

Preliminary Consultation
MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

Address:	2500 Holman Avenue, Silver Spring	Meeting Date:	1/8/2025
Resource:	Outstanding Resource (John E. Semmes House) Forest Glen Historic District	Report Date:	12/31/2024
Applicant:	Partap Verma	Public Notice:	12/25/2024
Review:	Preliminary Consultation	Tax Credit:	No
Permit No.:	1097561	Staff:	Laura DiPasquale
Proposal:	Construction of two new single-family houses		

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the applicant make revisions and return for a second preliminary consultation.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SIGNIFICANCE: John E. Semmes House, Outstanding Resource within the Forest Glen Historic District
STYLE: Queen Anne
DATE: c. 1891

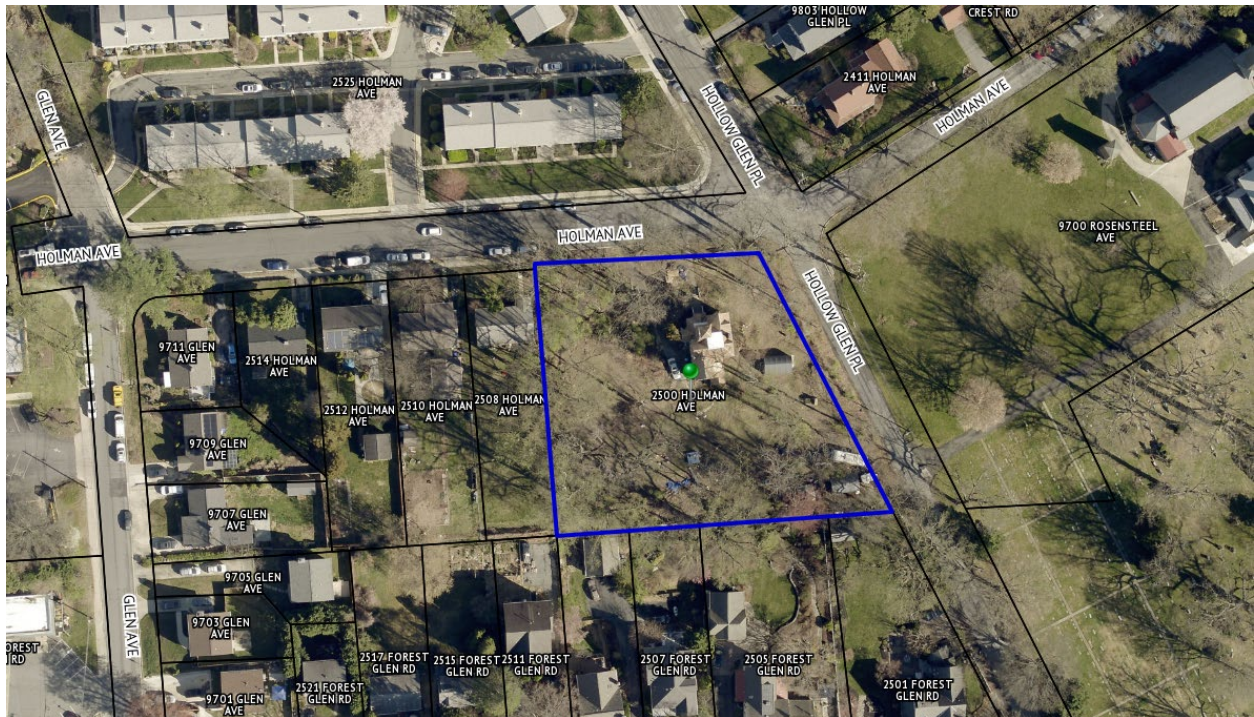


Figure 1: Location of 2500 Holman Avenue (outlined in blue).

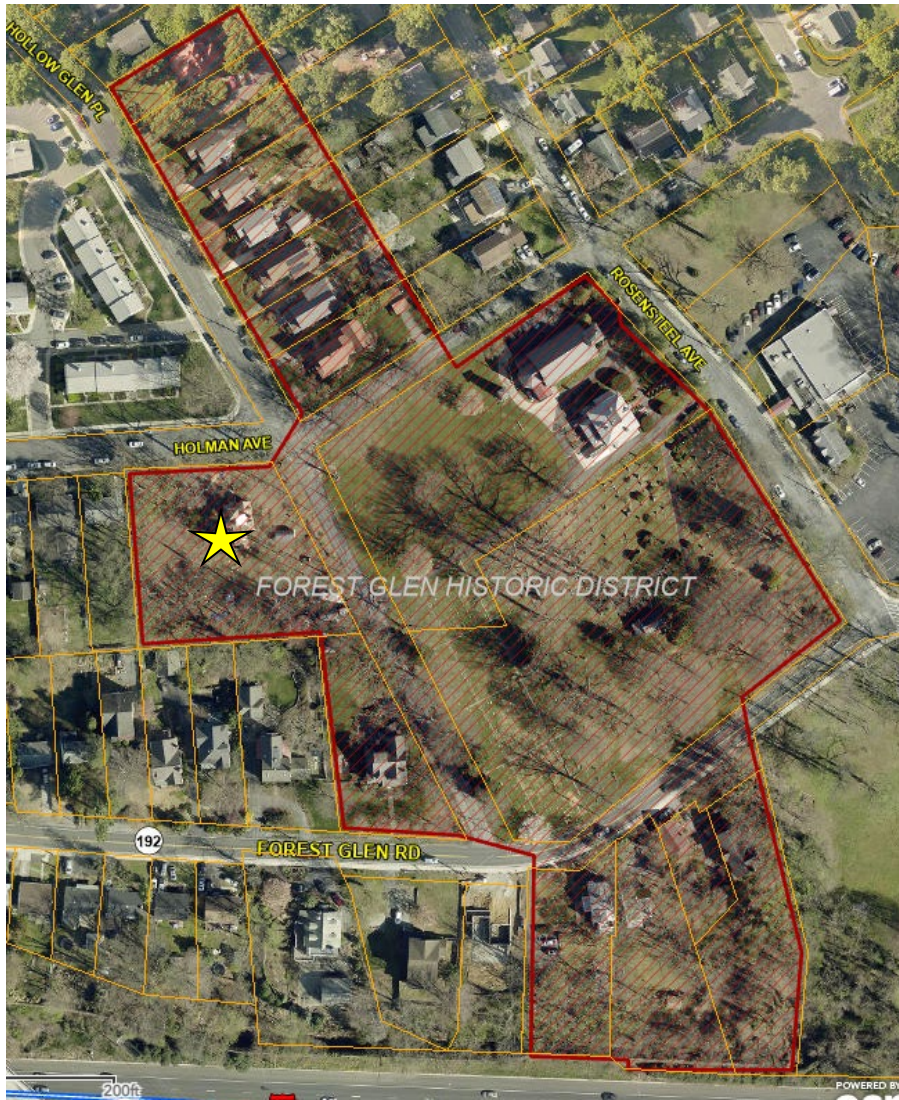


Figure 2: Location of 2500 Holman Avenue (demarcated with a yellow star) within the Forest Glen Historic District (outlined and hashed in red).



Figure 3: View of the subject property from Holman Avenue, December 2024 (Historic Preservation Office).

LOT DISPOSITION & PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to construct two new houses on the property at 2500 Holman Avenue, which includes four separately platted lots (7, 8, 9, and 12). It should be noted that these plots do not appear in the GIS, likely because they have all been taxed together since ownership was consolidated in 1944 (see more detailed discussion later in the report). The lots were all legally platted in 1887. The historic house is located on platted Lot 9. The current owner of the historic house has also retained ownership of Lot 12. The lots are zoned R-60 (residential, one-family detached), which call for minimum lot size of 6,000 square feet.¹ Lots 7 and 8 each measure 50' in width by 200' in depth for a total of 10,000 square feet. Zoning requirements for new construction on lots zoned R-60 include maximum 35% lot coverage, with a minimum front setback of 25', side setbacks totaling 18' with one side 8', and a rear setback of 20'. Height maximums for new construction range from 30-35', depending on the roof type.

The main block of the historic house measures approximately 30' wide by 30' deep, with an approximately 21' wide by 13' deep rear ell. Property records indicate a square footage of 2,104. The proposed houses on Lots 7 and 8 would each measure 33' in width by 45' in depth and would feature 20' by 20' garages attached by breezeways and accessed by a shared driveway.

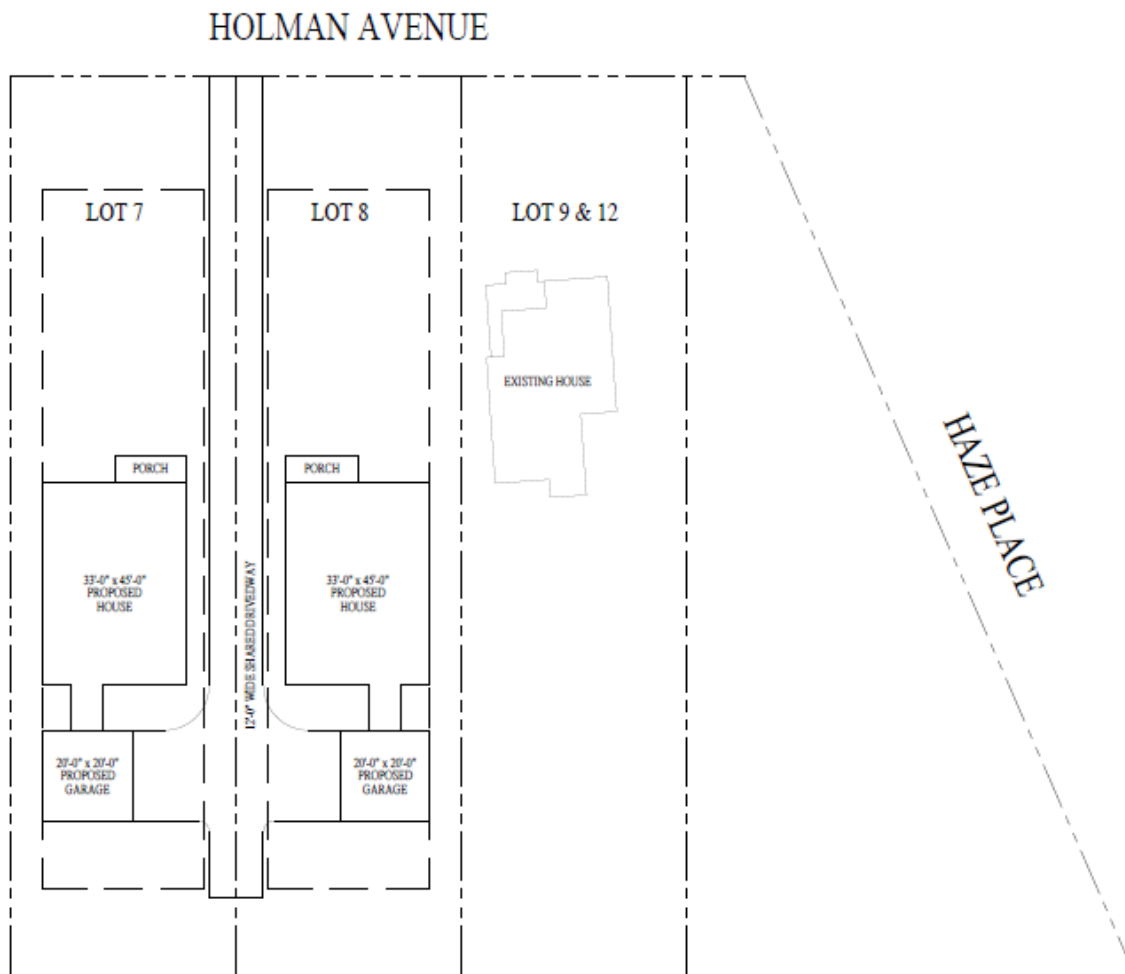


Figure 4: Proposed site plan showing the existing house and the two proposed houses. The street identified on the plan as “Haze Place” is Hollow Glen Place. Hale Place (which looks like Haze Place in the handwritten text) is the old street name from when the lots were originally platted.

¹ R-60 Zoning Fact Sheet:
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DPS/Resources/Files/ZSPE/DevelopmentStandardsForR60Zone.pdf>

BACKGROUND

Forest Glen Historic District

The Forest Glen Historic District was listed on the Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation in 1985. The *Amendment's* Statement of Significance describes the district as follows: “Forest Glen was among Montgomery County's earliest subdivisions along the Metropolitan Branch of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. The original plat of 1887, by the Forest Glen Investment Company, covered 166 acres.² The picturesque setting had previously been chosen by members of the Carroll family who had their homestead here: Daniel Carroll II, who was a member of the Second Continental Congress, and his brother, John Carroll, first catholic bishop of the United States. The attractiveness of the site was described in an 1889 article in the Washington star:

The rolling character of the surface of this subdivision settles easy that great sanitary problem with which so many country places have to wrestle, and at the same time it creates eligible building sites. The old Carroll Chapel, where the proud Carrolls of Carrollton worshiped as long ago as 1690, is on the property and is a source from whence much that is interesting may be drawn.

In the late 18th century, John Carroll established the first Catholic church in the United States in Forest Glen. A replica of this chapel is located in the historic district on the site of the original.

The community grew dramatically in the 19th century. Within six years of the opening of the B&O's Metropolitan Branch, a railroad stop named Forest Glen Station was established. The Forest Glen Post Office opened in 1883. Much of the emphasis of the early Forest Glen community was as a summer resort for Washington residents. In 1887, the same year that the Forest Glen Investment Company was founded, construction on a resort hotel, the Forest Glen Inn, was begun.

A promotional brochure for Forest Glen, published in 1887, described the Glen as ‘a healthy, well located, and easily accessible suburban village, and in addition, a commodious summer hotel, which should be especially adapted to the wants of the very large class of officials and businessmen who find it necessary or pleasant to remain near Washington during the summer months.’ The brochure advertised the construction of beautiful houses, noting that more were expected to be built in the near future.

Forest Glen's success as a resort was short-lived. The Forest Glen Inn proved a financial disaster and was sold in 1894. It became the centerpiece for the National Park Seminary, a finishing school for young women.

The area, however, continued to grow as a residential community. The Washington, Woodside and Forest Glen Railway was organized in 1895 to extend streetcar service from the District line to Silver Spring and Forest Glen, with its terminus at the National Park Seminary. Construction of the trolley line, which ran along Seminary Road, was completed in 1897. The trolley line was abandoned in 1927, giving way to bus service.

Forest Glen's central block containing St. John's Church complex and open green serves as a visual center and historical anchor for the community. There are eleven historic and four non-historic (non-contributing) structures or sites in the proposed district. Of the historic structures, at least two and possibly three predate the subdivision and six were built in the 1890s. The non-historic structures are generally compatible with Forest Glen's historic resources in scale, massing, setback, and style.”³

² The 1887 plat book for Forest Glen Investment Company's Subdivision is available here: <https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/pages/unit.aspx?cid=MO&qualifier=c&series=2139&unit=000016>

³ The Master Plan Amendment for the Linden and Forest Glen Historic Districts: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Linden-Lane-Forest-Glen-HD-Amendment.pdf>

The January 2001 Maryland Historical Trust NR-Eligibility Review form noted that, “The historic district remains relatively unchanged in materials and character since the last survey [by the HPC in 1984]. One significant change is the construction of five houses within the historic district on previously vacant parcels along Hollow Glen Road, between the Shephard and Emma Everett House (M:31-8-2) and Joseph R. Hertford House. These houses are 9803 Hollow Glen Road (Tax Parcel HP562-27), 9805 Hollow Glen Road (Tax Parcel HP562-26), 9807 Hollow Glen Road (HP562-23), 9809 Hollow Glen Road (Tax Parcel HP562-22) and 9811 Hollow Glen Road (Tax Parcel HP562-19). The new houses are relatively sympathetic to the character of the district, utilizing a neo-Victorian front-gable vernacular design. Another change is a large rear addition to the Shepard and Emma Everett House. The addition, being made to one of Montgomery County’s best examples of the Stick-style, is particularly well executed. The addition uses compatible materials and scale, yet is visually distinct from the historic core of the house. The remaining structures within the Forest Glen Historic District retain their architectural and material integrity.”



Figure 5: The properties to the northeast of the subject property along Hollow Glen Place, including the historic building at 2411 Holman Avenue (far right) and c. 2000 infill buildings at 9803, 9805, 9807, and 9809 Hollow Glen Place.

2500 Holman Avenue

The existing frame, L-shaped Queen Anne house was constructed around 1891 by the Forest Glen Investment Company. It was sold after one of the corporation members, Joseph Hertford, defaulted on the mortgage in 1897. The house, located on lots #9 & 12 of block 24, was then described as a "commodious and attractive new dwelling house" containing nine rooms and a bathroom. Also mentioned was a cellar and plumbing. According to the sale advertisement it was "in every way adapted for a suburban residence, being 9 miles from Washington and in a high and healthy location" (Equity #1490, Judgement Record, JA 15/136). The property was sold for \$2,500 to John E. Semmes of Baltimore who sold it in 1899 to Emma E. Knott of Washington, D.C. (Deed TD 8/202). The property remained in the Knott family for many years. Sometime between 1899 and 1944, the Knotts appear to have acquired lots 7 and 8, which were conveyed jointly with lots 9 and 12 for all subsequent purchases between 1944 and 2024, when lots 7 and 8 were conveyed separately from lots 9 and 12.⁴

⁴ The 1899 deed from John and Frances Semmes to Emma E. Knott (Montgomery County Circuit Court Land Records, TD 8, p. 202) conveyed two parcels— lots 9 and 12. Subsequent deeds, including those made in 1944, 1946, 1970, 1974, and 2000, include lots 7, 8, 9, and 12. HPC staff have not uncovered the deed(s) between 1899 and 1944 where lots 7 and 8 were added to the property.

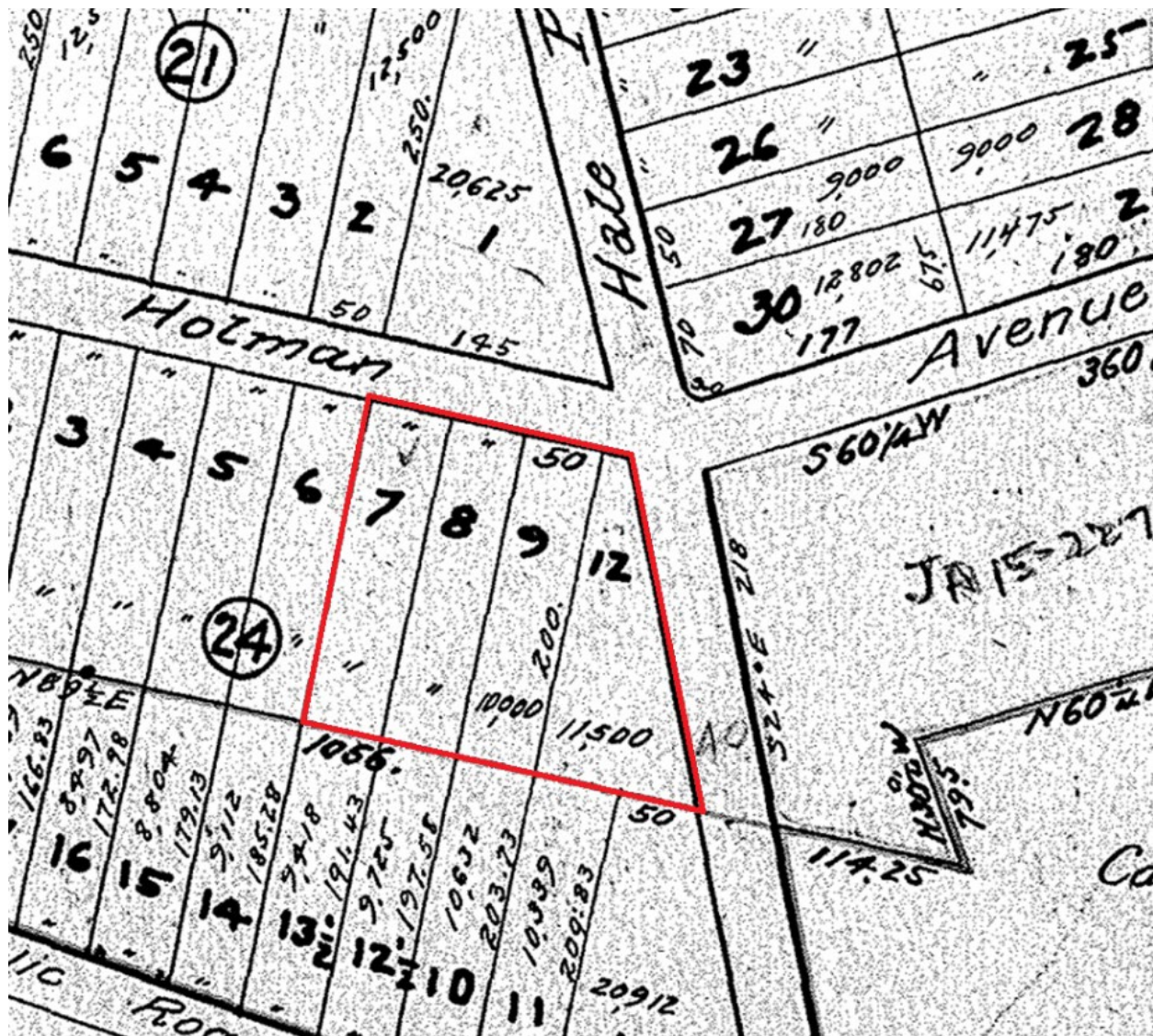


Figure 6: Detail of the 1887 Plat Book A, p. 17, Forest Glen Investment Company, Josephs Park. The property at 2500 Holman Avenue (outlined in red) is comprised of four platted parcels, three of which have never been developed. The existing house is situated primarily on parcel #9. New houses are proposed on parcels #7 and #8.



Figure 7: Detail of the 1931 Klinge Atlas of Montgomery County, Sheet 24, with a red arrow pointing to the existing house at 2500 Holman Avenue. The map shows scattered buildings among numerous other platted, but undeveloped lots in the Forest Glen community.

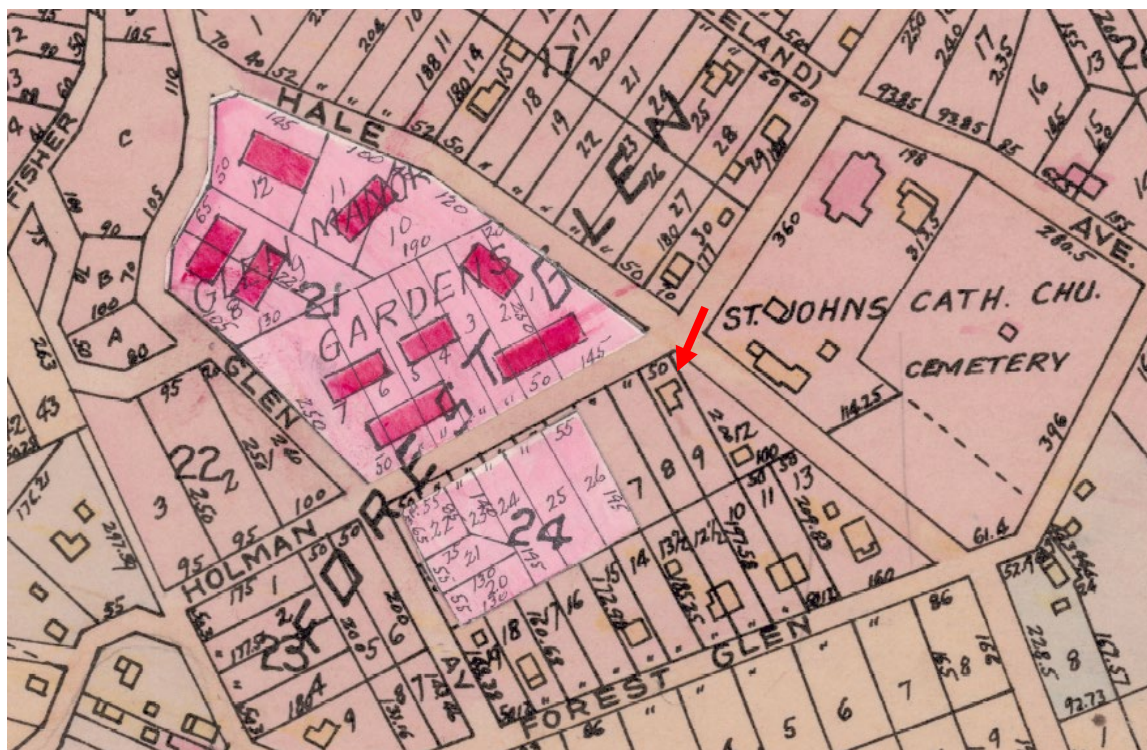


Figure 8: Detail of the 1948-53 Klinge Atlas of Montgomery County, Vol. 1, sheet 12 showing the mid-20th century development of Glen Manor Gardens apartments across from 2500 Holman (outside of the Forest Glen Historic District).

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES

When reviewing alterations and new construction within the Forest Glen Historic District several documents are to be utilized as guidelines to assist the Commission in developing their decision. These documents include the *Approved & Adopted Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Linden/Forest Glen Historic Districts, Atlas #31/8 (Amendment)*; *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.

Approved & Adopted Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Forest Glen Historic District, Atlas #31/8

Once designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, historic resources are subject to the protection of the Ordinance. Any substantial changes to the exterior of a resource or its environmental setting must be reviewed by the Historic Preservation commission and an historic area work permit issued under the provisions of the County's Preservation Ordinance, Section 24A-6. In accordance with the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and unless otherwise specified in the amendment, the environmental setting for each site, as defined in Section 24A-2 of the Ordinance, is the entire parcel on which the resource is located as of the date it is designated on the Master Plan.

Designation of the entire parcel provides the County adequate review authority to preserve historic sites in the event of development. It also ensures that, from the beginning of the development process, important features of these sites are recognized and incorporated in the future development of designated properties. In the case of large acreage parcels, the amendment will provide general guidance for the refinement of the setting by indicating when the setting is subject to reduction in the event of development; by describing an appropriate area to preserve the integrity of the resource; and by identifying buildings and features associated with the site which should be protected as part of the setting. It is anticipated that for a majority of the sites designated, the appropriate point at which to refine the environmental setting will be when the property is subdivided.

Outstanding Resources should be given the highest level of scrutiny in reviewing proposed alterations.

Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A-8

- (a) The commission shall instruct the director to deny a permit if it finds, based on the evidence and information presented to or before the commission that the alteration for which the permit is sought would be inappropriate, inconsistent with or detrimental to the preservation, enhancement or ultimate protection of the historic site or historic resource within an historic district, and to the purposes of this chapter.
- (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 ensure 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; or
 - (3) The proposal would enhance or aid in the protection, preservation and public or private utilization of the historic site or historic resource located within an historic district in a manner compatible with the historical, archeological, architectural or cultural value of the historic site or historic district in which an historic resource is located; or
 - (4) The proposal is necessary in order that unsafe conditions or health hazards be remedied; or

- (5) The proposal is necessary in order that the owner of the subject property not be deprived of reasonable use of the property or suffer undue hardship; or
- (6) In balancing the interests of the public in preserving the historic site or historic resource located within an historic district, with the interests of the public from the use and benefit of the alternative proposal, the general public welfare is better served by granting the permit.
- (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. (Ord. No. 9-4, § 1; Ord. No. 11-59.)

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

The Secretary of the Interior defines rehabilitation as “the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features, which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.” The Standards read as follows:

- 2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
- 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic 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

For this preliminary consultation, the applicant seeks guidance on the appropriateness of constructing two new houses on Lots 7 and 8 of the property currently or until recently known as 2500 Holman Avenue (the newly developed properties would be given new addresses prior to issuance of the occupancy permits). The *Amendment* states that the environmental setting for each site is the entire parcel on which the resource is located as of the date it is designated on the Master Plan. At the time of designation in 1985, Lots 7, 8, 9, and 12 were part of the same deeded/tax parcel, known as 2500 Holman Avenue. Staff finds that, although separately platted parcels, the joint ownership and use of the undeveloped lots around the house at 2500 Holman Avenue since at least 1944 makes them part of the historic resource’s environmental setting. As detailed in the *Amendment*, the appropriate point at which to refine the environmental setting of a property is at the time of subdivision or when the setting is subject to reduction in the event of development, and that it is important to identify the buildings and features associated with the site which should be protected as part of the setting.

Staff conceptually supports new construction on Lots 7 and 8, provided they are scaled appropriately and located far enough away from the historic building to maintain its character and that of the site and setting, as recommended by the *Amendment* and the Secretary of the Interior’s “New Exterior Additions and Related New Construction” guideline.⁵ Staff finds that the large open lots around freestanding Victorian houses is significant to the suburban character of the Forest Glen Historic District. Staff finds that the preservation of the open space on Lot 12 at the corner of Holman Avenue and Hollow Glen Place

⁵ [The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties With Guidelines For Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings](#)

is the most critical to the environmental setting of the subject property, and that the preservation of green, open space to the west is also important, but decreases as one moves west from Lot 8 to 7.



Figure 9: View of the historic house at 2500 Holman Avenue (left) and undeveloped Lots 7 and 8 (to the right), December 2024 (Historic Preservation Office).



Figure 10: View towards the subject property from Holman Avenue at the time of designation in 1984-85 (Historic Preservation Office).

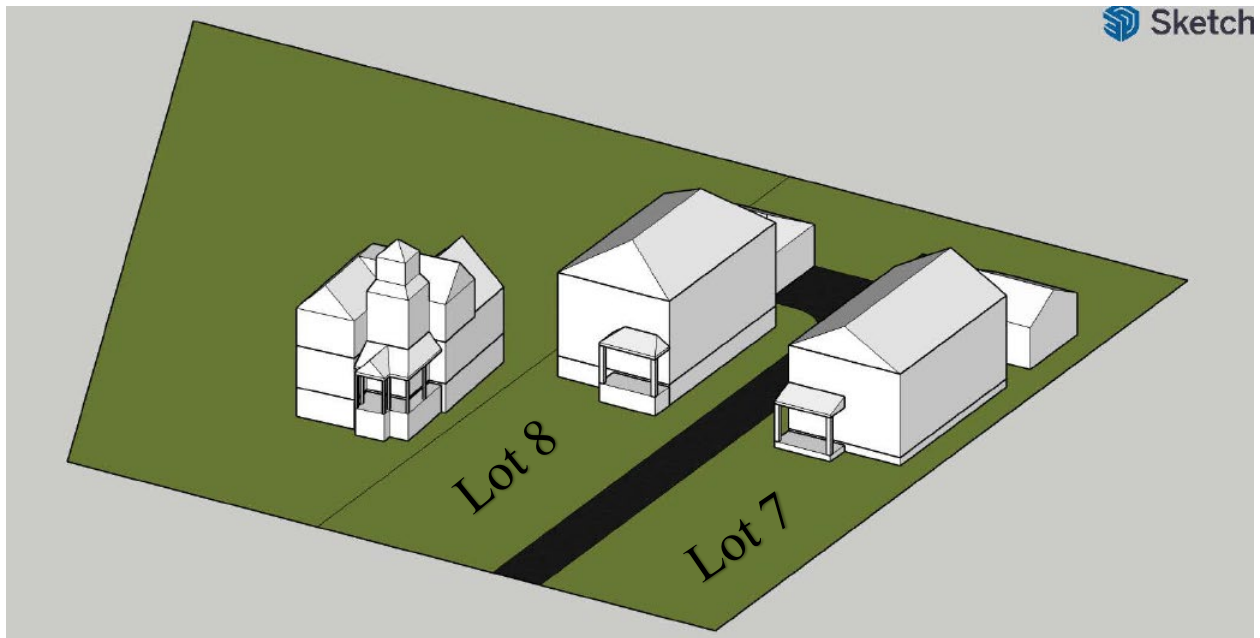


Figure 8: Massing diagram of the existing building (left) and proposed new construction (center and right).

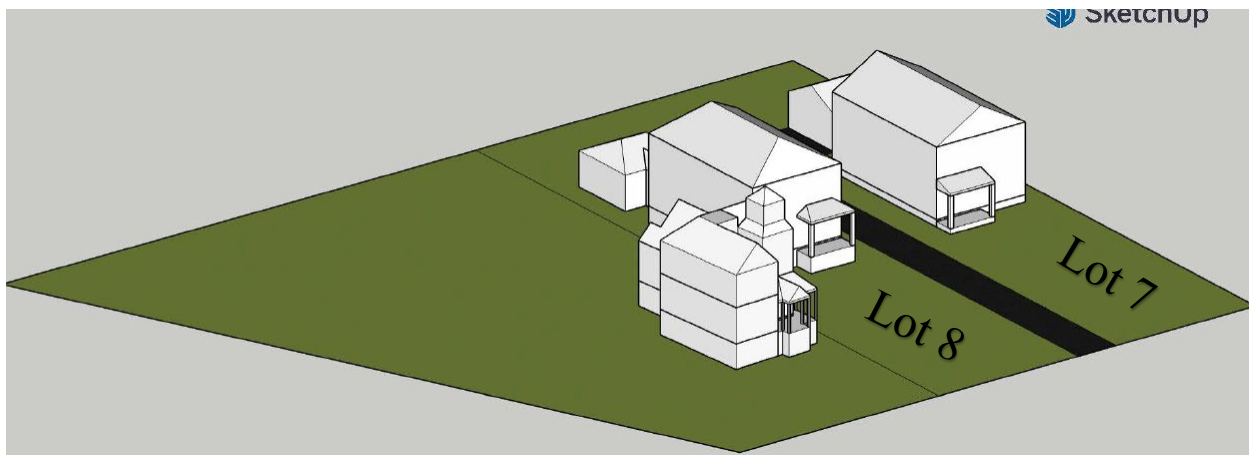


Figure 9: Second massing diagram of the existing building and proposed new construction.

Based on the massing diagrams provided (*Figure 8* and *Figure 9*), staff finds that the proposed construction on Lot 7 is set far enough back and away from the historic building to not detract from the historic resource. Provided no tall fencing is installed forward of the rear wall plane and large tree removal is limited, staff finds that the setbacks and massing would be sufficient to maintain the verdant suburban character of the historic resource and district. A tree survey was provided, but staff would request additional information in a table on each individual tree proposed for removal on both lots, including caliper and species, for the next submission for the HPC to consider. Staff also notes that the grade of the parcels descends considerably along Lot 7.

Staff's primary concern is in regard to the proposed construction on lot 8. As presented, the front corner of the proposed building would be roughly in line with the rear corner of the historic house and in close proximity to it (no measurements or scale is provided on the drawings beyond the overall building footprints). A front porch would project beyond the rear wall plane of the historic building. Staff suggests that the entire mass of the proposed building on Lot 8, including the front porch, be pushed back so that no part projects beyond the rear wall plane of the historic building. Staff also recommends that the

massing of the proposed façade and roofline be broken down, with setbacks on the eastern half of the front elevation. Staff finds that the proposed façade is three feet wider than that of the historic building, and that the flatness of the façade makes it appear out of scale and massing with the historic resource. Staff also notes that the foundation line of the proposed building on Lot 8 is shown higher than that of the building on Lot 7, and that the existing rolling topography of the lots is not shown in the schematic drawings, but would be helpful for a second preliminary consultation review. Once the HPC has indicated preferences for the infill construction and has provided guidance on what would be successful siting for the new houses and successful approaches to the massing, the applicant should provide a streetscape rendering with the new proposed houses in relation to the historic house. This rendering can then also include accurate grading information.

Staff generally supports the use of a shared driveway for the proposed new construction, but notes that it eliminates the driveway for the existing building, which is currently located on Lot 8 (*Figure 10*). Although not part of the current scope, staff suggests that the applicant consult with the owners of Lots 9 and 12 to determine if a shared driveway could be achieved from Hollow Glen Place along the rears of Lots 7, 8, 9, and 12. A joint application could be made for such a proposal, and the HPC could require this work as mitigation as part of the current HAWP application.



Figure 10: View from the existing curb cut on Lot 8 towards the historic house.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the applicant make any revisions based upon the HPC's comments and return for a second preliminary consultation.

Staff Requested HPC Feedback

- The appropriateness of constructing in fill housing on the platted lots;
- The appropriateness of the location, scale and massing of the proposed buildings;
- The appropriateness of the proposed shared driveway and attached garages;
- Any other comments.

Staff-recommended materials to be submitted for a second preliminary consultation:

- Massing diagrams that include existing/proposed topography and are shown as part of a streetscape rendering that includes the historic house.
- Setback measurements from the street and from the neighboring buildings.
- Clarification on the different foundation lines shown between the buildings on Lots 7 and 8.
- Tree survey identifying all trees greater than 6" d.b.h. on the properties that will be impacted by the proposed construction. Information should be shown in a table and plan view noting the caliper and species of the trees.
- Refinement of the proposed architectural style for the infill houses including detailed elevations and proposed materials.
- Information on discussions with the adjacent neighbor regarding the driveway.



APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC AREA WORK PERMIT
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
301.563.3400

FOR STAFF ONLY:
HAWP#
DATE ASSIGNED

APPLICANT:

Name:
Address:
Daytime Phone:
E-mail:
City:
Zip:
Tax Account No.:

AGENT/CONTACT (if applicable):

Name:
Address:
Daytime Phone:
E-mail:
City:
Zip:
Contractor Registration No.:

LOCATION OF BUILDING/PREMISE: MIHP # of Historic Property

Is the Property Located within an Historic District? Yes/District Name
No/Individual Site Name

Is there an Historic Preservation/Land Trust/Environmental Easement on the Property? If YES, include a map of the easement, and documentation from the Easement Holder supporting this application.

Are other Planning and/or Hearing Examiner Approvals /Reviews Required as part of this Application? (Conditional Use, Variance, Record Plat, etc.?) If YES, include information on these reviews as supplemental information.

Building Number: Street:

Town/City: Nearest Cross Street:

Lot: Block: Subdivision: Parcel:

TYPE OF WORK PROPOSED: See the checklist on Page 4 to verify that all supporting items for proposed work are submitted with this application. Incomplete Applications will not be accepted for review. Check all that apply:

- Checklist of work types: New Construction, Addition, Demolition, Grading/Excavation, Deck/Porch, Fence, Hardscape/Landscape, Roof, Shed/Garage/Accessory Structure, Solar, Tree removal/planting, Window/Door, Other.

I hereby certify that I have the authority to make the foregoing application, that the application is correct and accurate and that the construction will comply with plans reviewed and approved by all necessary agencies and hereby acknowledge and accept this to be a condition for the issuance of this permit.

Signature of owner or authorized agent

Date

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

Owner's mailing address	Owner's Agent's mailing address
Adjacent and confronting Property Owners mailing addresses	

Description of Property: Please describe the building and surrounding environment. Include information on significant structures, landscape features, or other significant features of the property:

Description of Work Proposed: Please give an overview of the work to be undertaken:

Work Item 1: _____	
Description of Current Condition:	Proposed Work:

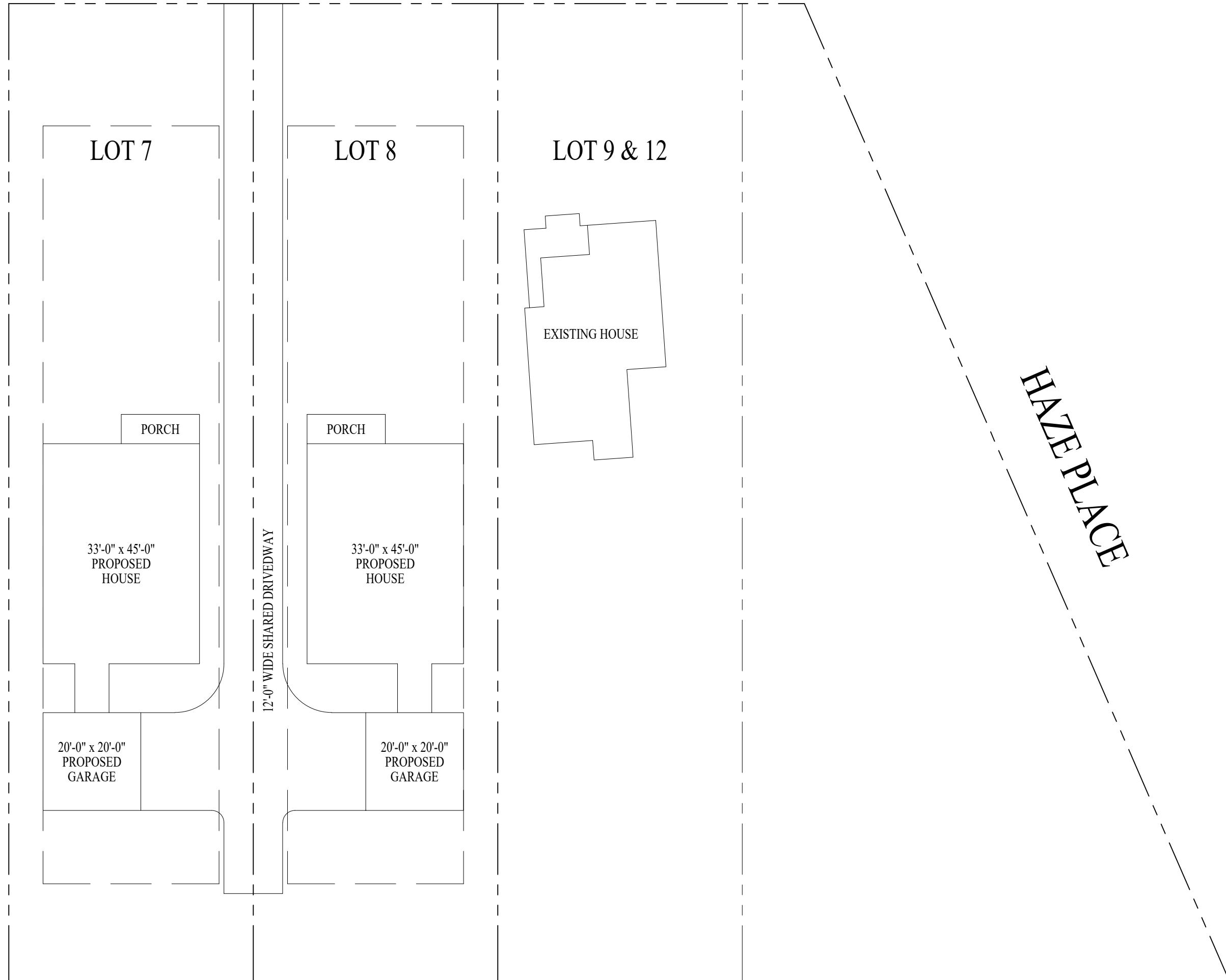
Work Item 2: _____	
Description of Current Condition:	Proposed Work:

Work Item 3: _____	
Description of Current Condition:	Proposed Work:

**HISTORIC AREA WORK PERMIT
CHECKLIST OF
APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

	Required Attachments						
Proposed Work	I. Written Description	2. Site Plan	3. Plans/ Elevations	4. Material Specifications	5. Photographs	6. Tree Survey	7. Property Owner Addresses
New Construction	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Additions/ Alterations	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Demolition	*	*	*		*		*
Deck/Porch	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Fence/Wall	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Driveway/ Parking Area	*	*		*	*	*	*
Grading/Excavation/ Landscaping	*	*		*	*	*	*
Tree Removal	*	*		*	*	*	*
Siding/ Roof Changes	*	*	*	*	*		*
Window/ Door Changes	*	*	*	*	*		*
Masonry Repair/ Repoint	*	*	*	*	*		*
Signs	*	*	*	*	*		*

HOLMAN AVENUE



LOT 7

LOT 8

LOT 9 & 12

PORCH

PORCH

EXISTING HOUSE

33'-0" x 45'-0"
PROPOSED
HOUSE

33'-0" x 45'-0"
PROPOSED
HOUSE

20'-0" x 20'-0"
PROPOSED
GARAGE

20'-0" x 20'-0"
PROPOSED
GARAGE

12'-0" WIDE SHARED DRIVeway

HAZE PLACE

