



REPORT OF ACTIVITIES
FOR
FISCAL YEAR 2019

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 2019 (December 2018–November 2019), HPRB considered only three cases from Mount Pleasant, the lowest number in recent memory. It approved an attic addition and deck, garage demolition to accommodate a patio, and a second floor addition to a garage. 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.

At **1835 Irving** (March 2019), where an attic addition and roof deck were proposed, the Board approved the concept design and delegated final approval to staff subject to the condition “that no part of the addition or its appurtenances be visible from Irving Street over the house’s roof ridge.” As an end unit, any rooftop addition would be prominently exposed to view from Irving Street. Possible changes included moving or eliminating skylights, pulling the roofdeck forward or reconstructing the rear-porch roof to incorporate the deck and eliminate any rear dormers.

At **1853 Irving** (March 2019), the owner initially proposed a deck on the garage roof but then decided to raze the garage and install a brick patio, wood fence and gates. The application was placed on the consent calendar, i.e., it was approved by the Board without discussion; but the staff report raised some interesting points about garage razes generally. Garages built in Mount Pleasant during the historic district's "period of significance" (1851-1949) qualify as "contributing structures" without having been individually assessed or listed. In prior cases, the HPRB "has effectively classed them as secondary in historic significance – lesser than the neighborhood's primary buildings such as houses, apartment buildings, and the carriage houses that are the more important accessory buildings. The Board has therefore treated these as subject to demolition. This suggests a future problem of losing so many garages that the scarcity of those remaining calls for a re-evaluation of their significance and a reversal of this position."

The large duplex at **1656-1658 Park** (March and July 2019) had been converted to apartments before 1960. The new owner proposed to consolidate the lots to enable addition of a second story on the detached garage and its conversion into another unit, bringing the total number of units to 13. (Under lot occupancy rules, consolidation of lots allowed for the absence of a garage behind 1656 to permit expansion behind 1658.) The proposed addition posed a number of problems (awkward cantilevered design, drainage and visibility), and the review revealed recent unpermitted work (front yard paving, roof replacement). A new design was developed for the garage, with the new upper level set back from the rear so as not to be visible from the street. After discussion with HPO staff and HMP about the permit conditions to limit front yard paving and install real slate on the front mansard, the applicant complied. Of note, the twelve identical houses at 1644-1662 Park Road are not only contributing structures within the Mount Pleasant Historic District but were collectively designated a historic landmark in 1984 and are separately listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The July staff report includes a detailed discussion of public space rules and why front yards may not be paved over.

Last year, we reported on the case of **1627 Monroe**, where the Board denied an application after-the-fact to widen the front window opening on the first floor and install new double-ganged windows in place of the original single window. The decision was appealed to the Mayor's Agent for Historic Preservation, who upheld the denial on July 26, 2019. The opinion noted that the staff report presented the HPRB with a question of judgment, that the hearing transcript showed that its members had carefully considered the issue, and that the Mayor's Agent generally defers to the expertise of the HPRB on questions of style and compatibility of alterations to contributing buildings. Thus far, the unpermitted work has not been reversed as required.

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 2019, CFA considered 15 projects from Mount Pleasant, including 1 rooftop addition, 4 window replacements, 5 rooftop solar arrays, 3 parking pads and fences (1853 Irving among them), and 2 new front basement entrances. CFA denied the application to install a steel overhead door and six-foot solid privacy fence at the rear of 3209 Adams Mill Road, saying it would be inappropriate to the character for the street frontage of Walbridge Place. As a result,

both 3207 and 3209 Adams Mill Road now have open 42-inch fences on Walbridge Place. In only one CFA case was HMP consulted, when an architect ran into unusual delays and seemingly contradictory reviews.

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.

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 2019 statement called out, once again, continuing problems in the enforcement of building permits and the current reliance on complaints from neighbors to initiate enforcement actions that then cannot be tracked to any particular outcome within the bureaucracy. DCPL also sought additional funding for preservation programs, including the Historic Homeowners Grant Program, and argued for preservation to have priority within the Mayor’s programs given the many ways in which it contributes to the economic health of the District. The statement took issue with the charge that preservation was to blame for the lack of affordable housing, saying that market forces were the primary cause and giving examples of where historic districts and landmarked properties are providing much-needed new housing.

Last fall, the Council approved a significantly revised Framework Element for the DC Comprehensive Plan. In response to widespread concerns about changes proposed by the Office of Planning (OP), Council Chair Mendelson took the unusual step of having someone outside OP rewrite it. The other chapters were subsequently released and deadlines for comments were extended into 2020. This will be a major topic for debate later this year, along with the proposal to create a new Department of Buildings and redesignate remaining functions at DCRA as the Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection. OP and DCRA both have new directors, reflecting widespread criticism of both agencies.

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.

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 several 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. We thank David Alfuth and Raymond DiPhillips for hosting the party in December. As of November 30, 2019, HMP members represented 43 households in the neighborhood.

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

Fiscal Year 2019 (December 1, 2018 – November 30, 2019)

Income

Memberships and unspecified contributions	1,451.35
Memberships made through PayPal	1,629.21
Interest earned	10.50

Total **\$ 3,091.06**

Expenses

2018 Holiday Party	1,023.26
PayPal charges	42.22
Contribution: Rosemount Center (2019 HMP Annual Meeting)	300.00

Total **\$ 1,365.48**

Net Gain **\$ 1,725.58**

Assets as of 11/30/2019

DGEFCU Acceso Share Draft	2,795.81
DGEFCU Acceso Regular Shares	21,033.35

Total **\$ 23,829.16**

Liabilities & Equity

Total Liabilities	00.00
Equity: Opening Balance as of 12/01/2018	\$ 22,103.58
Net Gain	\$ 1,725.58

Total **\$ 23,829.16**