

Capitol Hill Restoration Society
P.O. Box 15264 Washington, D.C. 202.543.0425

April 20, 2017

Ms. Marnique Heath
Chair, Historic Preservation Review Board
1100 Fourth Street, SW, Suite E650
Washington, DC 20034

Re: HPA 17-317 231 10th Street, SE

Dear Ms. Heath:

The Historic Preservation Committee of the Capitol Hill Restoration met with applicant Eric Goetz and reviewed the plans for the project dated April 6, 2017 (the plans submitted to HPRB). The applicants received permits B1700524 (October 2016) and B1703499 (February 2017) from DCRA without the required review by HPO and HPRB. The permits refer to "reduction in lot occupancy of single family home including mechanical, electrical, and plumbing work." The February permit makes a reference to an addition. It appears that an HPO sign off or an HPRB hearing would have been required before DCRA issued building permits, and that the process that DCRA followed was not appropriate. The applicants began construction, received a stop-work order, and then filed this HPA case.¹ Our comments follow.

This is a two-story three-bay brick porch-front house designed in 1939 by Lewis Wentworth Giles for owner/builder H. V. Hudgins. The house has panel brick designs over the second story windows, a feature that Giles used in several of his Capitol Hill buildings. This is a contributing building. Lewis Wentworth Giles (1894-1974) was a well-known African-American architect who graduated from Armstrong Technical and studied architecture at the University of Illinois. After serving in World War I, he worked in the office of Isaiah Hatton from 1918 to 1921. In 1921, he opened his own office at 1200 U Street, NW. He designed many churches (Rock Creek Baptist Church, 4201 8th Street, NW; New Mt. Olive Baptist Church, 58th and Grant Streets, NE), offices, apartment buildings and houses in Capitol Hill, Brookland, Eastland Gardens, Capitol View and Deanwood. Later, his home and office were located at 4428 Hunt Place, NE, a house that he designed.

From Blue Star's website and email signature, Eric and Christal Goetz are the owners of Blue Star Design Build. Eric Goetz is a design build professional. Blue Star Design Build appeared before HPRB in March, 2017, 407A 4th Street, SE (HPA 17-176).

There are multiple issues in this case. We will consider first the project under construction, and next the project plans submitted to HPRB.

¹ On February 25, 2016, HPRB gave concept review to construct an addition on a one-story garage at 231 10th Street, SE, the garage height to be reduced to 20 feet 6 inches. HPA-16-209.

Project under construction

The applicants are building a visible addition, and because we are unsure what is under the tarp on the front elevation, it may be a popup. The addition under construction is built over the main block of the historic house. Figure 1 shows 231 10th Street, SE as of 2004 (from www.planning.dc.gov). Figure 2 shows 231 10th Street, SE as of October 2016 (from www.planning.dc.gov). Looking at Figures 1 and 2, the original cornice line of 231 10th Street can be located by looking at the cornice line of 233 10th Street (adjacent beige building), then adding from that point, the height of the second story window on 233 10th Street. Figures 3A and 3B, photographs taken in early April 2017, show the front elevation, with a tarp covering part of the upper section of the house. Looking at Figures 3A & 3B, then making the computation using Figures 1 and 2, it appears that some type of structure (covered with a tarp) comes up approximately four feet from the original cornice line, increasing the height of the front elevation. Figure 4 shows the rear of 231 10th Street, SE. The applicant indicated that the HVAC will be internal and the condensers will be placed on a high section of the addition's roof.

We requested that the applicants supply a copy of the building permit application and the building permit application drawings, which have been provided, showing approvals for structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing. These plans closely resemble the April 6, 2017 plans submitted to HPRB.

Project plans submitted to HPRB

An addition must not be visible from public space.

HPO's guidelines, "Additions to Historic Buildings," p. 13, states that roof top additions should not be visible from public space. This addition will be visible from oblique angles, from only two-three houses away, as the applicant agrees. The photos (Figures 3A & 3B) clearly show that the addition is visible immediately north and south of the property. The sight line study is impossible to verify because the construction tarp obscures the roof. In addition, we believe that if the tarp were removed, the third story would be visible from across 10th Street.

An addition must be subordinate to the historic building

The historic building is 1,448 square feet, and to be subordinate to the historic building any addition must not exceed 1,448 square feet. The proposed addition is 2,762 square feet, almost twice the size of the historic building, is not subordinate, and overwhelms the historic building.²

An addition must not be built over the main block of a historic house.

From the plans it appears that the project would demolish part of the existing roof (so labeled on drawings) to create a deck on the front of the house accessible from the third story

² Historic building is $((20 \times 31.4) \times 2 \text{ stories}) = 1,256$ square feet plus one-story $16 \times 12 = 192$ square feet. $1,256 + 192 = 1,448$. The addition is $50 \times 20 = 1,000$ (first story). $52.10 \times 20 = 1,042$ (second story). $36 \times 20 = 720$ (third story --- master suite). $1,000 + 1,042 + 720 = 2,762$.

master bedroom.³ The sight-line study shows that a third-story addition is to be built halfway over the main block of the historic house. HPRB requires that an addition must not be built on the original block of the historic structure. See 146 13th Street, SE, HPA 15-127. The proposed addition violates this requirement. The photographs of the partly built addition, which encroaches on and envelops the historic building, illustrate why the rules require that additions be built off the main block of the house.

Recommendation

We urge the Board to evaluate this project irrespective of the construction underway, as it would any other proposed project. We believe that this project conflicts with three key historic preservation principles as discussed above in this letter, and is not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District, in terms of the plans submitted to HPRB or the actual construction in process. Removing the third story would correct the problems with visibility, subordination, and building over the main block of the house. We urge that the Board order that the addition in the front and over the main block of the house be removed.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Beth Purcell

Beth Purcell, Chair

³ The applicant indicated that he might be willing to pull the porch back from the front. Also, the height of the parapet wall may be on 40 1/2 inches, less than the required 42 inches.

Figure 1. 231 10th Street, SE (red brick porch front house) as of 2004 (from www.planning.dc.gov).

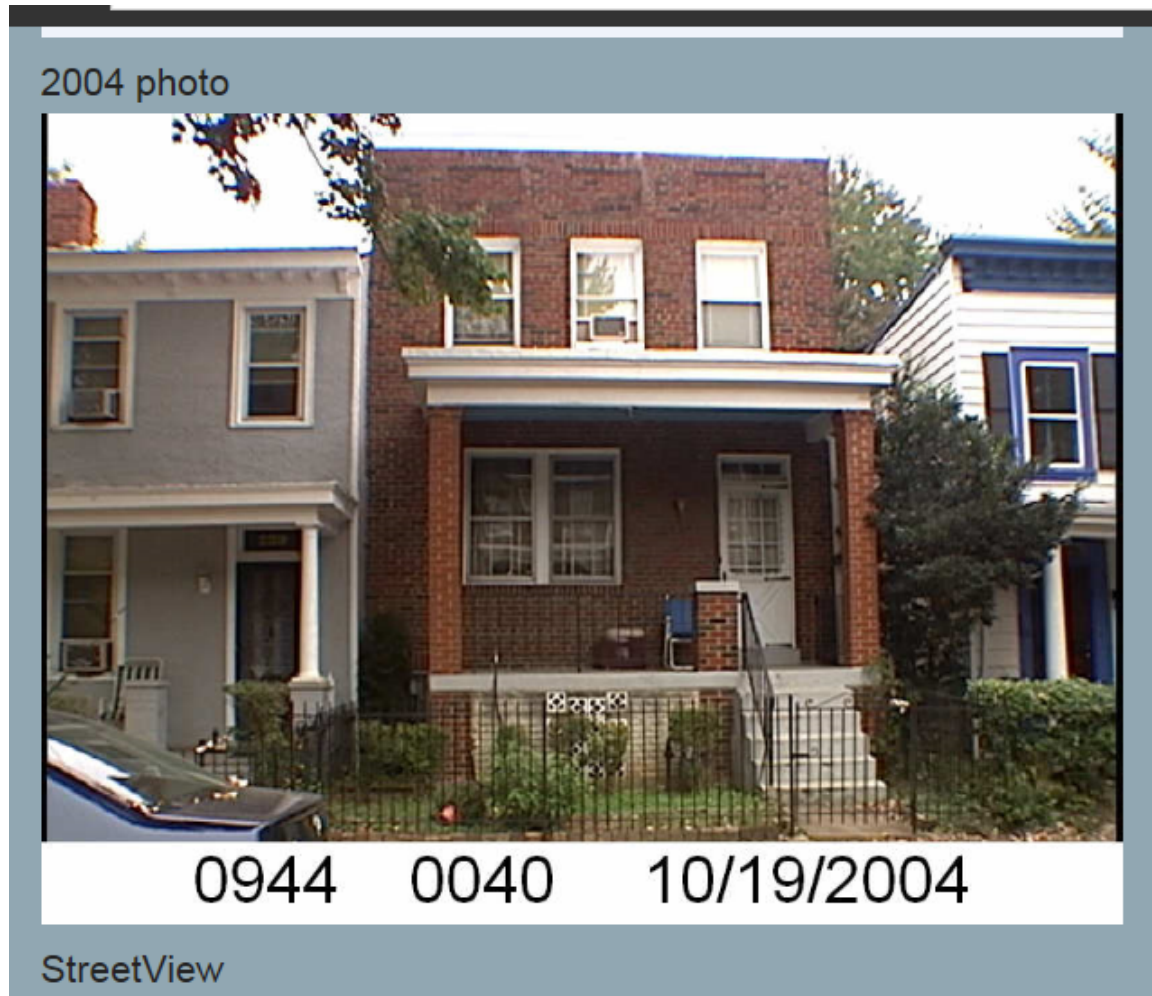


Figure 2. 231 10th Street, SE (red brick porch front house) as of October 2016 (from www.planning.dc.gov).

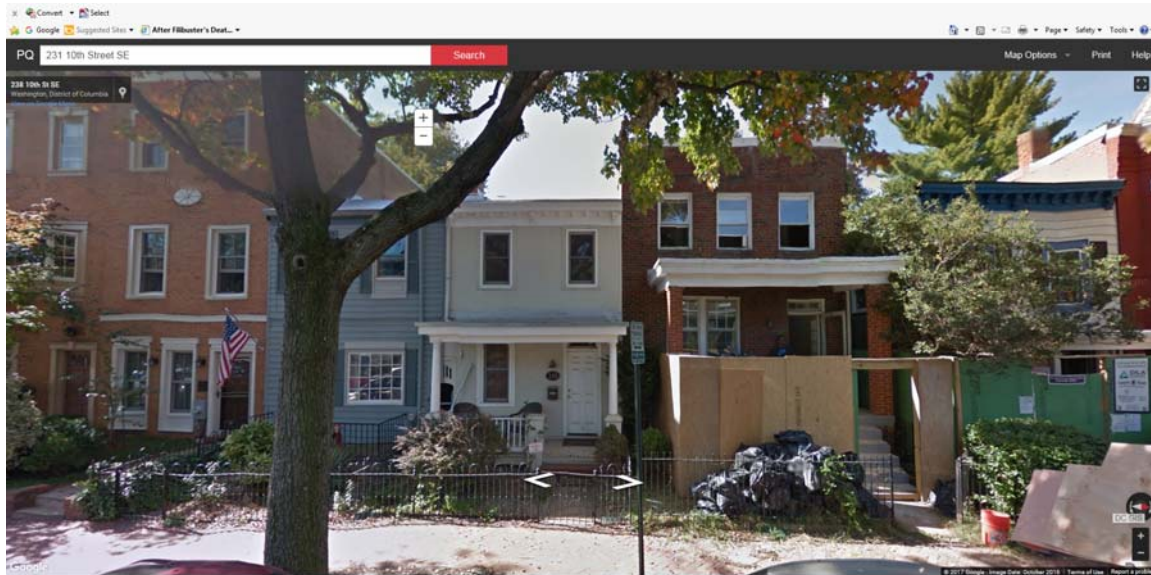


Figure 3A. 231 10th Street, SE, front view (April 7, 2017).



Figure 3B. Front view 231 10th Street, SE April 10, 2017



Figure 4. 231 10th Street, SE rear view (April 9, 2017).

