



Catherine E. Pugh
Mayor

**COMMISSION FOR
HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL
PRESERVATION**

Tom Liebel, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

August 14, 2018

REQUEST: Demolition Hearing One – Determination of Architectural Significance:
Demolition of Rear Portions of Buildings Only, Retain and Preserve Front Portions

ADDRESS: 406-414 Park Avenue (Howard Street Commercial Historic District)

RECOMMENDATION: Determination that the rear portions of the buildings at 406-414 Park Avenue do 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 Howard Street Commercial 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 Howard Street Commercial 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:

406-414 Park Avenue is a group of 2 ½ and 3-story nineteenth century rowhouses with commercial storefronts on the 1st stories. The building at 406 Park Avenue is a three-story brick rowhouse with a three-story brick bay topped with an elaborate brick and wood cornice. The historic storefront has been altered as has the entry. The building at 408 Park Avenue is a three-story, three-bay Italianate rowhouse with an ornate metal storefront with large glass windows. 410-414 Park Avenue consists of a group of three two-and-a-half story Greek Revival rowhouses with low-pitched gable roofs and gable dormers. Recessed brick panels run below the simple wood cornices. These buildings date to the 1830s, with storefronts that were added in the late 19th or early 20th century. A mural was added to the north elevation of the property a few years ago to provide some curb appeal and minimize the condition of the rear addition.

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.
- In January of 2018, the Commission determined that the parking deck, south of these properties, did not contribute to the historic district and could be demolished. The lot created by this demolition will be a part of a larger project on this parcel, which will also include the rowhouses.

PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

The applicant proposes to retain and rehab the front portions of the buildings at 406-414 Park Avenue and to demolish the rear portions of the building.

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 buildings on the 400 block of Park Avenue are some of the earliest in the area. The buildings were built as residential, and converted to small retail and offices following a fire on Clay Street in 1873 when businesses were forced to relocate. The mid-19th century rowhouses along Park Avenue housed bakers, seamstresses and garment menders on the first and second stories and were residential on the upper stories. These buildings are some of the few remaining vestiges of Baltimore’s “China Town,” most notably, the building at 406 Park Avenue, which was home to the China Inn and China Doll restaurants since the 1940s.

The buildings at 406-408 Park Avenue are good examples of Italianate rowhouses, with bracketed cornices and brick detailing at the cornice and between the floors at 406 Park Avenue. The buildings at 410-414 Park Avenue are 2 ½ story gable rowhouses with recessed brick panels over the 2nd story windows. A variety of storefronts, some of which are historic are present on the 1st story facades. The storefront at 408 Park Avenue is the most intact of the storefronts with square fluted columns and a decorative cornice. The buildings all feature rear ells or additions that are simple in design.

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 front portions of the buildings on this block are in deteriorated condition but retain a high level of architectural integrity. The rear additions to the buildings are in more significantly deteriorated condition and do not retain a high level of architectural integrity. The rear additions of 408-412 Park Avenue are relatively hard to see from the street. The roof of the rear steeply pitched, 2-story addition of 412 Park Avenue has also significantly collapsed, as has a portion of the rear wall of the front portion of the building. The roof of 410 Park Avenue is also partially collapsed and has been poorly reinforced. The rear addition at 414 Park Avenue is partially collapsed and was previously damaged by a fire. The interiors of the additions have suffered due to the collapsed roof and little to no historic material exists on the interior. The rear additions at 406 and 408 Park Avenue are in the best condition; however, the addition at 408 Park Avenue is not visible from the street. The addition at 406 Park Avenue is 3 stories with an open porch on the south elevation. The roof of the building is not failing; however, the building has experienced minor alterations and repairs over time that have left little architectural integrity.

Due to the appearance and condition of the rear additions, the buildings lack integrity and do not meet any of the criteria for evaluation. As such, the additions no longer contribute to the historic character of the buildings or the historic district.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

There is no neighborhood architectural review committee here. Notice has been sent to Baltimore Heritage, Inc., the Market Center Merchants Association, the Mount Vernon Belvedere Association, the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore, and the UniverCity Partnership. Baltimore Heritage responded that they do not object to the demolition, but want to ensure that the front portions of the buildings are properly stabilized prior to the demolition so they do not fall over during the demolition. The UniverCity Partnership has no comment.

ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION

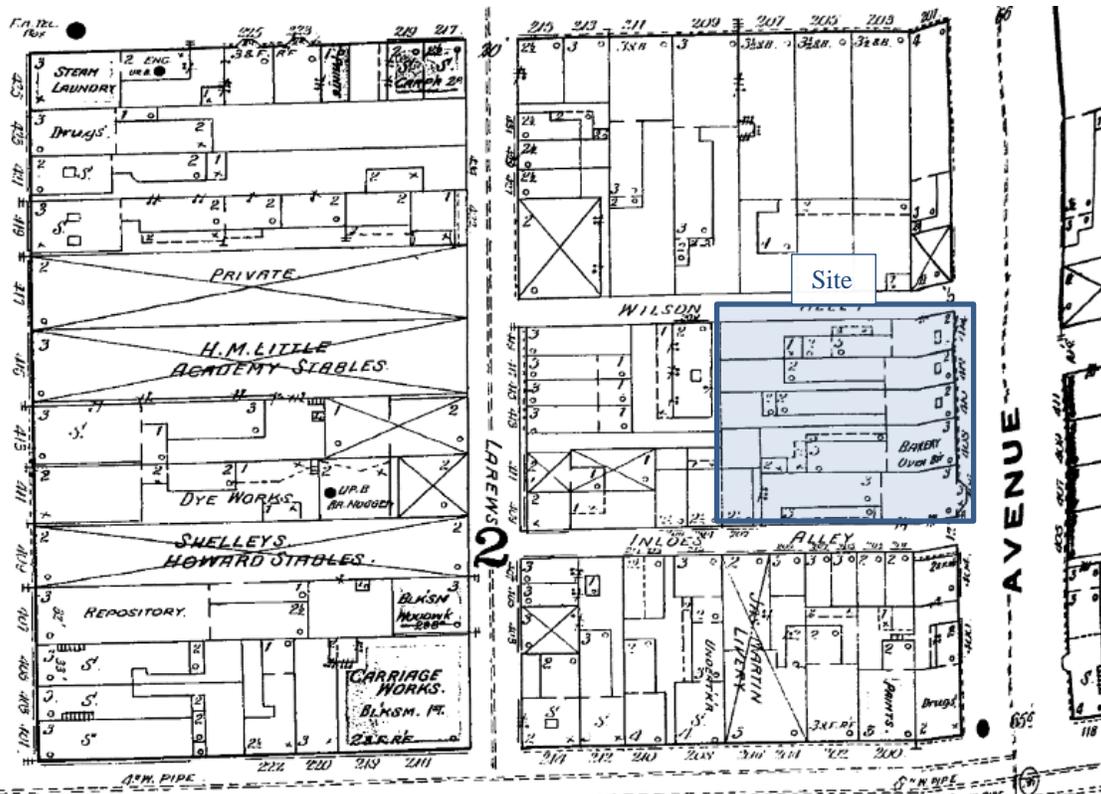
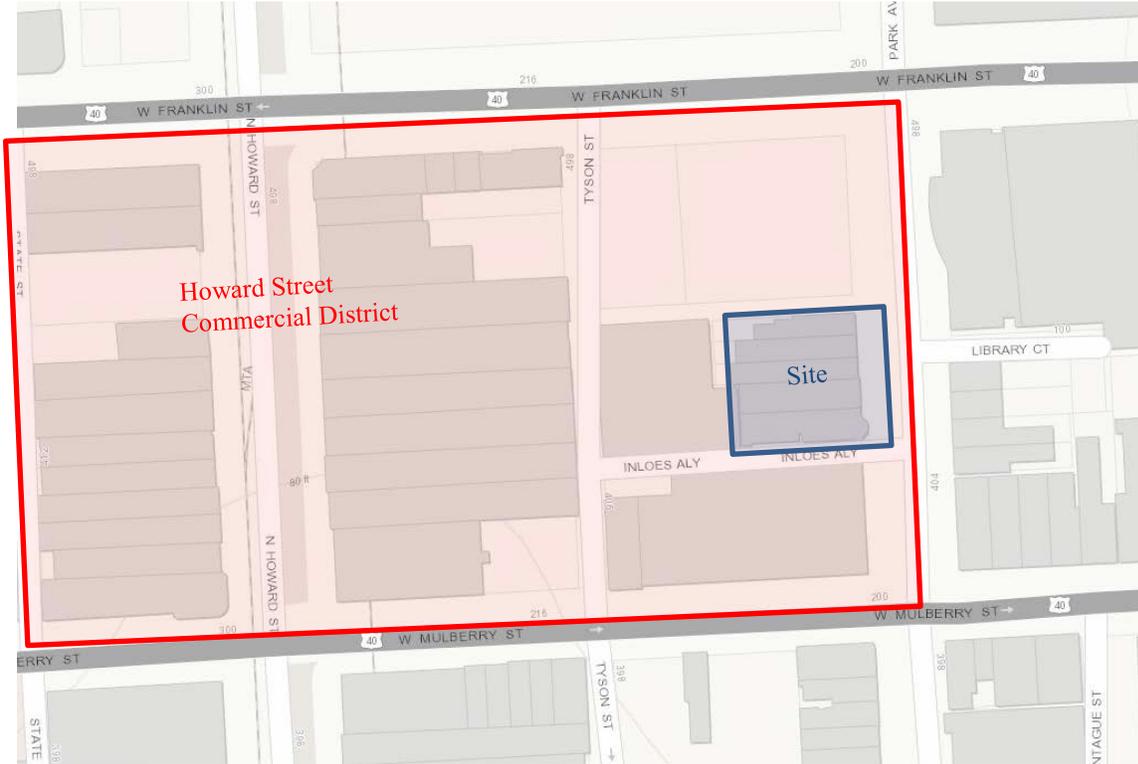
Staff finds that the rear additions of the buildings at 406-414 Park Avenue lack integrity and do not meet the criteria for designation.

Staff recommends a determination that the rear additions of 406-414 Park Avenue are non-contributing. If the commission approves the finding that the rear additions of 406-414 Park Avenue are non-contributing, the applicant can be granted approval to demolish these rear additions.

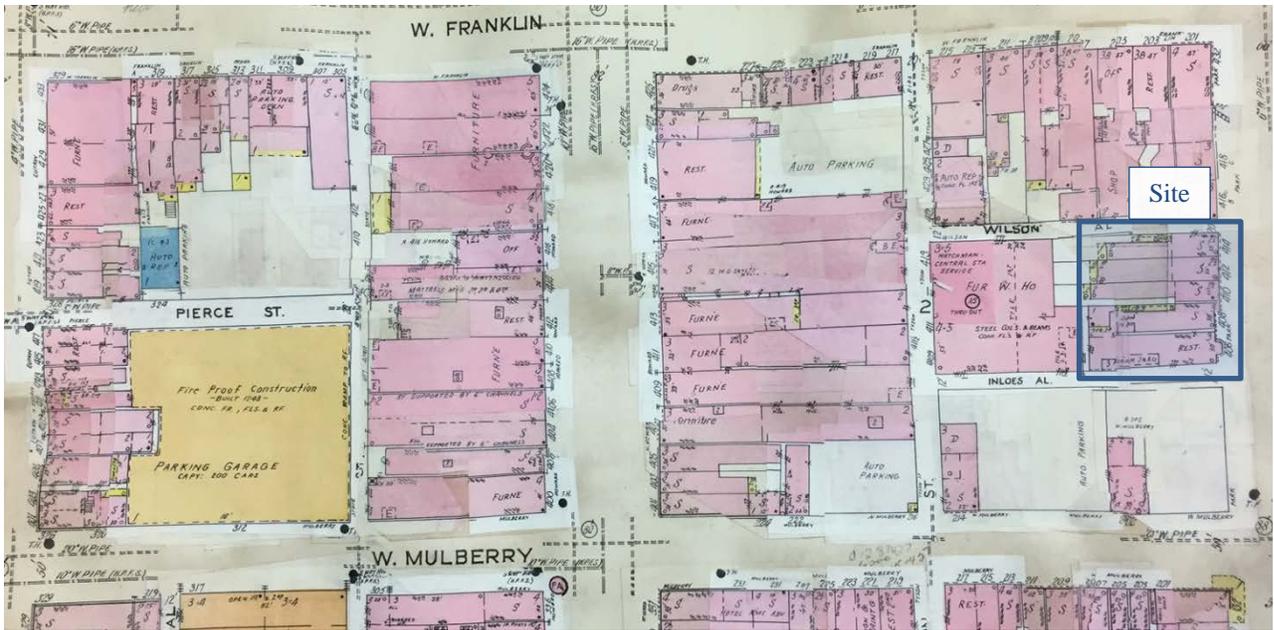


Eric Holcomb
Director

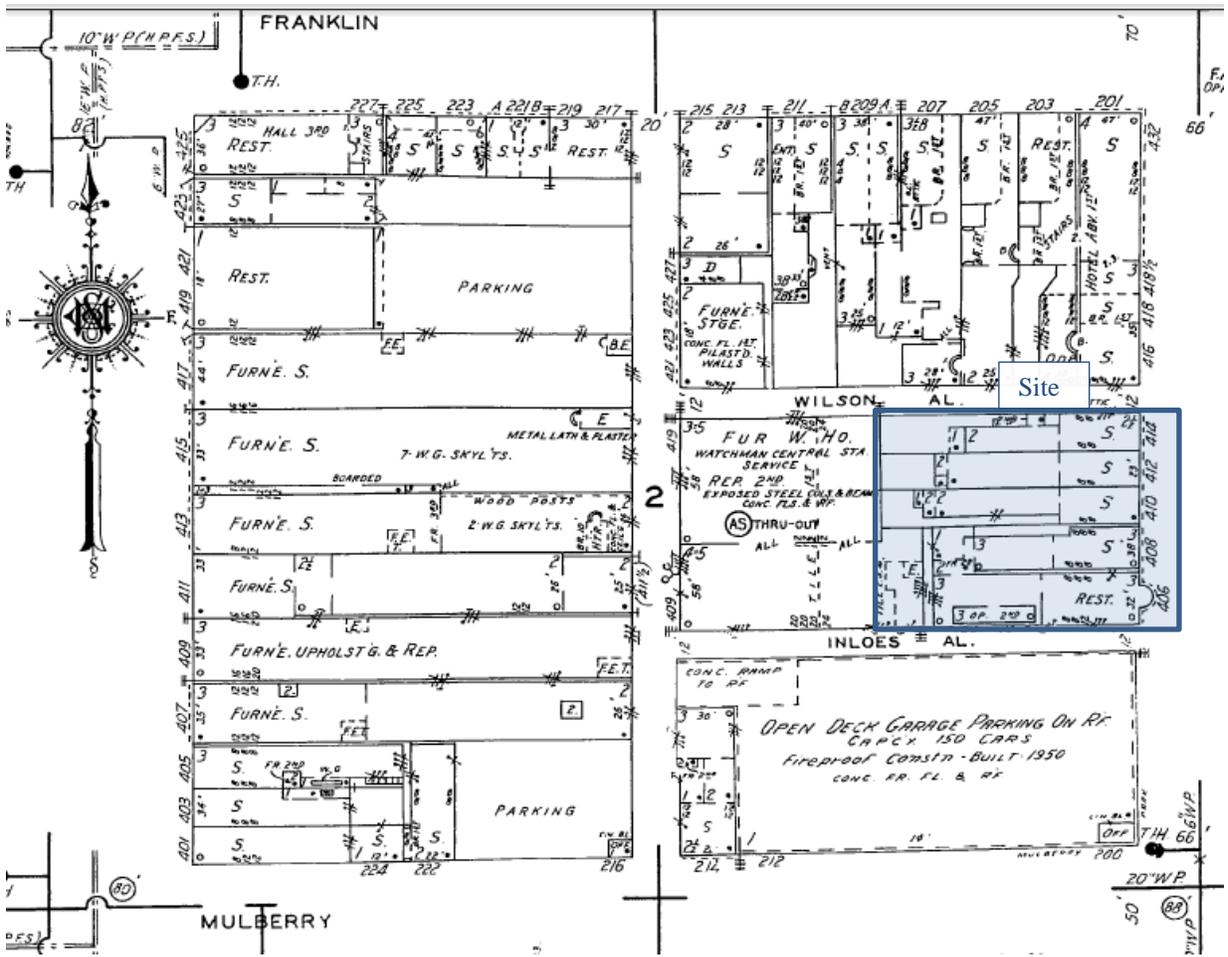
MAP AND IMAGES



1890 Sanborn Map



1949 Sanborn Map



1951 Sanborn Map



406-414 Park Avenue from South



406-414 Park Avenue from North



Rear Additions to 414 and 412 Park Avenue from the North



Rear Additions to 414 and 412 Park Avenue from the North



Rear addition to 406 Park Avenue



Rear addition to 406 Park Avenue