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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Mount Pleasant Historic District</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>1646 Park Road, NW</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
Meeting Date:	<b>October 28, 2010</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New construction
Case Number:	<b>11-021</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Addition
Date Received:	<b>October 15, 2010</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Tim Dennée</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept

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The applicant, contract purchaser Capital City Real Estate LLC (Brian Papke), agent for property owner Missionaries of Charity, Inc., requests concept review to construct a three-story addition to the rear of this three-story, semi-detached home, built in 1906, in order to create five apartments.

**Background**

The subject property is one of a dozen semi-detached, brick houses designed by Appleton P. Clark, Jr. for builders Osterman and Butler. They are of two distinct but related types of porch-front, mansard-roofed homes. The entire development was landmarked in 1986, prior to the designation of the larger neighborhood, in order to take advantage of federal rehabilitation tax credits (the nomination is attached).

Whereas most of residential Mount Pleasant is zoned R-4, the higher-density R-5-B zoning applicable to the apartments along 16<sup>th</sup> Street extends to include this landmark row. This zoning theoretically permits apartments up to 50 feet tall, with a minimum rear yard of fifteen feet and lot occupancy up to 60 percent. However, the zone also establishes a maximum floor-area ratio of 1.8. If the Zoning Administrator's Office determines the basement level to constitute a floor, because of how much is above grade, the project may exceed the allowable FAR.

**Description**

The addition would retain the side walls of the rear ell and its rear wall at the basement and first floors. It would be faced with similar brick. It would continue the ell's setback from the west property line, making only the recessed rear half of the addition somewhat visible when sighted at the widest possible angle through the approximately 5'6" gap between 1646 and 1648 Park. The adjoining house at 1644 Park would block views from the northeast.

One may best understand the massing and magnitude of the addition by reference to the section drawing on Sheet A3. As each story of the ell now has a different depth, the length of each story of the addition differs. The first floor would be extended about 20 feet—not counting the proposed rear porch—the second floor about 32 feet, and the set-back third floor about 25. The total length would then be about 81 feet, not counting front and rear porches. The section is not entirely accurate as to the extent of the basement level, which the plan shows extending under

the proposed first-floor porch or deck. There would be a roof deck in the setback of the third floor.

Much of the rear addition would be surrounded by a sunken terrace to provide light and exterior space for a basement unit.

### **Evaluation**

The limited visibility of the addition from Park Road suggests that the important consideration is the relationship between the addition and the existing structure; how it may affect the overall character of the row and relationships between the buildings. Building to the full zoning envelope would create a building that is taller, deeper and wider than what is proposed. The Board should not be unmindful of the zoning applicable to these lots, nor should it feel that it must approve a project based upon the zoning without due regard to the need for compatibility.

The landmark nomination does not provide much guidance as to how or if to add, except for stating that the buildings have changed little and possess high integrity. The argument for designation was based upon the distinctive architecture, the work of master architect Appleton P. Clark, Jr. Sufficiently respecting that architecture is the task at hand. Although constructing *no* additions would obviously constitute the best preservation, it seems that some kind of addition would be compatible in the interest of adapting the property to modern use.

A two-story addition—engaging the main block below the rear mansard roof—is obviously preferable and would be more successful. But the pre-1928, three-story additions at 1660-1662 Park suggest that attaching at the mansard may be sufficiently successful, as the rear elevations are not as ornate as the fronts. Of course, those three-story additions are not as deep as that proposed.

The most difficult issue is the relationship with 1644 Park which, not as deep as the proposed addition or as the larger apartment building to the east, would be in something of a tunnel. This would be caused by any addition, although to a lesser extent for a smaller one.

On balance, the proposal represents the maximum conceivable bulk for this lot and building, or for any of the others that make up the landmark. The length of the total proposed ell is a few feet less than that of the main block, and the bulk to be added is probably not much more than the equivalent of half of that which now exists. The depth of the rear yard proposed exceeds the required depth even for an R-4 zone. Nonetheless, a smaller addition, such as a shallower one or, better, one at only two stories, would certainly constitute a more compatible, better-scaled relationship with the main block of the building and the row.

The sunken terrace would be deleterious to the appearance of the building as it would visually undermine it. While entrance areaways and light wells are frequently approved, such extensive areaways, exposing the basement, have generally been discouraged, except along a rear wall. In addition to removing the visual base of the building and changing its proportions, such an extensive terrace, in conjunction with the parking and rear porches, would remove the side yard and any opportunity for green space on the lot. While the areaway or terrace may be more permissible along the side of the addition—especially to keep the large openings from being introduced to the base of the historic main block—it is along the addition that there is still the possibility of green space, as the lead walk takes up the entire side yard further forward.

**Recommendation**

The staff recommends that the Board approve the application in concept, with the direction to reduce the excavation around the basement to only what is necessary for light and access.