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## Endorsement of Proposed Alterations to 3109 18th St NW (HPA 16-527)

Resolved, that ANC 1D kindly advises the Historic Preservation Review Board that plans for the alteration of 3109 18th St NW are compatible with the Mount Pleasant Historic Preservation District.

**Why:** The plans for alteration of 3109 18th St NW have been significantly revised since last reviewed by HPRB, based on feedback given by HPO staff and HPRB. ANC 1D has carefully considered these revised plans in concert with the applicable historic preservation guidelines made available by the Office of Planning. As detailed below, these revised plans meet the guidelines. The north wall is left unaltered, with the extension set back several feet from it. The setback increases towards the rear of the building so as to limit visibility from street. The pent-roof form is preserved.

A portion of the roofline of the extension will be visible from a vantage point across 18th St to the north by the intersection with Kilbourne, due to a section of sidewalk being on higher ground. Given the considerable setback from the north wall and the use of frame construction for the extension, we feel the perceived massing of the building is retained, stemming from the unaltered masonry of the north and west walls. As illustrated in the plans, the extension is not visible from other points on the sidewalk across the street, nor from any point on the same side of the street.

Further, such limited visibility is not prohibited by the preservation guidelines. Consider:

“A roof-top addition to a historic building is sometimes necessary for mechanical and communications equipment. In other cases, a deck may be added to the roof of a commercial building. In still other cases, an entire floor may be added to the top of an existing building.

16.1 Any roof-top addition should be located far enough behind the existing cornice so that it is hidden from view by pedestrians on the street.

16.2 If this is not possible, the design of the addition or its screening should be compatible with the character of the building.”

and

“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. Before proceeding with any roof alteration the owner of a historic building should consult with the Historic Preservation Division.”

These guidelines establish that compatible alterations are permissible: “an entire floor may be added to the top of an existing building.” §16.1 states that a “roof-top addition...should be hidden from view.” The plans under consideration meet this guideline from all pedestrian vantage points except for a stretch of sidewalk across the street, from approximately 3122 18th St NW to the intersection with Kilbourne Place (i.e., two

rowhomes). §16.2 states the “design of the addition...should be compatible with the character of the building” when it is “not possible” to hide it from view. The understated design of the addition and the materials proposed for it remain compatible with the building and the neighborhood generally and do not add to its massing or disrupt its rhythm, while the trees on the street obscure the limited amount of what will be visible for much of the year. Moreover, the reason why any portion of the addition will be visible is because of the higher elevation northwest of the property, across the street. It is not possible for Mr. Cooper to sink that section of sidewalk lower into the ground, nor does it seem possible for Mr. Cooper to make further reductions to visibility of the addition via its design; therefore, the “not possible” condition of §16.2 is met. Finally, given the careful design of the setback and preservation of the north wall and parapet, it is hard to see how anyone could argue that the character of the roof has not been maintained or that “extreme care” has not been taken. The emphasis remains squarely on the north masonry wall looming over the alley and its unique bay windows. The guidelines plainly do not set a strict requirement of invisibility from all possible vantage points. The addition concept therefore meets the guidelines and should be permitted.

The HPO staff report discusses the addition extending to the rear of building and how it disrupts the roofline of the rear elevation. ANC 1D does not consider the rear elevation relevant; certainly the rear elevation cannot be judged incompatible given the many varied styles of rear additions in Mount Pleasant.

The HPO staff report does highlight the potential need for a railing along the parapet (the visibility of which is also permitted by the guidelines), as the north wall slopes towards the rear of the building and the open space of the setback will be utilized as a roof deck. It could be the case that the alteration may render a railing unnecessary, with the parapet perhaps having sufficient height above the deck surface. If a railing is necessary, ANC 1D welcomes guidance from HPRB about design details of such a railing to ensure its compatibility.

Having discussed how the plans maintain both the character of the building as well as of the Mount Pleasant historic preservation district, and should therefore be approved by the HPRB under the law, ANC 1D points out that there are other factors of the plans which argue in its favor. They are:

1. Jon Cooper, owner and resident of the property, has resided at this address since 1979, predating the designation of the historic preservation district by several years, and plans to continue his residence here for as long as he is able.
2. Mr. Cooper seeks the addition to increase available living space in the primary unit for him and his adult daughter, who requires some care.
3. The project will necessitate reinforcement work on the existing roof, entailing new insulation. The roof deck will also feature a rainwater capture mechanism and the roof of the extension will have flush-mount solar panels. With these elements the energy footprint of the building will significantly reduced and is in keeping with the DC Department of Energy and the Environment’s Sustainable DC Plan and its RiverSmart program, as well as DC’s overall commitment to the Paris Climate Accords.

*Passed by 5 to 0 vote at the legally noticed, public meeting of ANC1D on January 24, 2017, with a quorum present. Voting “yes”: Commissioners Stewart, Romero-Latin, Karaffa, Karrer, McKay. A quorum for this commission is three; five commissioners were present.*