



REPORT OF ACTIVITIES
FOR
FISCAL YEAR 2018

HISTORIC MOUNT PLEASANT, INC.

Incorporated in 1985, Historic Mount Pleasant (HMP) aims to bring neighbors together to celebrate and protect features of the Mount Pleasant Historic District that give the neighborhood its special character. Our website (www.historicmountpleasant.org) provides basic information about historic district requirements and links to a variety of other resources on historic preservation. We regularly field inquiries from residents about individual properties and work with the Historic Preservation Office in the D.C. Office of Planning and other official entities to resolve issues affecting the historic district. We sponsor occasional social and educational activities in Mount Pleasant. We welcome the participation of neighbors in all our activities. Please contact us if you are interested in joining our Board of Directors or helping to review projects or working on other things with us.

Advice and Assistance on Exterior Renovations

Our principal ongoing responsibilities relate to exterior renovations in Mount Pleasant – advising and assisting neighbors on permit requirements, reviewing designs with architects, and providing input on cases going before the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB). Given the broad scope of authority delegated by HPRB to the staff of the Historic Preservation Office (HPO), the cases actually going to HPRB for decision are relatively few in number. HPO advises all applicants to share their plans with both HMP and the Advisory Neighborhood Commission for Mount Pleasant (ANC1D), and HPRB invariably asks for our views during the hearing. We invite applicants to discuss their plans with us and also invite the views of neighbors. We exchange views with HPO staff while projects are under review and generally support the staff report to HPRB, although differences of opinion may arise and will be shared with HPRB. If we cannot attend the hearing, we provide comments in writing beforehand.

During Fiscal Year 2018 (December 2017-November 2018), HPRB considered nine cases from Mount Pleasant, approving four rear and/or rooftop additions, a garage roof-deck, installation of an electric cabinet on the face of an apartment building, and demolition of a carriage house/garage. It ruled against applications to substitute a double window for a single one on a façade and to install cement pavers in public space in front of a house. Whenever rooftop additions are proposed, it is standard HPO/HPRB practice to ask whether they would be visible from the street – as determined by a flag or stick test – and to require that rooftop additions not be visible from the public right-of-way (generally the vantage point of a pedestrian at any place on the sidewalk across the street from the property in question). In all cases going to the HPRB, an HPO staff member prepares a written recommendation for the Board. The HPO reports and summaries of HPRB decisions are available on the Office of Planning website (www.planning.dc.gov) under the month of the hearing, which is given for each case below. Drawings submitted in individual cases are also now posted on the website.

In the case of **1715 Kenyon**, a developer was seeking to add rear and third-floor additions to a two-story row house. HMP visited the site with the developer and his team and offered a number of suggestions, which we believe improved the design. The Board approved the concept and delegated final review to staff subject to ten conditions. Of significance for other projects in the neighborhood (as lessons to be learned), it required that the house not be demolished “in significant part,” that the roof addition and any appurtenances not be visible from the street right of way, that any new windows fit the original masonry or rough opening and have brick molds

that match the original, that new electrical meters not be placed in front of the house, and that staff review all repairs to the front of the house and work with the applicant on an overall preservation plan.

The owners of **1800 Kenyon** (May 2018) sought approval to construct a deck on top of their garage which was initially proposed to be surrounded by a 56-inch tall wooden fence. Notwithstanding the existence of numerous decks in the neighborhood of similar appearance, HPRB had never approved one on a prominent corner site such as this, where the proposed deck would be fully visible from the 18th Street right of way. Our initial question was thus why they were not proposing to add the deck at the rear of the house, where it would also be more accessible to the kitchen. It turned out that a large addition had been built years ago which put the property at 70.1% lot occupancy – significantly over the 60% allowed by zoning. Any addition to the house would require a variance, for which the property would not qualify. Changes were made to the design – e.g., substituting an open handrail for the fence to make it less obtrusive. The staff recommended that the design not be approved based on standing guidance requiring nonvisibility of roof decks intended to preserve the character of historic districts. It also noted that, in this case, there was no strong claim to violate preservation standards as this particular property did not lack for yard space. HMP supported the staff report. HPRB ruled 6-to-3 in favor of the project. However, the Zoning Administrator did not approve the project, effectively blocking it.

At **1627 Monroe** (May 2018), the homeowner had hired a Pella distributor to replace an original six-over-six wood window on the first floor of the façade with double-ganged six-over-six aluminum-clad simulated-divided-light windows. The contract called for the installer to get the appropriate permit; he did not. A Stop Work Order was issued, and the owner applied for a permit. HPO staff recommended that the permit not be approved, as the window replacement was incompatible with the character of the house, the row and the historic district. HMP supported the staff report, pointing out that the house was one of 25 such houses on contiguous streets and that to allow the substitution here would encourage others to do likewise. ANC1-D recommended that the permit be issued. The Board acknowledged the ANC resolution and stated that the proposal would be evaluated as if the work had not already been done. The Board reaffirmed that the subject property was contributing and should be respected for its own design and as part of a consistent row. It approved the staff report finding the alteration contrary to the purposes of the preservation law. The homeowner has appealed the decision to the Mayor's Agent for Historic Preservation. A hearing had been scheduled for January 10, 2019, but will be rescheduled.

The carriage house/garage behind **3305-3307 18th** presented a difficult case. It was a unique structure in the historic district – built by brothers at 1842-1844 Monroe and moved to 18th Street and shared by them between their two houses. It was thus the remaining original element of 1842-1844 Monroe which burned down in the 60's and existed on a par with the carriage houses along the 1800 Park/Monroe alley which neighbors and HMP have consistently sought to protect. However, as it had been shared between two houses and the two owners had taken different approaches to maintaining the property over the years, it was in very rough shape by the time the current owners began looking at whether it could be restored. After much discussion, the owners submitted an application to raze the structure, arguing that it should no

longer be considered a contributing structure – and thus something that should be restored – given its deteriorated condition. They submitted two structural reports to HPRB, a building history, and a concept design for new construction. HMP took no position on whether the building should be razed but suggested that, if new construction were approved, the design should be simplified to be more in keeping with an alley building. The Board found that the building could be razed as it had suffered such a loss of historic character that it no longer contributed to the character of the historic district. It approved the concept of a replacement building and recommended that the design be simplified, particularly by reducing the number of dormers. Final review was delegated to staff.

As part of a project to upgrade the electrical system at **1900 Lamont** (July 2018), the apartment building facing the Lamont Street right-of-way, the property owner sought approval to install a large cabinet on the primary façade. While most such installations are on the inside, the property owner said there was no room. Their preferred exterior location would have been the alley wall, but installation there would have required more turns in the copper cable than allowed by PEPCO as the line would have to be extended from 19th Street. The initial proposal was to mount the cabinet high on the façade over the areaway to the west of the front entrance. HPO advised the property owner that this would not be approved. HMP visited the site with apartment managers, their architect, PEPCO and DDOT to discuss alternatives. The revised proposal involved excavating the areaway, so that the cabinet could be placed in it without rising above the top of the basement windows. The retaining wall immediately in front would be increased to the same height. HPRB approved this approach subject to five conditions, including that the cabinet match the base of the building, that the slope of the hill not be altered and that plants be installed to screen the cabinet.

The owners of **1866 Monroe** (September 2018) proposed adding a master bedroom and roof deck behind their partial attic. The design met the basic requirements for such additions: it proposed materials distinct from the original but compatible, it would not be seen from the street the property faces, and the rear wall would be set forward so as to retain the original roofline of the row. A couple of minor technical issues were resolved by staff. The project was placed on the consent calendar and approved without discussion by HPRB.

Applying similar logic, HPRB approved a rooftop addition at **3143 19th** (October 2018) which included an addition in the rear side court. Among other requirements, the Board directed that the floor framing be retained within the main block of the house, that the front door and windows be retained and repaired instead of being replaced, and that there be no alley vehicular gate or door with prominent tracks or housing.

The Board approved demolition of the rear wall and two-story porch at **1654 Irving** (October 2018) and construction of a two-story addition ending in a narrower two-story screened porch. The staff report cited a number of technical issues and recommended that the project be approved subject to nine conditions, including specific requirements for window and door replacements, repointing, placement of meters under the front porch, and no roll-up vehicular door(s).

At the same time, it recommended against issuance of a public space permit or a building permit for the paving of public space in the front yard of **3150 17th** (October 2018) to be used as a parking pad. The homeowner had started to lay brick pavers over “grass pavers” where they had removed a cement pad a few years earlier and was issued a “stop work order” for lack of a permit. He argued that the new paving was merely a continuation of the prior use and should thus be “grandfathered.” Exchanges with HPO prior to the hearing and the staff report itself disputed that interpretation.. The report explained prior HPO consideration of the issue and cited design guidelines against adding a new driveway or parking area where it could be seen from a public right-of-way. It noted that “while the Board has no authority to enforce against people putting cars in their yards, it does have a say in the permitting of paving for that purpose, on public or private space.” HMP testified as to the difficulties it had experienced in getting DDOT to enforce against parking on public space and also that it had urged this homeowner to “regreen” the area as part of its earlier construction project. The ANC recommended approval of the requested permit. HPO staff addressed each of the ANC’s arguments. The Board acknowledged the ANC resolution but did not find its arguments persuasive as they did not address the alteration’s compatibility with the character of the historic district.

Exterior renovations to properties in Mount Pleasant close to Rock Creek Park are subject to review by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) under the 1910 Shipstead-Luce Act, in addition to HPO/HPRB. While CFA’s mandate does not include historic preservation, CFA refers all cases involving historic properties to HPO and incorporates their comments in its review. In 2018, CFA considered 16 cases from Mount Pleasant, including multiple cases for some addresses. In only one case was HMP notified of a pending CFA review. We advised the architect to work with HPO, as he would for any other property in Mount Pleasant. Five of the cases that went to CFA involved replacement windows, three the installation of solar panels. Based on the description given on the CFA website, the most significant alterations were probably at 2009 Park, which built a new garage, modified its front areaway and also installed solar panels.

Smaller projects have continued to arise, some without building permits posted. While repairs involving replacement of original materials in kind generally do not require permits, larger projects – as well as the replacement of windows or exterior doors in historic districts – do, and the permits must be displayed where they are visible from the street. The D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) issues all building permits. The Historic Preservation Office (HPO) in the Office of Planning must clear on all permits in historic districts. Work in public space, such as excavations in front yards that are part of the right of way for our streets, requires a permit from the District Department of Transportation (DDOT). If you are concerned about work proceeding without the proper permits, you may report it to Toni Cherry, chief inspector for HPO (toni.cherry@dc.gov), the DCRA illegal construction hotline at 442-STOP (7867), or the Mayor’s call center (311). We try to answer all questions from neighbors about possible illegal construction but cannot always do so in a timely manner. The best time to stop such activity is when it is in process.

Zoning

As noted in last year's report, on September 8, 2017, the owners of **1665 Harvard** applied to the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) for both special exception and variance relief to build a two-story single-family dwelling on the separate alley lot they owned behind 1701 Harvard (BZA Case No. 19629). A public walkway separates the alley lot from the lot on which 1665 Harvard stands. In 2008, they had sought permission to build a one-story garage on the alley lot. HPRB approved a design but BZA denied the necessary area variance (Case No. 17833). With new zoning regulations in 2016 encouraging "accessory" dwellings, they decided to try again – this time increasing their bid to a two-story structure with parking on the lower level. The new owners of 1701 Harvard were surprised by this development and naturally opposed it, as did other neighbors. HMP shared records of the 2008 case and its own prior research on the property with the new owners and encouraged them to hire an experienced zoning lawyer, which they did. HMP contributed to the legal fees, as did neighbors. Several neighbors requested party status to oppose the application; others filed letters with the BZA, most in opposition. A resolution from ANC1D advised the BZA to deny the zoning relief requested.

In 2018, the applicants filed new plans with BZA, eliminating the second story, which required neighbors and the ANC to review the new proposal and, in most cases, renew their opposition. A hearing was held February 21 but did not proceed to a conclusion, as counsel for the applicants asked for permission to consult her clients in Africa before making her rebuttal statement. The hearing left unanswered several historical questions raised by BZA members. As a result, HMP filed a written submission on March 15 addressing three issues: why there are no garages behind the 1700 block of Harvard Street and should not be, the history of the alley lot, and the history of the 2016 zoning regulations showing that no change was intended on the critical issue of whether a record lot was needed to obtain a building permit. It still is – and this alley lot was only a tax lot, that is, one recorded for the sole purpose of assessing and collecting real estate taxes. When the hearing resumed April 17, the discussion ended by asking OP to clarify whether any work whatsoever could be legally permitted on a tax lot. OP had to consult DCRA and provided the answer the following month – yes, general maintenance. The panel then voted to deny the zoning relief requested to build a garage. Soon thereafter, the applicants put 1665 Harvard and the alley lot on the market.

The other ongoing BZA case from Mount Pleasant involved construction of a new rowhouse at **1844 Monroe**. As explained in last year's report, in 2016 HPRB had approved construction of a pair of rowhouses at 1842-1844 Monroe without side yards. During the permitting process, the Zoning Administrator (ZA) ruled that, under the 2016 zoning regulations, a side yard was required to the west of the house proposed for 1844. This reflected a change from historic practice in which lot line to lot line development had been allowed. Counsel for the developer consulted with OP and appealed the decision to BZA. We learned that OP would be submitting a text amendment to restore the historic rule allowing lot line to lot line development, which it did on December 1, 2017 (ZC Case No. 17-23).

Over the next few months, counsel for the developer sought extensions of his appeals, expecting them to be mooted by the decision in Case No. 17-23. Neighbors to the west of 1844

Monroe, as well as ANC1D, weighed in against reinstating the historic rule on lot line development and, at the ZC hearing on May 2, 2018, seemed to gain some sympathy for their viewpoint. Nevertheless, the ZC ultimately approved the amendments as submitted by OP, and they took effect February 22, 2019. In the meantime, the developer submitted revised plans providing the five-foot setback from the west lot line required by the ZA. When those plans were approved and the building permit issued, the appeals to BZA were withdrawn. The project is now under construction. Each house will measure 18½ feet wide and not 25 as originally proposed.

Advocacy before DC Council

Each spring, the DC Council convenes oversight and budget hearings for individual agencies of the DC Government. HMP generally provides input to and endorses the testimony of the DC Preservation League (DCPL), which reiterates longstanding pleas of the preservation community for more transparency, accountability, and resources to protect our city's historic building stock. The 2018 statement included a plea that the Council not approve the revised Framework Element for the DC Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan), which the Mayor had forwarded for action without the required period for public comment. There was a lengthy public hearing on March 20, 2018, specifically on the Framework Element, after which Council Chairman Mendelson has indicated that he is likely to remove an entire section that would have dramatically altered the legal standing of the Comprehensive Plan in violation of the Home Rule Act. Many other changes were proposed to undermine the protections for neighborhoods and historic properties in the Comp Plan. Indeed, the outcry against OP's handling of the Comp Plan amendment process was so widespread that the Mayor fired the Director of OP.

DCRA performance remains a matter of controversy at the DC Council. In January 2018, Chairman Mendelson introduced legislation to create a new Department of Buildings and redesignate DCRA as the Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection. At the first of two required hearings on the bill April 19, 2018, the overwhelming majority of witnesses supported splitting up DCRA while recognizing that the core building and permitting functions also required fundamental reform. The second public hearing on the legislation is expected later this year. All Councilmembers are now co-sponsors except Brandon Todd. In the meantime, the Mayor has dismissed the Director of DCRA and tabled a competing proposal to place DCRA under a new deputy mayor for operations and infrastructure.

HMP is watching for opportunities to weigh in with the DC Council on amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and reorganization of DCRA during the coming year. In doing so, it will seek to align its comments with both neighborhood and citywide organizations and advocates, including DCPL and the Committee of 100 on the Federal City. On September 22, 2018, HMP participated in DCPL's first-ever Historic Preservation Community Day at All Souls Unitarian Church. This was an opportunity to reach out to nearby communities to explain what preservation is all about and answer questions about what is and is not actually involved. We hope the event will be repeated in the future.

Annual Meeting

The HMP by-laws require an annual membership meeting to review prior year activities and vote on the proposed slate of Directors and officers for the coming year. For many years, we held those meetings at Stoddard Baptist Home and sought to attract participation with keynote speakers on topics of interest, such as the history of the 42 Streetcar. In the last two years, we have tried other things. In lieu of an oral summary of the annual report at the meeting, followed by its posting on our website, we have begun posting the annual report as soon as it is completed and then held a spring garden party. Annual elections have been conducted on-line. We welcome comments and questions at any time.

Promoting Broader Membership and Involvement

The annual Holiday Party, held on the first Friday in December, has long been our main membership drive. HMP President Fay Armstrong hosted the party in December, as well as the garden party on April 29. As of November 30, 2018, HMP members represented 49 households in the neighborhood.

**Historic Mount Pleasant, Inc.
Profit and Loss Statement**

Fiscal Year 2018 (December 1, 2017 – November 30, 2018)

Income

Memberships and unspecified contributions	3,436.02
Memberships made through PayPal	641.75
Holiday party bar donations	46.00
Interest earned	10.53
Contributions -1665 Harvard BZA Proposal Opposition	4,520.00

Total **\$ 8,654.30**

Expenses

2017 Holiday Party	310.00
Copying, office supplies, zoning project	284.21
PayPal charges	16.82
BZA-25 Biennial Report Filing (2/10/18)	80.00
Garden Party/Membership activity	270.64
Lawyer's fee (FY18 w/Final) - 1665 Harvard BZA Opposition	13,447.55

Total **\$ 14,409.22**

Net Loss **\$ (5,754.92)**

Assets as of 11/30/2018

DGEFCU Acceso Share Draft	2,489.86
DGEFCU Acceso Regular Shares	19,613.72

Total **\$ 22,103.58**

Liabilities & Equity

Total Liabilities	00.00
Equity: Opening Balance as of 12/01/2017	\$ 27,858.50
Net Loss	\$ (5,754.92)

Total **\$ 22,103.58**