapet at the sides, so that water does not run off onto the neighbors’ properties. The drainage needs to be addressed even at the rear of the structure, because no gutters or scuppers or leaders are depicted.

The addition does several things that the Board typically requires of similar projects. It promises to be invisible from the street that the property faces. Its rear wall is set forward so as to retain the original roofline along the row and to reduce the visual impact of the added floor. It is sufficiently distinct from the original construction without being of incompatible form, materials, proportions or details. The roof deck sets in from the edges of the second floor, and the deck is built into the roof below. Fiber-cement panels are discouraged as a primary, façade material, but are acceptable as a secondary material on this rear elevation and might improve upon the present varnished vertical boards.

The rear of the addition need not be as tall as shown—with a 9’8” floor-to-ceiling height. In fact it almost certainly cannot be, as the drawings depict the roof as perfectly flat, when it will need to slope rearward to drain.

The house presently has an extensive rooftop solar array, plus mechanical equipment and a hatch or skylight. Neither the elevations nor the roof plan depict these. If such items are ultimately proposed, they, too, should be invisible from 19<sup>th</sup> Street and not especially prominent from any vantage point.

### **Side and rear projections**

The cantilever of the rearward projection at the second floor is odd because of its degree of projection, beyond that of typical bays and oriels. This does not render the project incompatible however, because even without visible supports, it is akin to the projections of neighboring infilled porches. And it replaces an existing, larger infilled porch/sunroom.

The rear wing would be extended to the north-side lot line at the first floor, filling the court. The Board has usually recommended approval of filling in such courts as a reasonable way to expand. The one-story addition proposed here is preferable to filling the court entirely, as it retains a sense of the repeating ells.

### **Demolition**

A nondescript, yet pre-1927 garage would be demolished, presumably to reduce the property's lot occupancy sufficiently for by-right construction of the side addition. While these little garages are very characteristic of the development of Mount Pleasant in the 1910s and 1920s, they typically lack much architectural character and have often been re-clad and had their doors replaced, as in this case. They have therefore not been protected as primary contributing structures to the degree that earlier carriage houses have.

Construction of the additions raises the most important preservation issue, that of significant demolition of the house itself. Most of the roof would be removed, and the drawings suggests that the attic floor would be replaced as well, to heavy up the framing for an occupied story above. A two-story infilled porch would be demolished as well, but it had already been reconstructed, slightly larger than the original.

The major demolition is of the rear wing, all but its south party wall. Because the ell is small relative to the whole building, this removal of fabric fits within the scope of what the Board has approved in the past to make way for new additions, including small ones whose rooms would straddle the line of the original exterior walls. Still, the demolition of much of the wing plus the attic and garage is considerable, and only compatible if the remainder of the walls and framing remain. One condition of the permit should be that the floor framing shall be retained.

### **Alterations**

The front of the building is proposed to be altered only by the replacement of windows and doors. It is not clear why replacement is necessary. They appear to be original and intact, old-growth-timber windows; there is a little deterioration apparent at the bottom rail of one of the dormers, but they otherwise look solid. It seems an expensive and disruptive way to address the fact that some have been painted shut. As drawn, the configuration of the dormers is not quite right, because the original/present lower sash is two-light, not the one-light shown. The unusual 35-light front door also looks solid and complete, and it is consistent with others on the row that have survived. Without gaining much in terms of better visibility, replacement with a full-light door would diminish the integrity of the façade and the row. Given the potential loss of the house's historic fabric represented by the proposed demolition, it is recommended that these original elements be retained.

### **Site work**

Without the garage, the applicant proposes a fence or wall at the alley, with a door or gate to allow access while securing the property. There is not much detail on this aspect of the project.

The fence/wall is said to be seven feet tall—which would be the entire height of the typical garage door. Sheet A-107 suggests that a door might roll up, but it is not clear by what means or where exactly. Freestanding roll-up doors should be discouraged in such instances in Mount Pleasant, because of the ugly housing and the fact that such a door cannot here be sandwiched between garages. On the other hand, if the door were to roll on tracks, there would have to be some prominent frame to support them.

As depicted on the same sheet, the rear yard would contain the parking pad, separated from a garden area by a “green wall.” There would be a patio immediately behind the house and a small shed near that.

***Recommendation***

*HPO recommends the Board approve the concept as compatible with the character of the historic district and consistent with the purposes of the preservation law, with the conditions that:*

- 1. the third-floor addition and its appurtenances not be visible from 19<sup>th</sup> Street;*
- 2. the roof of the third-floor addition be lowered at rear to allow for proper drainage;*
- 3. the third-floor addition have low side parapets;*
- 4. the floor framing be retained within the main block of the house;*
- 5. the front door and windows be retained and repaired as necessary; and*
- 6. there be no alley vehicular gate or door with prominent housing or tracks.*