2nd Preliminary Consultation MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

Address: 7018 Poplar Ave., Takoma Park Meeting Date: 12/4/2019

Resource: Non-Contributing Resource **Report Date:** 11/27/2019

Takoma Park Historic District

Applicant: Thomas & Sue Immermann **Public Notice:** 11/20/2019

Larry Neal, Architect

Review: 2nd Preliminary Consultation **Staff:** Dan Bruechert

Proposal: Demolition and New Building Construction

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the applicant make revisions based on the feedback from the HPC and return for a third prelim or a HAWP, as recommended.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

SIGNIFICANCE: Non-Contributing Resource to the Takoma Park Historic District

STYLE: Ranch DATE: c.1940s

The subject property is a one-story, brick, side gable ranch house with a small front porch.



Figure 1: 7018 Poplar Ave.

BACKGROUND

The applicant presented a preliminary consultation proposal for new construction at the April 10, 2019 HPC meeting.¹

The HPC acknowledged that the *Design Guidelines* for the Takoma Park Historic District supported the demolition of the existing, non-contributing, building. The general feedback from the HPC regarding the new proposal was that the proposed building seemed too wide and too tall to be compatible with the surrounding district. However, the HPC acknowledged that there was not sufficient information to evaluate the proposal within the larger context. Many of the commissioners also acknowledged that the front porch without stairs made of an awkward design element. The applicants have returned for a second preliminary consultation. Additional information regarding the size and placement of houses in the surrounding residential area has been submitted for consideration. No design changes have been made to the design of the proposed new construction.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing building and construct a new two-story house with a raised basement in its place.

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES

Takoma Park

When reviewing alterations and new construction within the Takoma Park Historic District several documents are to be utilized as guidelines to assist the Commission in developing their decision. These documents include the historic preservation review guidelines in the approved and adopted amendment for the Takoma Park Historic District (*Guidelines*), Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A (*Chapter 24A*), and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (*Standards*). The pertinent information in these documents is outlined below.

Takoma Park Historic District Guidelines

There are two very general, broad planning and design concepts which apply to all categories. These are:

The design review emphasis will be restricted to changes that are at all visible from the public right-of-way, irrespective of landscaping or vegetation (it is expected that the majority of new additions will be reviewed for their impact on the overall district), and,

The importance of assuring that additions and other changes to existing structures act to reinforce and continue existing streetscape, landscape, and building patterns rather than to impair the character of the district.

Non-Contributing/Out-of-Period Resources should receive the most lenient level of design review. Most alterations and additions to Non-Contributing/Out-of-Period Resources should be approved as a matter of course. The only exceptions would be major additions and alterations to the scale and massing of Non-

¹ The Staff Report for the first Preliminary Consultation can be found here: https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/II.A-7018-Poplar-Avenue-Takoma-Park.pdf and audio of that hearing can be found here: https://mncppc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=dedd0033-5c58-11e9-aee3-0050569183fa. Discussion of this item begins at 14:58.

Contributing/Out-of-Period Resources which affect the surrounding streetscape and/or landscape and could impair character of the district as a whole.

Demolition of Non-Contributing/Out-of-Period Resources should be permitted. However, any new building constructed in the place of a demolished building should be reviewed under the guidelines for new construction that follow.

New Construction

"The goal of new construction within both residential and commercial historic districts is to be sympathetic to the traditional street and building patterns in that district, while allowing for creative new building designs. In addition to the approach of recalling earlier architectural styles in new buildings, it is appropriate for new structures to reflect and represent the period in which they are built. It is not the intention of these guidelines to inhibit or exclude creative design solutions that may be developed for new buildings in the Takoma Park district. Unique designs which may not adhere strictly to traditional neighborhood practices, but which are sensitive to and compatible with the fabric of the community should be supported."

Residential Areas

In Takoma Park, there are a number of elements which define the streetscape and building patterns within the residential areas. New construction should consider some of these elements, such as:

- Rhythm of houses along the street, including patterns of height, massing, side and front setbacks, and roof pitch;
- Patterns of open space/landscaping and building coverage, including ample front and back yards, space between houses, preservation of important mature trees, etc.;
- Principal building facades oriented toward the street;
- Covered porches on the front or main facades;
- Patterns of openings in facades, especially doors and windows, which provide a sense of residential scale;
- Building and roofing material;
- High degree of building craftsmanship, as expressed in detailing and use of materials;
- Use of decorative stone retaining walls (where required by topographic changes) and occasionally fences to define a sidewalk line and separate yards from street;
- Sidewalk and planting strips along the street;
- Orientation of driveways and parking areas to the rear and sides of the buildings;
- Use of outbuildings (e.g. detached garages); and
- Extensive landscaping, including mature trees and flowering plants.

Montgomery County Code, Chapter 24A-8 Historic Resources Preservation

- (b) The commission shall instruct the director to issue a permit, or issue a permit subject to such conditions as are found to be necessary to insure conformity with the purposes and requirements of this chapter, if it finds that:
 - (1) The proposal will not substantially alter the exterior features of an historic site or historic resource within an historic district; or
 - (2) The proposal is compatible in character and nature with the historical, archeological, architectural or cultural features of the historic site or the historic district in which an historic resource is located and would not be detrimental thereto or to the achievement of the purposes of this chapter;
- (d) In the case of an application for work on an historic resource located within an historic district, the commission shall be lenient in its judgment of plans for structures of little historical or design significance or for plans involving new construction, unless such plans would seriously impair the historic

or architectural value of surrounding historic resources or would impair the character of the historic district.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:

- 2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, space and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
- 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportions, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
- 10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

STAFF DISCUSSION

The applicant proposes to demolish the c.1940s Non-Contributing house at 7018 Poplar Ave. and construct a new two-story house with a partially exposed basement.

Demolish Existing Building

As stated in the previous Staff Report, the existing building is classified as a Non-Contributing resource to the Takoma Park Historic District. Staff finds that demolition of Non-Contributing resources should be permitted, per the *Design Guidelines*, and the existing building contributes to the existing streetscape principally in its small size, low scale, interaction with and preservation of the existing topography, and its contribution to the predominant building pattern and existing rhythm of this block of Poplar Avenue.

Staff would support the demolition of this structure, at the HAWP stage provided the proposed new construction was in keeping with the historic character of the surrounding district and that it conforms to the guidance laid out in Chapter 24A-8(d) which states that new construction must not, "seriously impair the historic or architectural value of surrounding historic resources or would impair the character of the historic district."

New Construction Design

A demolition without replacement construction would result in an empty lot, which is not in keeping with the surrounding district. To avoid that appearance the applicant proposes to construct a two-story, stucco house, with a hipped roof, and a partially-to fully exposed basement. The house will be 30' (thirty feet) tall, and 34' 7" (thirty-four feet, seven inches) wide. The applicants propose to take advantage of the existing foundation, by matching the width of the proposed house with the existing. The architecture of the new construction is eclectic with a low-pitched hip roof, similar to a Prairie-style house. The columns and full width porch could be from a number of 20th century styles. The applicant has provided Staff with an aspirational image of the proposed house with casement windows, hipped-roof front porch, and low-pitched roof with a deep overhang. The address is identified as 11 Grant Ave, but the architect informed me that it is actually 11 Sherman Ave., a house constructed in 1923, outside of the bounds of the Historic District.

Staff finds that there is not enough information proposed to support a finding that the architectural details of the house are in keeping with the character of the early 20th century building designs found throughout the Takoma Park Historic District. There are several elements of the proposed design that are in keeping with the guidance for new construction included in the *Design Guidelines*, including, façade orientation

toward the street, patterns of openings on the façade, and building materials.

The *Design Guidelines* recommend the use of covered front porches for new construction. And while this house has a covered section in front of the house, because it has no exterior stairs, it appears more like a balcony than a porch. Staff recommends that if a porch is utilized in the final design, that it provides steps to access the first floor. These stairs would help to soften the transition from the yard to the front of the proposed house. The houses on the block contain both front-loading and side-loading porches. Staff finds that either type would be appropriate. Any porch should also be utilized to mitigate the vertical orientation of this house, which is not in keeping with its neighbors on the block.

Massing and Placement

Rather than focus on the minute details and architectural elements of the proposed new construction, Staff's focus is on the massing and placement of the new construction and its impact on the surrounding streetscape. The majority of the houses along this side of Poplar Ave. are Non-Contributing, however, all but one of the Contributing buildings are either one-and-a-half or two stories tall. Due to the variety of building heights, Staff finds that the massing of the proposed house will have a bigger impact on compatibility than the height of new construction.

The proposed house will be two stories with a partially exposed basement. However, due to the applicants' desire to have a no-step entrance to the house, in order to counter the slope of the lot virtually all of the basement will be fully exposed and visible at the front of the house. While zoning considers this to be a two-story house, the appearance in elevation is closer to three-stories. Staff addresses this issue first, because the visual effect will be a front wall plane that rises nearly 25' (twenty-five feet) before the roof eave. Staff finds that the appearance will be much taller than any of the houses in the surrounding area. Staff recommends revisions be made to the foundation and basement to minimize its visual impact. If an at-grade entrance is necessary for the program, Staff encourages the applicant to explore a treatment similar to 7119 Poplar Ave. This house retains a front-loading porch, but also includes a vehicular entrance at the basement level.

The applicant provided supplemental information regarding the height and setback of a number of houses on the block to provide a context for the current proposal (see the attached application). The applicant expressly calls out the Contributing house at 7010 as comparable with the proposed construction. This house is setback 30.8' (thirty point eight feet) and is 32' (thirty-two feet) tall when measured from the curb. This contrasts with a front setback of 29.4' (twenty-nine point four feet) and a height of 35.3' (thirty-five point three feet) for the proposed construction. Staff finds that while proposed house is only one-and-a-half feet closer to the street and three feet taller than the house at 7010, the natural rise in grade and the front porch foundation at 7010 Poplar help to soften the front wall plane and lessen the sense of height than the proposed three-story wall plane.

The other significant difference between the proposed construction and the house at 7010 Poplar Ave. is the width. Based on Staff's calculations the house at 7010 Poplar Ave. is 29' (twenty-nine feet) wide, compared to a proposed width of 34' 7" (thirty-four feet, seven inches) for the proposed construction.

Based on these calculations, the proposed house will be the tallest, widest, and closest to the street of all of the houses on the west side of Poplar Ave. Staff finds that the proposed massing is incompatible with the existing streetscape, and revisions need to be undertaken to bring the massing into compatibility with the surrounding district. Because of the impact of all three dimensions (height, front setback, and width), Staff recommends a substantial reduction in at least one of these dimensions to make the proposed house more compatible. The total height of the building along the right side, is 29' 11" (twenty-nine feet, eleven inches), but because of the change in grade and exposed entrance on the left side the house will appear several additional feet taller. Staff finds that while a below grade entrance may be appropriate, the

first floor should be on grade or significantly closer to grade or even on grade. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. The first is by changing the grade on the lot; a second method is to lower the basement and set the house lower into the ground. Another method for reducing the overall building height is reducing the floor-to-floor height, but because floor height dimensions were not included with the application materials, Staff cannot determine if this would be feasible. Staff's last recommendation is to consider an alternative house form, like a bungalow, that could still provide the desired size, but the roof form would be lower and the horizontal orientation of the bungalow form would help to break up the verticality shown in the current proposal.

Staff request the HPC provide the applicant with specific feedback regarding the appropriateness of the massing.

The application indicates that in order to accommodate the new house construction, much of the existing drive and retaining walls will be eliminated and/or re-graded. The submitted existing site plan shows an approximate 6' (six foot) rise in grade from the sidewalk to the front of the house, however, a proposed site plan was not included to enable Staff to evaluate how this will change. Details regarding the appearance of these features was not included with this preliminary consultation and Staff recommends the HPC provide guidance as to the appropriate material and configuration of these features. Staff notes that the *Design Guidelines* call for the use of 'stone' retaining walls. The existing walls are modern decorative concrete block and are not historic. Staff would support their removal and would support approval of either stone or concrete retaining walls. Staff recommends the HPC require a site plan with topographic lines to be submitted with the HAWP to better evaluate the existing versus the proposed grade and the potential need for retaining walls or other hardscape features.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the applicant make the revisions recommended by the HPC and return for either a third preliminary consultation or HAWP with the following additional information, including, but not limited to:

- Alterations to the size and/or massing of the proposed construction;
- Detailed material specifications for proposed doors and windows; and
- Information on the regrading and treatment for the new driveway and retaining wall, including proposed limits of disturbance.





DPS - #1

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION 301/563-3400

APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC AREA WORK PERMIT

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SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR INSTRUCTIONS

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS MUST BE COMPLETED AND THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTS MUST ACCOMPANY THIS APPLICATION.

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G -	neral description of project and its effect on the historic resource(s), the environmental setting, and, where applicable, the historic district.
-	Historically pleasing intent

2. SITE PLAN

Site and environmental setting, drawn to scale. You may use your plat. Your site plan must include:

a. the scale, north arrow, and date;

1. WRITTEN DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

- b. dimensions of all existing and proposed structures; and
- c. site features such as walkways, driveways, fences, ponds, streams, trash dumpsters, mechanical equipment, and landscaping.

3. PLANS AND ELEVATIONS

You must submit 2 copies of plans and elevations in a format no larger than 11" x 17". Plans on 8 1/2" x 11" paper are preferred.

- a. Schematic construction plans, with marked dimensions, indicating location, size and general type of walls, window and door openings, and other fixed features of both the existing resource(s) and the proposed work.
- b. Elevations (facades), with marked dimensions, clearly indicating proposed work in relation to existing construction and, when appropriate, context. All materials and fixtures proposed for the exterior must be noted on the elevations drawings. An existing and a proposed elevation drawing of each facade affected by the proposed work is required.

4. MATERIALS SPECIFICATIONS

General description of materials and manufactured items proposed for incorporation in the work of the project. This information may be included on your design drawings.

5. PHOTOGRAPHS

- Clearly labeled photographic prints of each facade of existing resource, including details of the affected portions. All labels should be placed on the front of photographs.
- b. Clearly label photographic prints of the resource as viewed from the public right-of-way and of the adjoining properties. All labels should be placed on the front of photographs.

6. TREE SURVEY

If you are proposing construction adjacent to or within the dripline of any tree 6" or larger in diameter (at approximately 4 feet above the ground), you must file an accurate tree survey identifying the size, location, and species of each tree of at least that dimension.

7. ADDRESSES OF ADJACENT AND CONFRONTING PROPERTY OWNERS

For ALL projects, provide an accurate list of adjacent and confronting property owners (not tenants), including names, addresses, and zip codes. This list should include the owners of all lots or parcels which adjoin the parcel in question, as well as the owner(s) of lot(s) or parcel(s) which tie directly across the street/highway from the parcel in question.

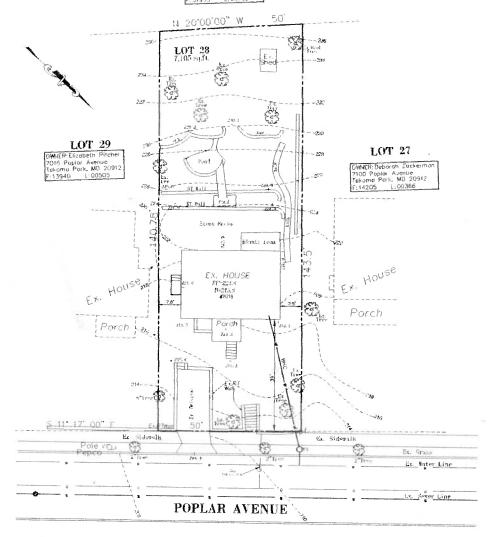
HAWP APPLICATION: MAILING ADDRESSES FOR NOTIFING [Owner, Owner's Agent, Adjacent and Confronting Property Owners]

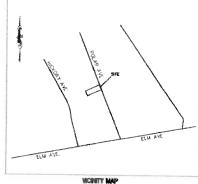
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7021 Poplar Aue	Julia L WASH BURN
	20 Hickory AUZ.
TAKOMA Park Md.	TAKOMA Park Mol.
20912	20912

Existing site Plan



DWNER: Julia Washaurn 20 Hickory Avenue Tokoma Park, MD 20912 F: 31903 L: 00769





REVISION :

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PROJECT NAME 7018 POPLAR AVENUE TAKOMA PARK

LOT 28 BLOCK 20

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ONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

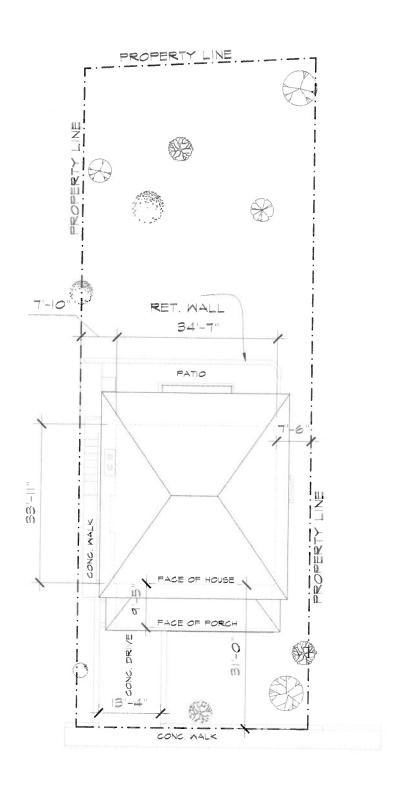
DRAWING TITLE

Topography Plan

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Susan Pitcher 7018 Poplor Pitcher Takomo Avenue, MD 20912 Phone #:

FOR LOCATIONS OF UTILITIES CALL "MISS UTILITY" AT 1-800-257-7777 AT LEAST 48 HOURS BEFORE BECKINNING CONSTRUCTION

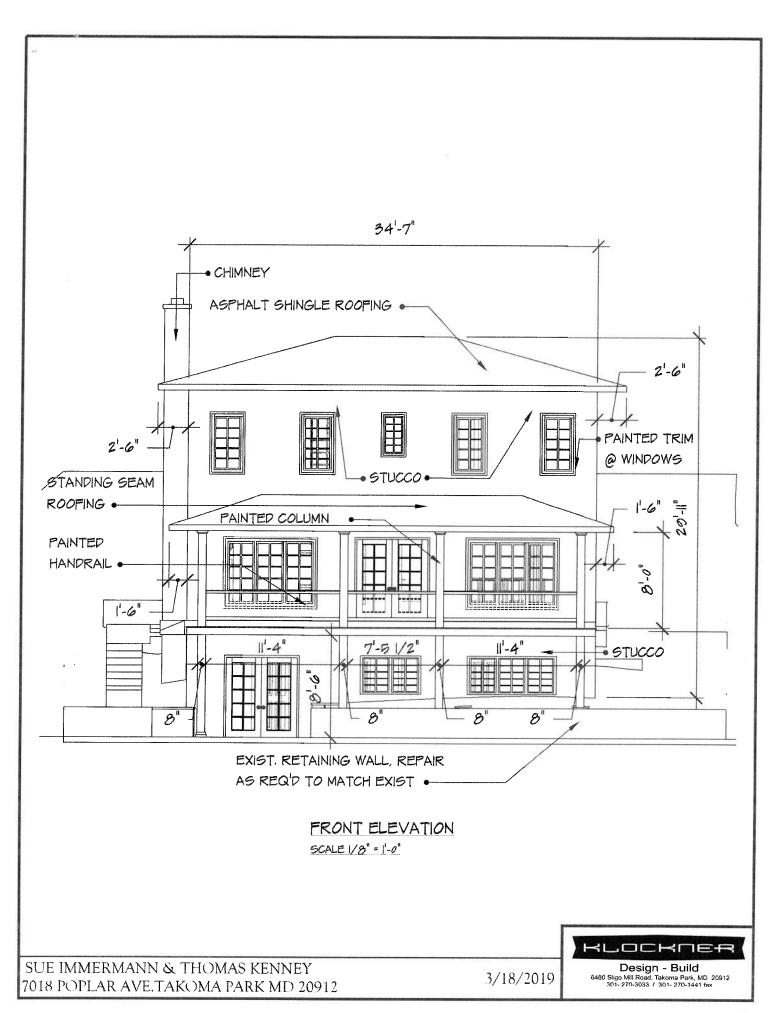


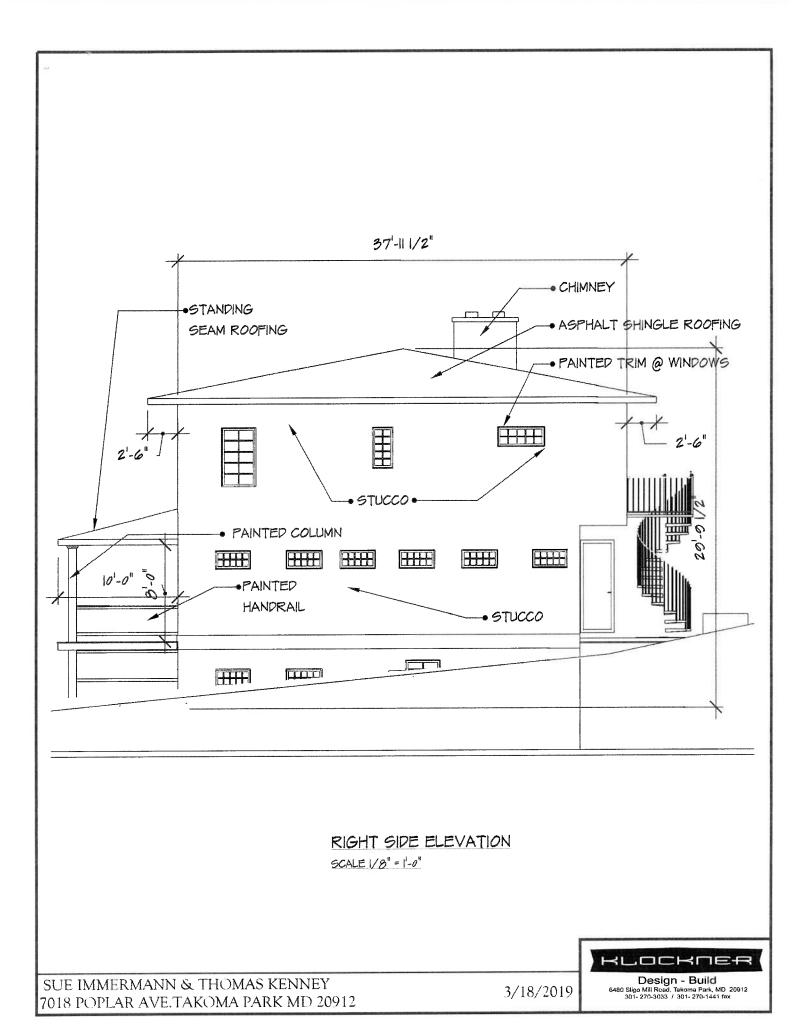


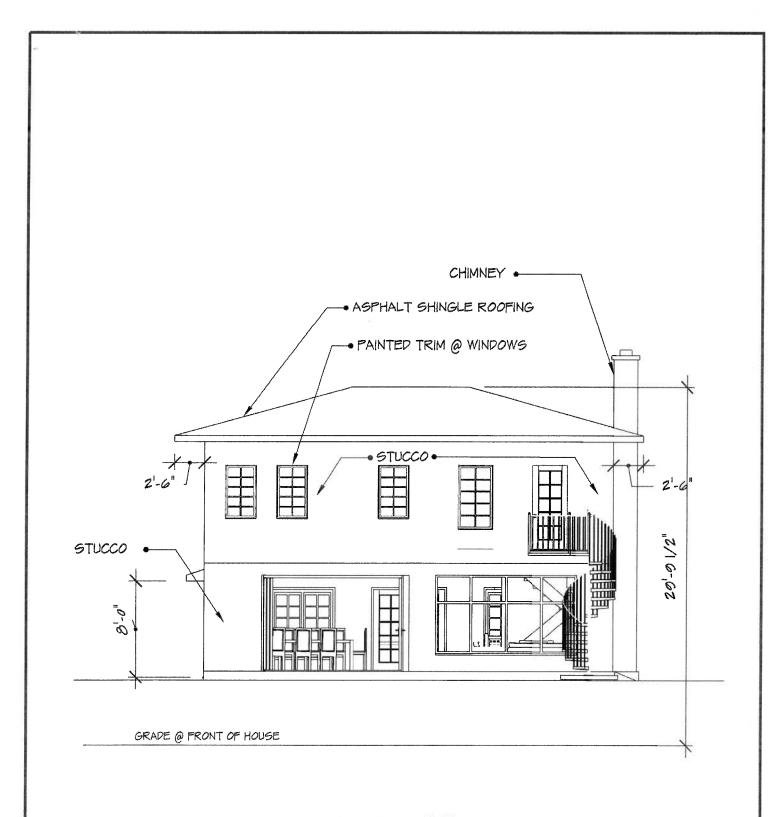
SCALE |" = 20'



Design - Build 6480 Sligo Mill Road, Takoma Park, MD 20912 301- 270-3033 / 301- 270-1441 fax





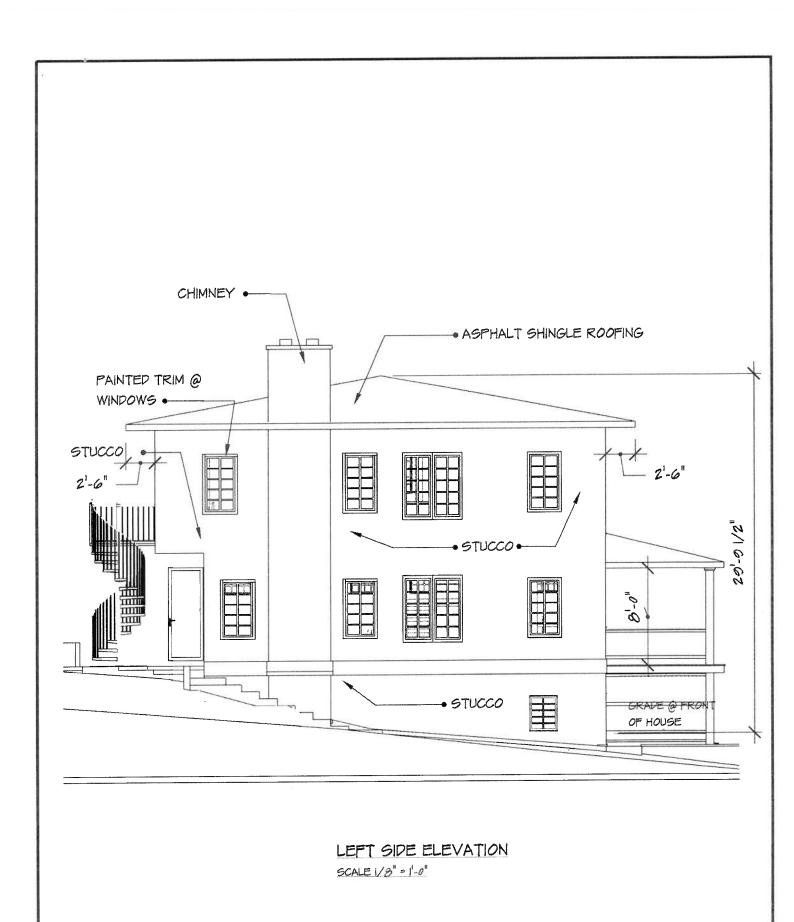


REAR ELEVATION SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

SUE IMMERMANN & THOMAS KENNEY 7018 POPLAR AVE.TAKOMA PARK MD 20912

3/18/2019

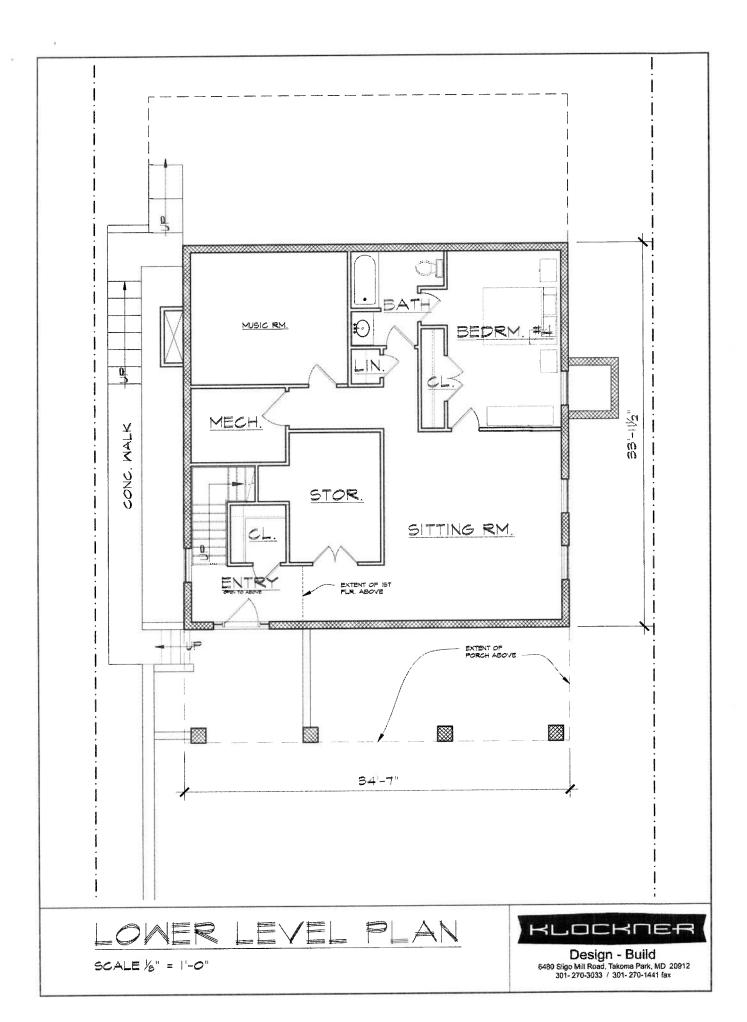


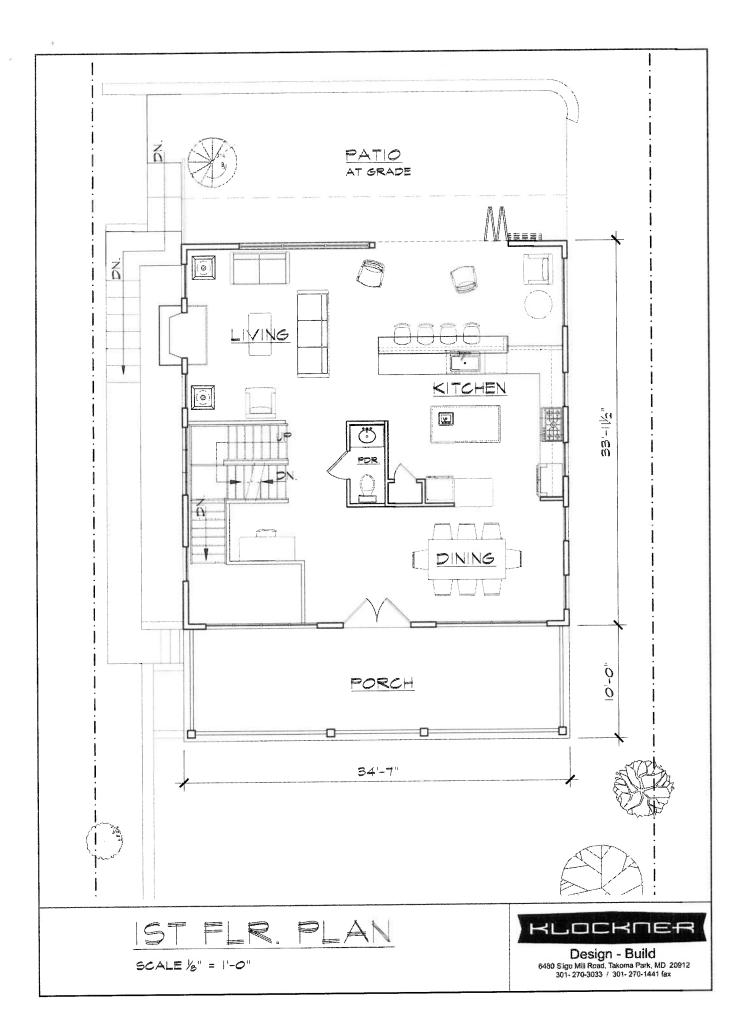


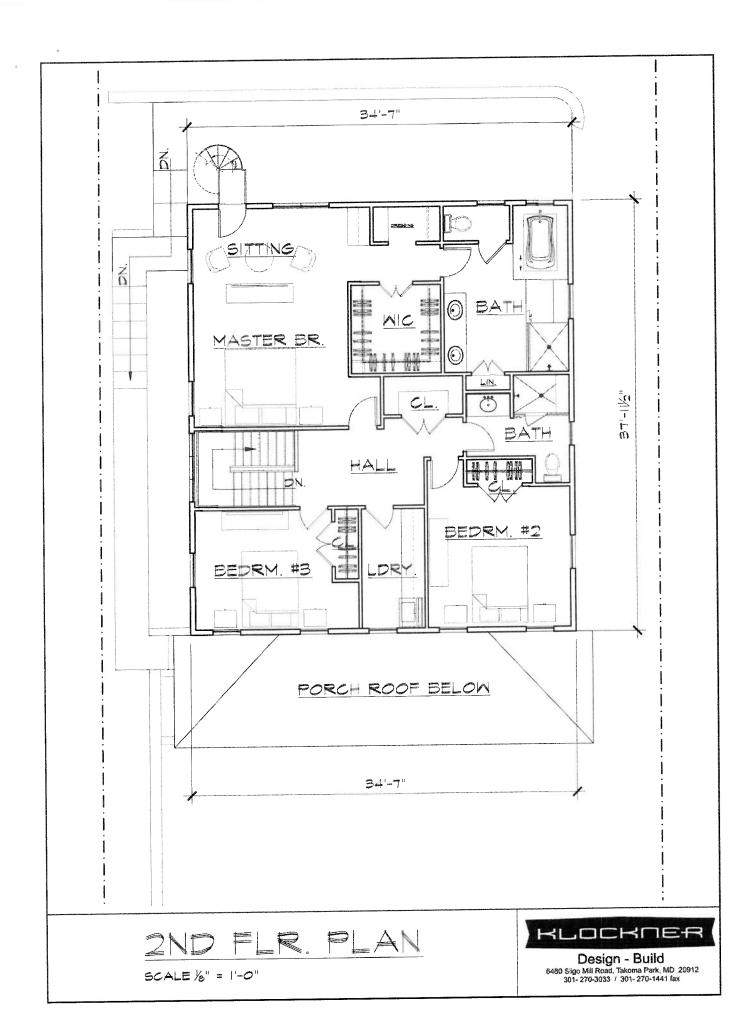
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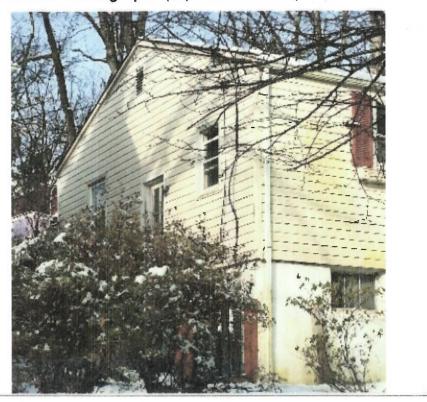






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Existing Property Condition Photographs (duplicate as needed)



Detail: Left side Existing



Detail: Right side

1018 Ropher AVE.
Front Eteration
Existins



Supplemental Information for Preliminary Consultation for 7018 Poplar Avenue Demolition and New Construction

Follow Up to Meeting April 10, 2019

Revised 4/1/2019

MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

301-563-3400

WEDNESDAY April 10, 2019

MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION MRO AUDITORIUM 8787 GEORGIA AVENUE SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND 20910

PLEASE NOTE: The HPC agenda is subject to change any time after printing or during the commission meeting. Please contact the Historic Preservation Commission staff at the number above to obtain current information. If your application is included on this agenda, you or your representative is expected to attend. Please arrive at the meeting at 7:30pm.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

Address: 7018 Poplar Ave., Takoma Park Meeting Date: 4/10/2019

Resource: Non-Contributing Resource **Report Date:** 4/3/2019

Takoma Park Historic District

Applicant: Thomas & Sue Immermann Public Notice: 3/27/2019

Larry Neal, Architect

Review: Preliminary Consultation Staff: Dan Bruechert

Proposal: Demolition and New Building Construction

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the applicant make revisions based on the feedback from the HPC and return for a second prelim or a HAWP, as recommended.

The propose demolition and new construction for the non-contributing house at 7018 Poplar Avenue has the following design program:

- 1. Provide no-step entrance to the lowest level for aging in place accessibility.
- 2. Enhance the soil conditions for the existing oak tree by removing the sidewalk steps and restoring the soil and by removing the impervious walkway to the existing stoop.
- 3. Expand the living area from 842 square feet existing to 2,436 square feet by adding a second level to the one-story building.
- 4. Maximize outdoor living space front porch to 10-feet depth.
- 5. Utilize the existing basement foundation to maintain existing width.
- 6. Make walk-in basement no step entrance with suitable ceiling height.
- 7. Expand basement area by extending the street side wall eight feet.
- 8. Retain existing back yard hard scaping.
- 9. Coordinate the Takoma Park arborist on pier foundation for front porch.
- 10. Use a suitable design that is coherent esthetically with the character of the adjacent houses.

The Commission and support staff have requested additional information about the proposed new construction related to the surrounding properties. There was concern about height and distance to the street. Measurements were made of adjacent houses and the proposed new construction to provide a basis of comparison. The measurements were made using a laser measurement device that was mounted on a tripod. The tripod was positioned in the street gutter in front of each house thereby providing a consistent relative measurement of distance to the street and the elevation to the tallest part of the house. Typically, the tallest viewable element of the houses was the roof gutter.

Measurements were made for houses on the same side (west) of the street and for several houses to the north and south of house 7018. The distances for 7018 are for the new construction.

Address	Stories	Distance From Curb - Feet	Height From Curb - Feet
7010 C	2	30.8	32.0
7012 NC	1	31.1	25.5
7014 NC	1	31.1	25.5
7016 NC	1.5	41.3	26.5
7018 NC	2	29.4	35.3
7100 C	1.5	47.4	32.5
7102 NC	1.5	56.5	31.3

C - contributing , NC - non-contributing

Table 1

The measurements were plotted on the following graphs to provide a visual representation of the relative positions of the houses.

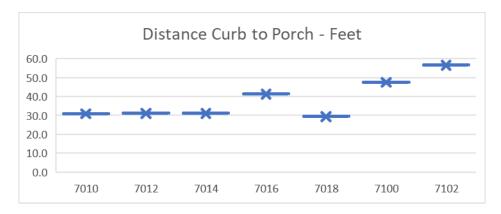


Table 2

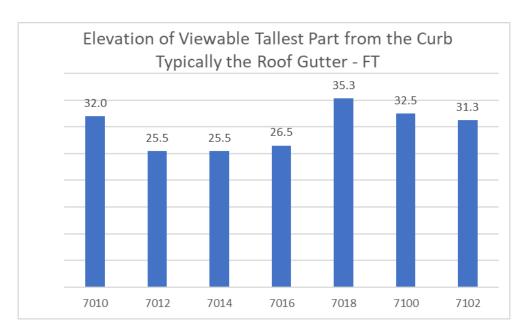


Table 3

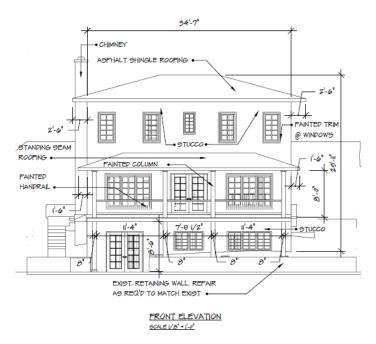
With regard to design and massing, the house at 7010 is similar in size and distance to the street as the new construction that is proposed for 7018. The house 7010 is designated as contributing and the proposed new construction, illustrated below, is of similar design. An Appendix to this document is a photo survey of the entire block of houses on Poplar Avenue to provide additional context about the eclectic nature of the designs and variability of the houses' setback.



7010 Poplar



7018 Poplar – house on right



7018 Proposed New Construction

Same Width as Existing House and Removed Center-Yard Steps and Walkway to Improve Conditions for the Roots for the Existing Trees



The house at 11 Grant Avenue is the aspirational vision for the design for the 7018 Poplar Avenue property

7/13/2019

Appendix

7000 to 7100 Block
Poplar Avenue Takoma Park
Street Scape Photo Survey of the
Whole Block from North to South



