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

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|--------------------|--|----------|------------------|
| Property Address:  | <b>1806 24<sup>th</sup> Street, NW</b>     | <b>X</b> | Agenda           |
| Landmark/District: | <b>Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District</b> |          | Consent Calendar |
| Meeting Date:      | <b>October 26, 2017</b>                    | <b>X</b> | Permit Review    |
| H.P.A. Number:     | <b>17-584</b>                              | <b>X</b> | Alteration       |
| Staff Reviewer:    | <b>Steve Callcott</b>                      |          | New Construction |
|                    |  |          | Demolition       |
|                    |  |          | Subdivision      |

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Owners Andrew Michels and Debbie Shon seek permit review for alterations, already completed without building or public space permits, in the public space front yard of a property in the Sheridan Kalorama Historic District.

**Property History and Description**

1806 24<sup>th</sup> Street is a four-story townhouse clad in red brick and Indiana limestone. It was constructed in 1924 as the end unit in a row of seven coordinated Classical Revival townhouses (1806-1818 24<sup>th</sup>) by the developer/architect team of David Baer and Robert Scholz. Scholz's architectural career is summarized in the DC Architects Directory, a historical study of the District's most prominent architects sponsored by the HPO in 2010; the biographical listing cites the row in which the subject property is located:

Scholz began designing apartments in 1920, when he became an architect for Howard Etchison, a prominent builder who was active in apartment house construction in Washington, D.C. from circa 1910-1925. The next year he took a position as architect in the office of noted Washington architect George N. Ray, who was known for his neo-classical commercial buildings. In 1922, Scholz established his own practice and also formed a partnership with David A. Baer, a lawyer who had recently become a builder specializing in apartment buildings. During the 1920s, Scholz was actively involved in apartment house construction as an architect, builder, and owner.

In 1928-29, Baer & Scholz was responsible for designing and constructing the largest apartment-hotel in the city. The five-story Alban Towers contained 132 apartments. Scholz designed it in the Gothic Revival style to complement the nearby Washington Cathedral and St. Alban's School. The building proved so popular that Baer & Scholz expanded it a year after it was built to include 84 more units. Other notable apartment buildings designed by Scholz included 2755 Macomb Street, N.W. (1926), 3707 Woodley Road, N.W. (1926), and the Bishop's House (1927). Scholz also designed the row of elegant Classical Revival-style town houses in Kalorama at 1806-1818 24<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W. (1924) that was constructed by Baer & Scholz.

The house, like the others in the row, has an approximately 20' deep landscaped front yard that extends up to the foundation of the house, with a central lead walk to a landing at the front door. Prior to the recent work, the walk and landing were scored concrete with exposed stone aggregate.

## **Proposal**

The work includes constructing a low (approximately 18” high) brick retaining wall; widening and repaving the original aggregate concrete front lead walk, front steps and entrance landing with bluestone pavers; expanding the width of the front landing to the full width of the house; and installing a large black metal parcel drop box in the front yard. The work was undertaken without building construction or public space permits, and is complete.

The HPO has issued a Notice of Infraction for the work and is currently pursuing enforcement through the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). In response to the infraction notice, the applicants have admitted to performing the work but have stated that they were under the belief that their contractor had obtained the appropriate permits. They have claimed that the “repairs/construction are esthetically and materially congruent with the design features of the neighborhood” and are seeking a permit after-the-fact.

## **Evaluation**

With respect to properties in historic districts, one of the stated purposes in the DC Landmark and Historic District Protection Act is “to assure that alterations of existing structures are compatible with the character of the historic district.”<sup>1</sup>

The house is one in a row of coordinated classical revival townhouses that are unified in their use of materials (red brick with limestone trim), siting and setting (with gardens extending up to the foundation of each house), and consistent use of aggregate concrete paving that is visually consistent, rather than contrasting, with the limestone trim on the houses. The recent unpermitted work has resulted in the expansion of the front stoop to the full width of the building in a manner that changes the relationship of the house to its yard and to the other houses in the row, paving that is inconsistent in color, material, shape and visual appearance with the other walks in this row, and installation of an obtrusive, oversized mailbox. The brick retaining wall is similar in height and materials with another low wall found on the row, and is reasonably compatible in materials and coloration with the building’s façade.

Recently installed replacement walks at 1816 and 1818 24<sup>th</sup> Street were coordinated in advance with HPO and completed with the required permits. The scope of work for each was modified slightly from what was initially submitted in order to be found consistent with the coloration and material use of the lead walks in this row.

## **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the expansion in width of the lead walk and front stoop, the use of bluestone paving, and the installation of a large metal box in the front yard to be incompatible with the character of the property and the Sheridan Kalorama Historic District. HPO recommends that the Board find the low red brick retaining wall to be compatible.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Alter* or *alteration* is defined in the act as: (A) A change in the exterior appearance of a building or structure or its site, not covered by the definition of demolition, for which a permit is required.



*1806 24<sup>th</sup> Street (left), prior to unpermitted work*



*1806 24<sup>th</sup> Street (far left) is part of a coordinated row of seven classical revival townhouses constructed in 1924.*





*1806 24<sup>th</sup> Street (left), after unpermitted work*



*Recently completed replacement walks at 1816 and 1818 24<sup>th</sup> Street, constructed after consultation with HPO and obtaining building permits, that replicate the material and coloration of the original walks.*