



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

Tom Liebel, Chairman

DRAFT STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer
Director

July 13, 2021

REQUEST: Concept Review: Construct a three-story residence with a garage front

ADDRESS: 1925-1927 Aliceanna Street (Fells Point Historic District)

RECOMMENDATION: Approve height, massing, and scale of the proposal. Disapprove the front-loading garage. The architectural details should be refined to reflect more contemporary design or more contemporary materials so that the new building can be distinguished from historic buildings. Final details to be considered by full CHAP Commission.

STAFF: Lauren Schiszik

PETITIONER(S): Adam Carballo

SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

Fells Point Historic District: Fells Point is significant as one of the original three settlements that merged to create the earliest form of Baltimore City. The area is directly linked to early maritime trade, an essential early force in Baltimore's growth and development. In addition to the significance of Fells Point in the eighteenth century, the community has continued to play an important role in Baltimore history as a constantly growing and changing urban place. Many of the earliest extant buildings were expanded in the Victorian era creating a unique blend of pre-Revolutionary War and post-Civil War architectural styles and characteristics. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century's Fells Point has been a diverse neighborhood composed of many ethnic groups each influencing the growth and development of the area.

Site Conditions/Architectural Description: The property is composed of two consolidated lots located on the south side of the 1900 block of Aliceanna Street, west of the intersection with Washington Street (*Map 1, Image 1-2*). The lot is comprised of a three story, irregular two bay Italianate brick rowhouse adjacent to a non-contributing one-story shed. The property does not have access to a rear alley. The property dates to the late 19th century.

BACKGROUND

- The property was reviewed by the Commission at the June 2021 Hearing as two separate items because the property was previously two separate lots. The Commission approved the demolition of the façade and party wall at 1925 Aliceanna St. because the property was so highly altered that it no longer contributes to the district. The Commission also approved the demolition of the one-story shed at 1927 Aliceanna St. because it is non-contributing.
- 1925 and 1927 Aliceanna Street were consolidated into one lot on June 17, 2021

- The application for a curb cut was denied in May 2021 by Baltimore City DOT because the proposal did not meet the curb cut policy requirements. The applicant has submitted a curb cut appeal.

PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

The applicant proposes to construct a five-bay wide, three-story tall residence with a garage front, and a roof deck that spans the entire width of the property and is set back from the façade by eight feet.

CHAP staff applied the Baltimore City Design Guidelines *Chapter 1: Design Guidelines for Building Exteriors, Chapter 2: Design Guidelines for Additions, New Construction, and Non-Contributing Buildings, and Chapter 4: Design Guidelines for Historic Landscapes.*

1.8.10 ROOF DECKS

- Locate roof decks to minimize visibility; for example, new decks may be appropriate at the rear of the roof in some instances and at the center of the roof in others.
- Use compatible materials, such as wood and metal, to construct roof decks.
- Minimize the appearance of railings, balusters and decking as much as possible.
- Keep roof decks simple in design. Use balusters and rails that are complementary to the style of the building.
- Provide access to roof decks from the rear of the property whenever possible. In general, do not construct rooftop additions to access roof decks. Instead use exterior stairs at the rear elevation or within the building.
- In most cases, do not install pergolas or other overhead permanent structures on roof decks.

The proposed roof deck is set back eight feet from the façade of the property, and spans the full width of the property. Because the east elevation abuts an unbuilt lot, the roof deck will be visible from the street. It is advisable that the applicant submit details about the roof deck materials and the visibility of the roof deck as part of the final materials submission package.

2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design

- Identify the character-defining features of the surrounding historic buildings and streetscape. Design new buildings to visually relate to the historic environment. Respect the established design precedent in the immediate area but do not imitate existing buildings.
- Contemporary architectural design that reflects its current time, place, use, and culture is accepted, provided that the design is compatible with the character of the historic district.
- Radically contrasting building designs are discouraged within local historic districts.
- New buildings that are similar to existing historic buildings in materials, form, massing, and architectural features are accepted as long as the new buildings can be distinguished from historic buildings.

- Avoid replicating historic styles, which diminishes the integrity of the historic district and confuses old and new.

The project identifies the character-defining features of the surrounding historic buildings and the proposal is designed to visually relate to the historic environment. The design as currently proposed is very similar to existing historic buildings in general materials, form, fenestration, and features including the arched window lintels. It is advisable that the final design and materials allow for the building to be distinguished from historic buildings.

2.2 Site Design

- Retain established property line patterns, street and alley widths, setbacks, primary and secondary building orientation, and landscape elements.
- Incorporate character-defining site design features of the historic district into the designs of new construction projects.
- In areas with varied setbacks, the setback for new construction should be within ten percent (10%) of those of neighboring buildings. Variations to these setback guidelines may be warranted in some cases, but decisions should be carefully considered with respect to their impact on the overall streetscape.
- The spaces between buildings help define the historic character of the neighborhood. Design new construction to follow the existing pattern of building widths and spacing between buildings.
- Primary buildings should have a similar orientation and relationship to the street as the existing buildings. Primary entrances and facades should be located, oriented, and sequenced to be consistent with the pattern of entrances and facades in the neighborhood.
- Locate and orient secondary structures, such as garages, sheds, or rear buildings, in a similar manner as existing secondary structures.
- New construction projects should reinforce existing patterns of open space and enclosure created by existing vehicular and pedestrian circulation routes, fences, walls, yards, courtyards, gardens, and landscaping.

The proposed design retains established property line patterns, set-backs, primary building orientation and this design overall meets these guidelines.

2.3 Scale and Form

- The scale and form of new buildings must be compatible with the height and depth of surrounding buildings. Where there is variation of building height within the immediate neighborhood, the new building should generally relate to the predominant pattern.
- New buildings must complement the massing of surrounding buildings, including the proportion of solid surfaces (walls) to voids (window and door openings.) Respect the characteristic rhythm (fenestration, bays, rooflines, etc.) of existing buildings.
- Design the new building to be proportional to surrounding buildings. Consider important building proportions such as floor-to-floor heights, the size and placement of windows and doors, the scale of articulated elements such as porches, overhanging cornices, and bay windows.

- Floor-to-floor heights in new construction should be within ten percent (10%) of the floor-to-floor heights of adjacent historic buildings.
- Design rooflines to be compatible with those found on surrounding buildings.

The scale and form of this design is compatible with the height and depth of the surrounding buildings, complements the massing of the surrounding buildings, and characteristic rhythm of existing buildings, and is proportional to surrounding buildings in terms of floor-to-floor heights and rooflines.

2.4.3 Garages

- Design and place garage entrances and doors to be compatible with surrounding buildings.
- Do not place garage entrances on front facades where there is no historic precedent.

There is no historic precedent for a front-loading garage on this property, and minimal historic precedent for front-loading garages on Aliceanna Street, which is a primary street in the neighborhood. The front-loading garage does not meet this design guideline.

The submission includes examples of garage-front buildings on the adjacent blocks: 1827 Aliceanna Street, 1902 Aliceanna Street, 1914 Aliceanna Street, and 1922 Aliceanna Street. 1902 and 1914 Aliceanna Street originally did not have front-loading garages on the first floor; these were later alterations likely dating to the 20th century. 1827 Aliceanna and 1922 Aliceanna Street are one-story masonry structures built between 1915 and 1951, according to Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. 1827 Aliceanna Street is comprised of two garage bays and was purpose-built as a garage; 1922 Aliceanna Street was originally a carpenter's shop. 1922 Aliceanna Street was the subject of a CHAP hearing in 2018; the Commission approved the vertical addition of two stories on top of the extant garage. The front-loading garages on the 1800 and 1900 blocks of Aliceanna Street predate the designation of Fells Point as a local historic district by at least a few decades.

4.1.1 Streetscapes

- Preserve all historic streetscape elements located within the cross-section between the buildings including the road width, grade, crown, swale, curb, tree lawn, sidewalk, and setbacks.
- Preserve historic site furnishings, such as benches and urns, and historic paving such as granite curbs, Belgian block, and brick sidewalk and roadway paving.
- Retain historic vehicular and pedestrian circulation patterns wherever possible.

The south side of the 1900 block of Aliceanna Street has a largely intact historic granite curb (*Image 5*). The installation of a curb cut will necessitate the removal of the granite curb in front of the garage. The front-loading garage will also alter the historic vehicular circulation pattern.

ANALYSIS

Staff finds that the proposed construction meets the CHAP design guidelines in height, massing, scale, and form. The structure is designed to visually relate to the historic environment; it is advisable that the final design and materials allow for the building to be

distinguished from historic buildings. The proposed front-loading garage and related removal of a historic granite curb do not meet the design guidelines. The proposed roof deck is likely to not be visible from the façade, but because the east elevation abuts an unbuilt lot, the roof deck will be visible from the street. It is advisable that the applicant submit details about the roof deck materials and the visibility of the roof deck as part of the final materials submission package.

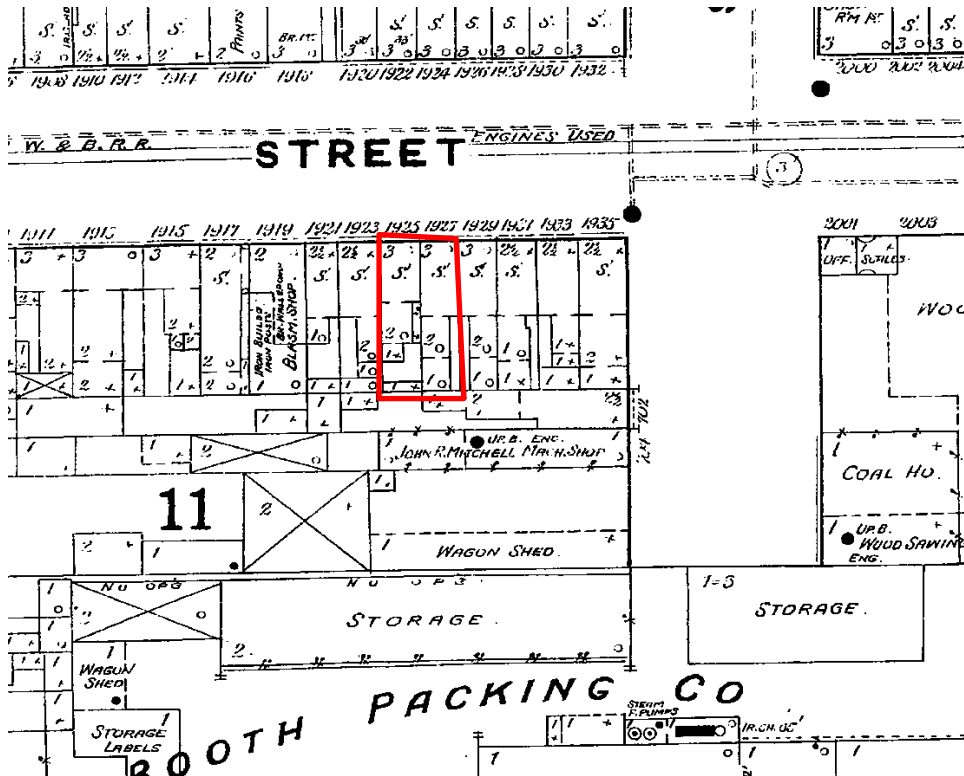
NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS The Fells Point Design Review Committee provided the following comments at their April 26, 2021 meeting on this proposal: “The panel did not express an issue with the garage as long as the Applicant is approved by Zoning to install a new driveway. Panel members were fine with the proposed elevation, but recommends that the Applicant seek more contemporary detailing and articulation since this would be considered a new construction, i.e. seek more contemporary opening details, not to replicate historic detailing, contemporary cornice detailing, and to insure the composition of the façade is refined to insure clear integration of all architectural elements of the façade.”

RECOMMENDATION

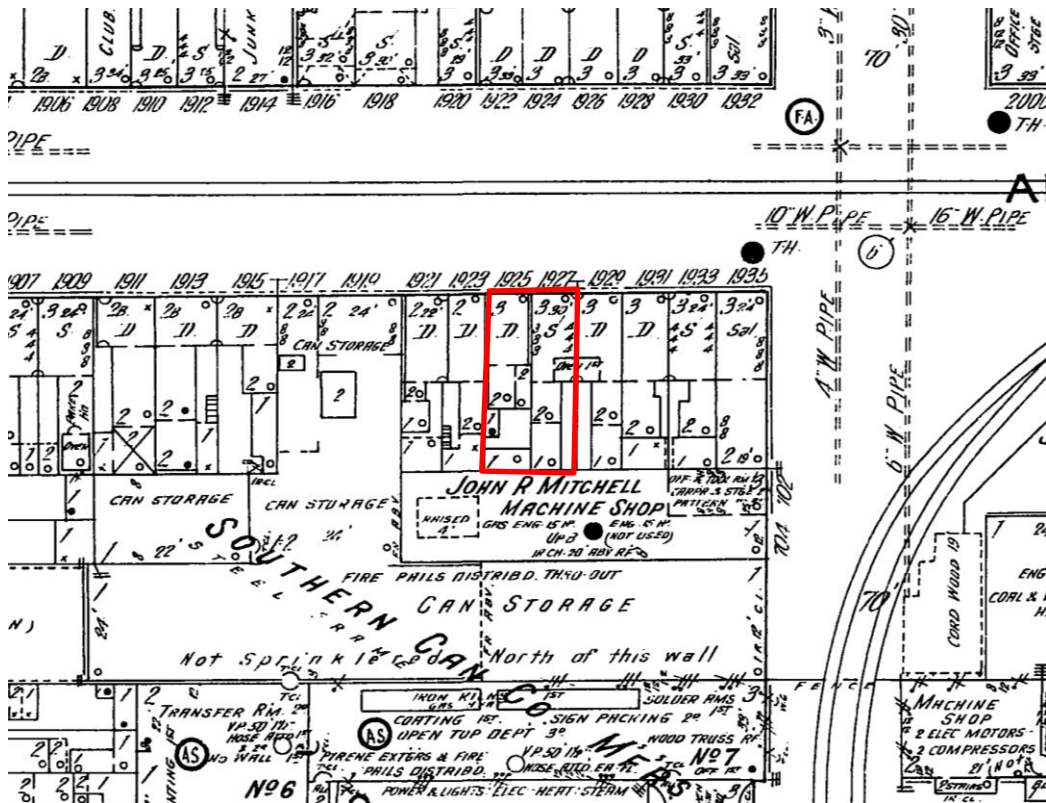
Approve the general height, massing, and scale of the proposal. Disapprove the front-loading garage. The architectural details should be refined to reflect more contemporary design or more contemporary materials so that the new building can be distinguished from historic buildings. Final details to be considered by full CHAP Commission.



Eric Holcomb
Director



Map 3: 1890 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Volume 1, Sheet 20b)



Map 4: 1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Volume 4, Sheet 347)

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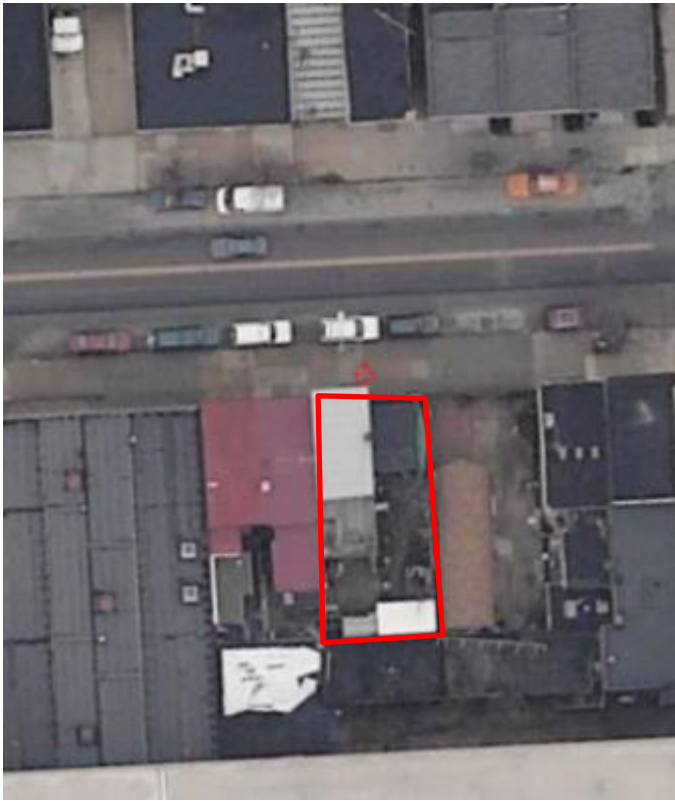


Image 1: Aerial photo of site; property outlined in red. (ConnectExplorer, December 2020)



Image 2: Aerial view of property from east. (Connect Explorer, December 2020)



Image 3: View of 1925 and 1927 Aliceanna Street.



Image 4: View of 1925 Aliceanna St. and 1927 Aliceanna St.



Image 5: Historic granite curb in front of 1925-1927 Aliceanna Street.

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