



Catherine E. Pugh
Mayor

COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

Tom Liebel, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

January 9, 2018

REQUEST: Demolition Hearing One – Determination of Architectural Significance

ADDRESS: 400 Park Avenue (City-Owned Property)

RECOMMENDATION: Determination that 400 Park Avenue does not contribute to the historic district.

STAFF: Stacy Montgomery

APPLICANT: Park Avenue Partners, LLC

OWNERS: Mayor and City Council of Baltimore

SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

Market Center and Proposed Howard Street Historic Districts: The Market Center National Register historic district is a nearly 24-block area that was home to Baltimore's retail activity from the beginning of the 19th century. The district encompasses a wide variety of architecture from modest 19th century rowhouses to grand department store palaces, as well as banks, theaters and restaurants. The blocks encompassing the proposed demolition, which are part of the proposed Howard Street (Westside) local historic district, include a cohesive group of modestly scaled commercial structures at the northern end of Baltimore's historic retail district.

Site Conditions/Architectural Description:

400 Park Avenue is a 2-story reinforced concrete parking structure that was initially constructed in 1950. The structure features a simple chevron design along the side of the parking deck. The deck is supported by capped concrete piers. A small enclosed office composed of concrete block featuring double-hung metal windows is located in the southwest corner of Mulberry and Park Avenue. A ramp to the upper story is located along the back of the deck, off of Tyson Street. The upper story of the deck is supported by round columns.

BACKGROUND

- These properties are owned by the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and were offered in an RFP for redevelopment by the Baltimore Development Corporation.
- These properties are included within the boundaries of the Howard Street Commercial local historic district, which CHAP reviewed for its second designation hearing on July 11, 2017.

PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

The applicant proposes to demolish 400 Park Avenue to support development of the surrounding site.

Staff applied Section 3.6 Demolition Procedures of the *Baltimore City Historic Preservation Rules and Regulations*, specifically “Demolition Hearing One—Determination of Architectural Significance.”

3.6 DEMOLITION HEARING ONE-DETERMINATION OF ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The first step in the demolition review process is a public hearing to determine if the building contributes to a local historic district or continues to meet standards for designation as a local landmark. At this hearing staff shall present the following:

1. The historical and/or architectural significance of the property;
2. The history of all structures on the property including the approximate dates of additions and significant alterations;
3. A determination of the historical and/or architectural significance of a structure’s additions, significant alterations, or ancillary buildings; and
4. Application of criteria for designation (see 2.1) to the structure in question.

A determination regarding the significance of the structure will be made prior to considering details of the demolition and hardship application, and any projects for new construction on the site. Doing so allows the Commission to determine the importance of the structure solely upon architectural and historical criteria. If a structure does not meet the criteria or contribute to the historic character of a local district, then an Authorization to Proceed for demolition shall be issued.

History/Architectural Significance—History of Structures

The two story parking deck at the corner of Park Avenue and Mulberry Street was constructed in 1950 as a part of a Baltimore City initiative to increase the amount of off-street parking. In the 1940s the Off-Street Parking Commission was formed to identify potential locations for parking garages and determine whether they should be acquired and developed by the City or private entities. The garage at Park and Mulberry was the first facility approved by the Commission. The garage replaced eleven lots that were used as surface parking. A second level of the deck was constructed in 1950, costing the City \$100,000.ⁱ The new parking deck was set to accommodate about 300 cars in one day. The City shared the costs with the private operator, Epps Parking Company, with the plan that Epps Parking Company would pay back the City’s investment over 20 years and would then own the lot outright.ⁱⁱ The City acquired the property again in 2009.

The lot was historically home to a row of 2-4 story rowhouses with commercial uses on the first stories. Over time, individual buildings were demolished and the vacant lots were used for parking. The last building to be demolished on the site was 202 West Mulberry Street, which

occurred in the late 1940s. The only remaining vestige of the historic appearance of the street is the building at 214 West Mulberry Street, the former Martick's building.

2.2 CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATING DISTRICTS AND LANDMARKS

...[T]he Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation will apply the following criteria in relation to the procedures for historic district and landmark designation.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

The quality of significance in Baltimore history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, public interiors, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

1. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history; or
2. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in Baltimore's past; or
3. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
4. That have yielded or may be likely to yield information important in Baltimore prehistory or history.

Present Conditions and Application of Criteria for Designation

The parking deck is currently unused and in deteriorating condition. The asphalt on the 1st story is largely deteriorated; there is loose surface concrete and several cracks in the structure. Water pooling and water infiltration are also evident.

The parking deck does not meet the criteria for evaluation for designation. It is listed as a non-contributing structure in the National Register nomination form for the Market Center historic district. The parking deck was constructed in 1950 on a lot that once held modestly scaled 19th century commercial buildings similar to others in the district. This parking structure is one of a number of parking structures that were built in the commercial district in the 1940s and 1950s.

Furthermore, parking structures such as this contributed to the deterioration of commercial downtowns across the country. In their book *Lots of Parking: Land Use in a Car Culture*, authors John Jakle and Keith Sculle argue that "Unlike other kinds of open space in cities, parking lots did not, by in large, help to weave together an overarching sense of place. Quite to the contrary, they destroyed the traditional fabric of place."ⁱⁱⁱ The parking deck detracts from, rather than contributes to, the historic and architectural significance of the district.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

There is no neighborhood architectural review committee here. Notice has been sent to Baltimore Heritage, Inc., Preservation Maryland, AIA Baltimore, the Baltimore National Heritage Area and the Market Center Merchants Association.

ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION

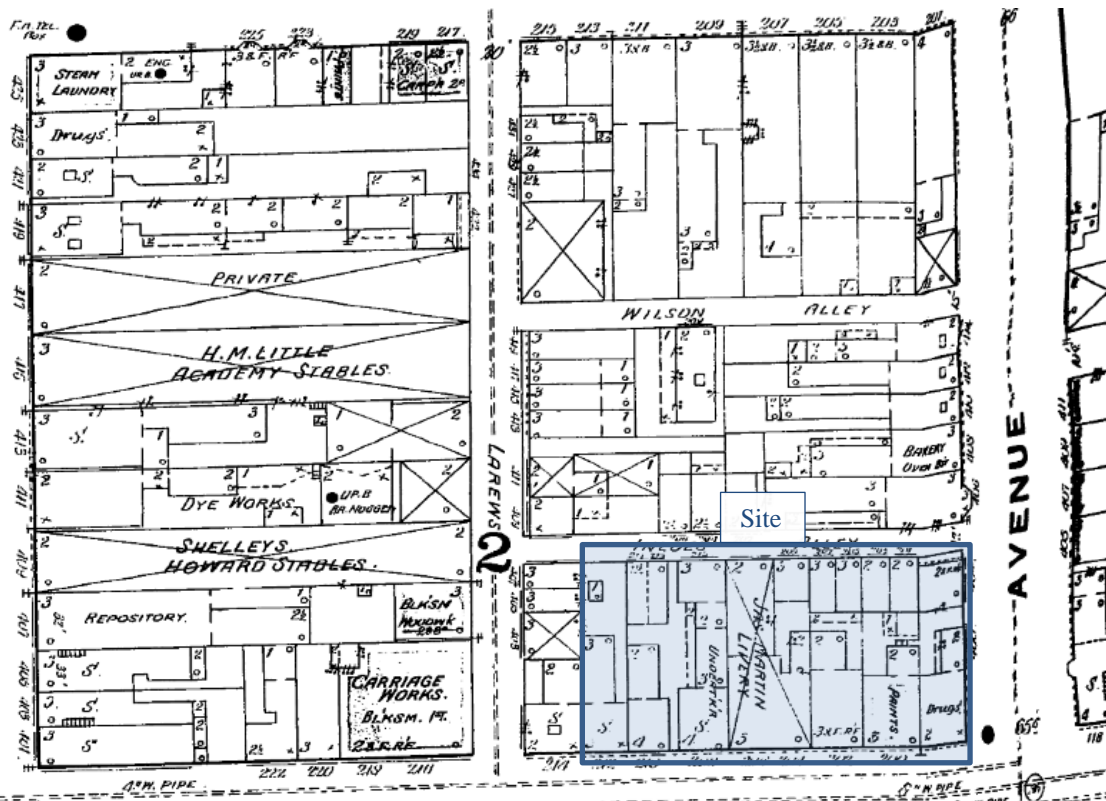
Staff finds that the parking structure was built in 1950 to accommodate automobile parking in the commercial district. Based upon the history and condition of the structure, staff finds that the parking deck does not meet the criteria for designation.

Staff recommends a determination that the structure at 400 Park Avenue is non-contributing. If the commission approves the finding that 400 Park Avenue is non-contributing, the applicant can be granted approval to demolish this structure.

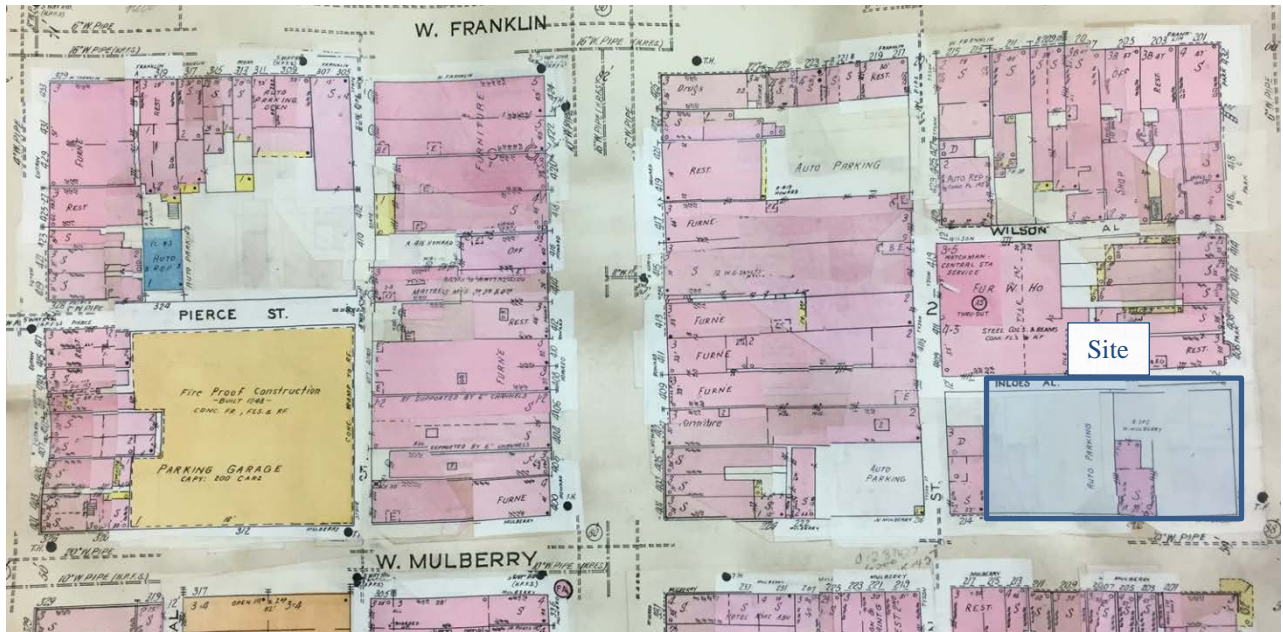
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. S. M. L.", likely representing Eric Holcomb.

Eric Holcomb
Director

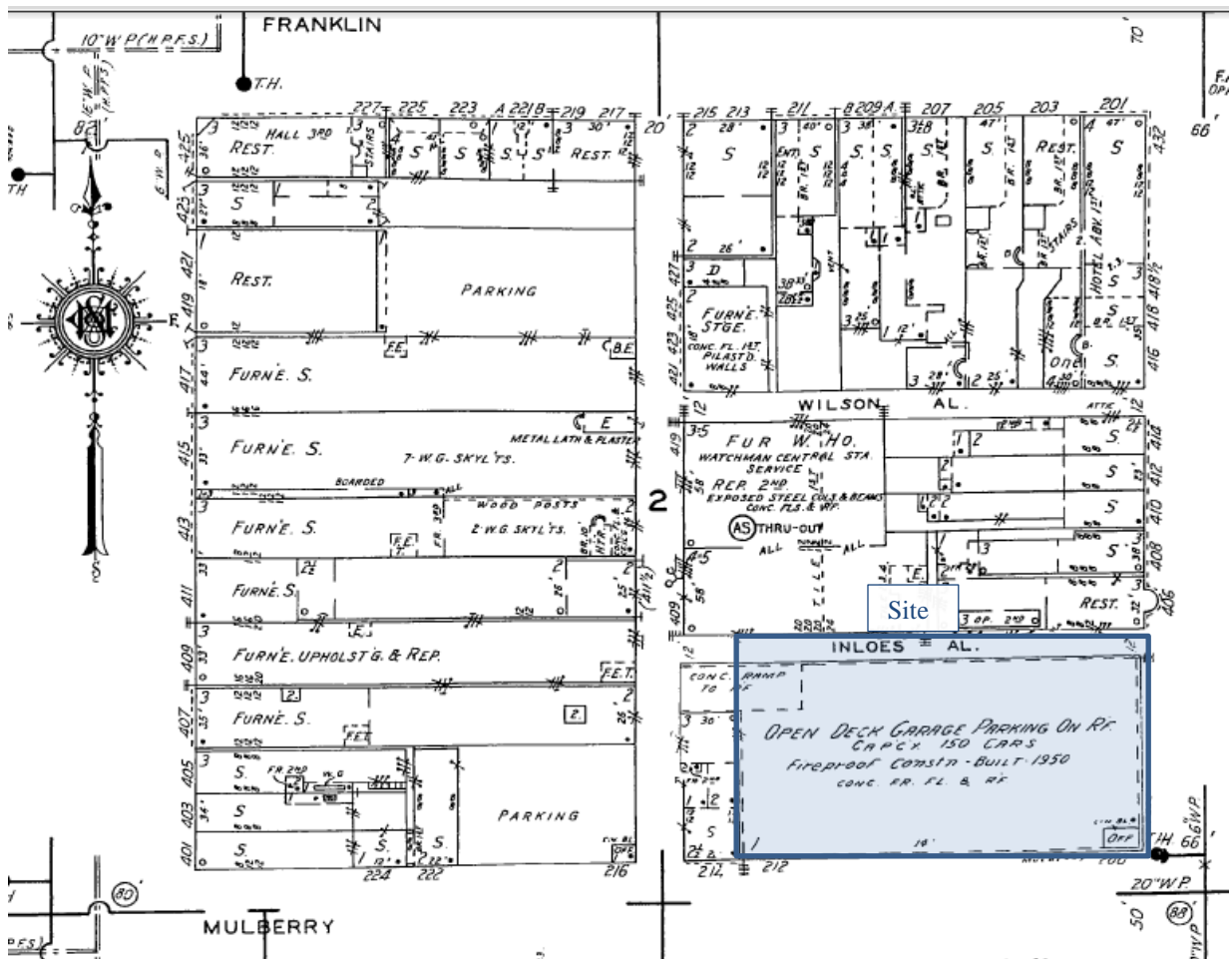
MAP AND IMAGES



1890 Sanborn Map showing the row of buildings that once occupied the site.



1949 Sanborn Map showing two surface lots and one remaining building on the site.



1951 Sanborn Map showing constructed parking deck.



Parking Deck from the corner of Park Avenue and West Mulberry Street



Parking Deck from West Mulberry Street



Parking Deck from Park Avenue



Ramp from Wilson Alley showing Inloes Alley



The corner of West Mulberry Street and Wilson Alley showing the remaining historic rowhouse and the parking garage.

ⁱ “Second Parking Facility Up Today.” Baltimore Sun: June 9, 1949 and “Parking Deal Set for Today: Lot Involved is at Mulberry Street and Park Avenue.” Baltimore Sun: May 5, 1949.

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ⁱⁱⁱ Jakle, John A. and Sculle, Keith A.. Lots of Parking: Land Use in a Car Culture. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004. (Pg. 96)