

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE
BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
September 21, 2021**



Preliminary Discussion

745 Park Street, Tax Parcel 520051100

Owners/Applicants: Karen Vadja and Kevin Riddle

Demolition of existing dwelling



Background

Year Built: 1957

District: North Downtown ADC District

Status: Contributing

Brick, stretcher bond; 1-1/2 stories; gable roof (composition); 3 bays. Detached house, 1950s-60s. Entrance in center bay. Exterior end chimney on north, single ramp. (NRHP listing for the Charlottesville and Albemarle County Courthouse Historic District. VDHR #104-0072.)

Prior BAR Actions

n/a

Presentation

- *745 Park Street Demolition, Informal Discussion*, dated 08/24/202

Preliminary discussion on request to demolish the existing, approx. 35-f x 30-ft, single story, brick dwelling. Owners planning significant and extensive improvements to home. Renovations to existing impractical; razing is preferred.

Note: A CoA is required to raze a contributing structure. Also, a CoA is also required for subsequent construction on or alteration to the site.

Discussion and Recommendations

The BAR should discuss if the proposed demolition is compatible with the ADC District Design Guidelines for Demolitions. As is standard for demolition requests, should the BAR consider approval, pending a formal submittal and request, staff will recommend condition of approval

that prior to demolition the applicant will provide sketch plan and photographs of the existing dwelling and site.

While a contributing structure, it must be noted that when the ADC District was established, all but approximately 15 primary structures were similarly designated. This district, including 745 Prk Street) was established in 1991. (It was expanded in 2005 to include the area north of downtown, between McIntire Road and 1st Street North.) Prior to 1996, when establishing an ADC district, it was the City's practice to designate all structures as *contributing*.

Additionally, while this dwelling was constructed 64 years ago and is thus eligible to be considered for possible designation, it is unique only because it is dissimilar in age and style from the houses that characterize this district.

Between Lyons Court and the Bypass, within the ADC District on the west side of Park Street, there are four houses north and four houses south of 745 Park Street. They date from 1840 to 1936; the median year built is 1910. On the east side of Park, not in the district, there are 15 homes, dating from 1946 to 1967; the median year built is 1951.

Prior demolitions in the North Downtown ADC District, which might be helpful.

- 705 Park Street, demo 1920s garage and construct new, CoA approved April 17, 2012.
http://weblink.charlottesville.org/public/0/edoc/622122/BAR_705%20Park%20Street_March2012.pdf
http://weblink.charlottesville.org/public/0/edoc/622121/BAR_705%20Park%20Street_July2012.pdf
- 713 Park Street, demo c1920 garage, CoA approved April 21, 2009.
http://weblink.charlottesville.org/public/0/edoc/790894/BAR_713%20Park%20Street_April2019.pdf

Note: Comments above and in the review below are based on the information provided and are intended for discussion only. Comments and recommendation may change when a formal request is submitted.

Suggested Motions

This is a preliminary discussion; no formal action will be taken.

Criteria, Standards, and Guidelines

Review Criteria Generally

Sec. 34-284(b) of the City Code states that, in considering a particular application, the BAR shall approve the application unless it finds:

- (1) That the proposal does not meet specific standards set forth within this division or applicable provisions of the Design Guidelines established by the board pursuant to Sec.34-288(6); and
- (2) The proposal is incompatible with the historic, cultural or architectural character of the district in which the property is located or the protected property that is the subject of the application.

City Code Sec. 34-278. Standards for considering demolitions.

The following factors shall be considered in determining whether or not to permit the moving, removing, encapsulation or demolition, in whole or in part, of a contributing structure or protected property:

- a) The historic, architectural or cultural significance, if any, of the specific structure or property, including, without limitation:
- 1) The age of the structure or property;

Owner comment: The house was built in 1957. This makes it unusually young to be included in the Park Street ADC. It's not even older than the majority of houses on the east side of the 700 block--none of them included within the ADC District.

- 2) Whether it has been designated a National Historic Landmark (NRHP), listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR);

Staff: The North Downtown ADC District is part of the Charlottesville and Albemarle County Courthouse Historic District. (104-0072),¹ which is listed on the VLR (1980, 1995) and the NRHP (1982, 2008). 745 Park Street is recorded in the district inventory; however, the inventory does not indicate *contributing* or *non-contributing* resources—see pdf page 50 of the NRHP nomination.

From the NRHP nomination, 1995 amendment: (*Emphasis added. Refer to map in the Appendix*)

As viewed on a map, the northernmost section of the district is seen as a projecting arm terminating at Lyons Court and at the 250 Bypass. Middle-and upper-middle-class residences extend along both sides of Park Street to Lyons Court. Similar houses are found interspersed on the northwestern side of Park Street between Lyons Court and the Route 250 Bypass; however, this area has been weakened by the recent construction of a large church unsympathetic in scale and quality to its neighbors. Houses on the northeastern side of Park Street, north of Lyons Court, are uniformly of *post-1930 construction and not suitable for inclusion in the historic district at this time.*

[...]

An irregular route is followed by the northern boundary between McIntire Road and Park Street. Such a course roughly follows the pattern of development of the low-lying area between the higher elevations of Park Street and North First Street. *The houses that are excluded are, for the most part, post-1930 builder houses.*

- 3) Whether, and to what extent, the building or structure is associated with an historic person, architect or master craftsman, or with an historic event;

Owner comment: No associations are known.

- 4) Whether the building or structure, or any of its features, represent an infrequent or the first or last remaining example within the city of a particular architectural style or feature;

¹ https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/VLR_to_transfer/PDFNoms/104-0072_CharlottesvilleAndAlbemarleCountyCourthouse_HD_1980-1995_Amendment_Final_Nomination.pdf

Owner comment: This house is not rare or singular. There are many dozens of houses in the city-- none of them protected within an ADC-- built in the same era and style of this house. They can be found in almost every corner of the city. Some are older. Some are younger. In some cases, entire streets are made up of variations of this house. (Photographs of examples are included in the presentation.)

- 5) Whether the building or structure is of such old or distinctive design, texture or material that it could not be reproduced, or could be reproduced only with great difficulty

Owner comment: No

- 6) The degree to which distinguishing characteristics, qualities, features or materials remain;

Owner comment: The brick exterior, windows and doors appear to be original.

- b) Whether, and to what extent, a contributing structure is linked, historically or aesthetically, to other buildings or structures within an existing major design control district, or is one of a group of properties within such a district whose concentration or continuity possesses greater significance than many of its component buildings and structures.

Owner comment: No.

- c) The overall condition and structural integrity of the building or structure, as indicated by studies prepared by a qualified professional engineer and provided by the applicant or other information provided to the board;

Owner comment: [Structure is sound,] to the best of our knowledge.

- d) Whether, and to what extent, the applicant proposes means, methods or plans for moving, removing or demolishing the structure or property that preserves portions, features or materials that are significant to the property's historic, architectural or cultural value; and

Owner comment: Dwelling will be razed. The most distinctive and memorable aspects of this property-- the only ones through which it truly adds to the fabric of the west side of Park Street-- are landscape elements: the stone wall at the sidewalk and the huge arborvitae screening the yard. We will keep those.

- e) Any applicable provisions of the city's Design Guidelines.

Staff: See ADC Guidelines for Demolition of Historic Structures.

Pertinent ADC District Design Guidelines

Chapter VII: Demolition and Moving. B Demolition of Historic Structures
Review Criteria for Demolition

- 1) The standards established by the City Code, Section 34-278

Staff: See above: Code Requirement for Considering Demolitions.

- 2) The public necessity of the proposed demolition.

Staff: There is no public necessity.

- 3) The public purpose or interest in land or buildings to be protected.

Staff: The requested demolition is necessary for the construction of a new dwelling, for which construction will require BAR review and approval.

- 4) The existing character of the setting of the structure or area and its surroundings.

Staff: See owner's comments and presentation.

- 5) Whether or not a relocation of the structure would be a practical and preferable alternative to demolition.

Staff: This is not a unique structure. Relocation would not be a preferable alternative.

- 6) Whether or not the proposed demolition would affect adversely or positively other historic buildings or the character of the historic district.

Staff: Demolition will not adversely or positively affect the other historic buildings or the character of the district.

- 7) Whether or not there has been a professional economic and structural feasibility study for rehabilitating or reusing the structure and whether or not its findings support the proposed demolition.

Staff: A structural report has not been received. Owner acknowledges there are no known structural issues.

Guidelines for Demolition

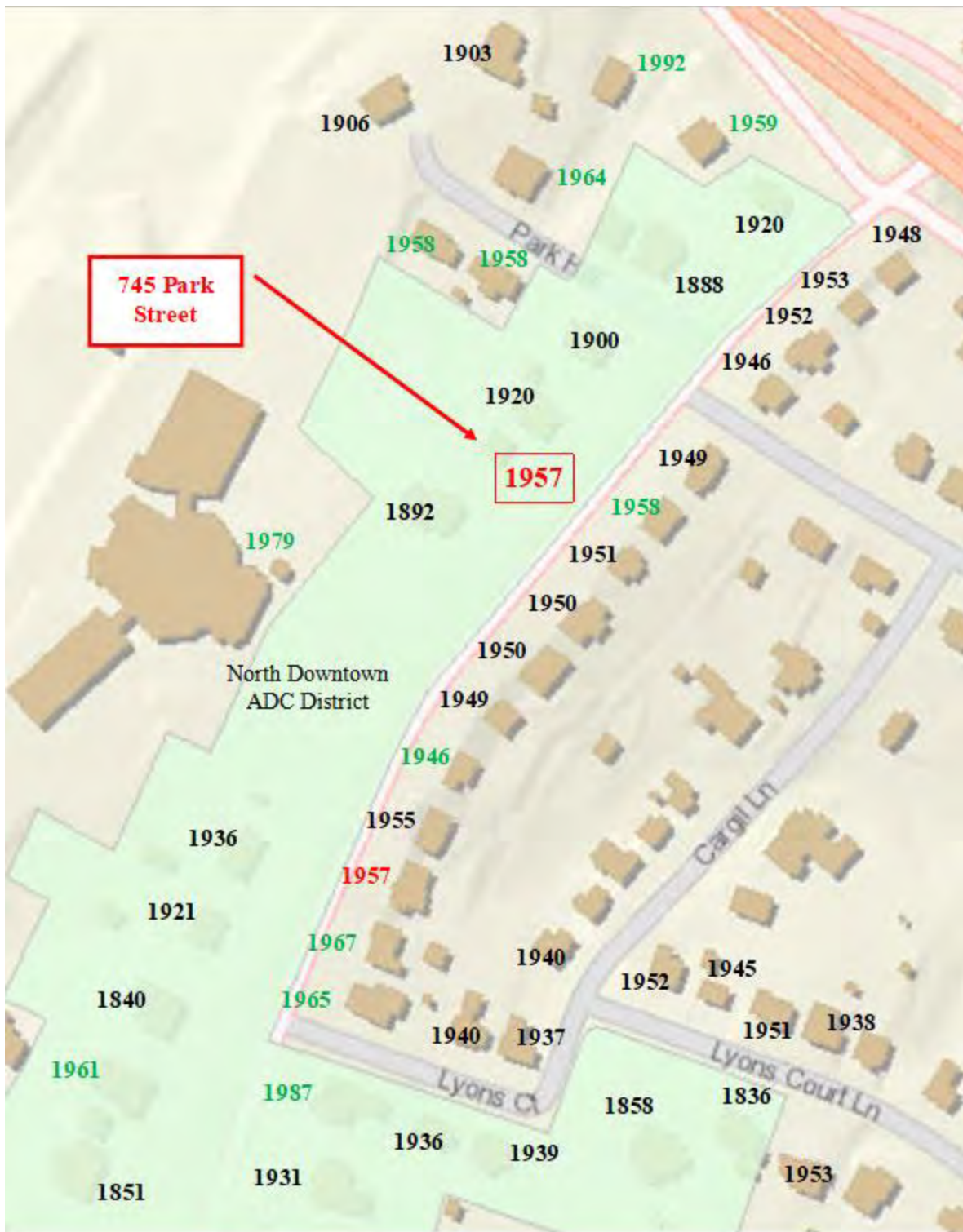
- 1) Demolish a historic structure only after all preferable alternatives have been exhausted.
- 2) Document the building thoroughly through photographs and, for especially significant buildings, measured drawings according to Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) Standards. This information should be retained by the City of Charlottesville Department of Neighborhood Development Services and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. **(See staff recommendation.)**
- 3) If the site is to remain vacant for any length of time, maintain the empty lot in a manner consistent with other open spaces in the districts.

Construction dates for nearby structures

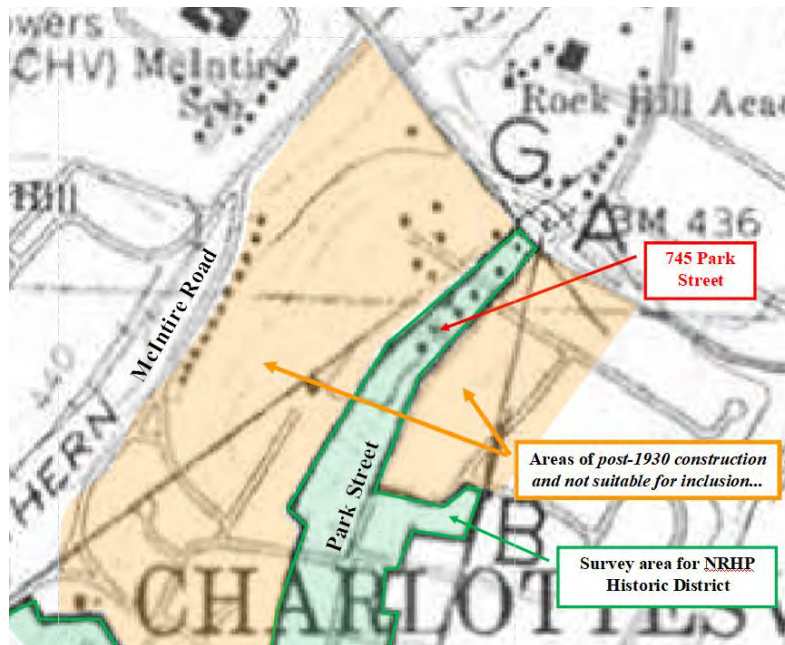
Year: Prior to 1957

Year: 1957

Year: After 1957



Survey area from 1995 amendment to the Charlottesville and Albemarle County Courthouse Historic District



City map indicating dates of construction



745 PARK STREET

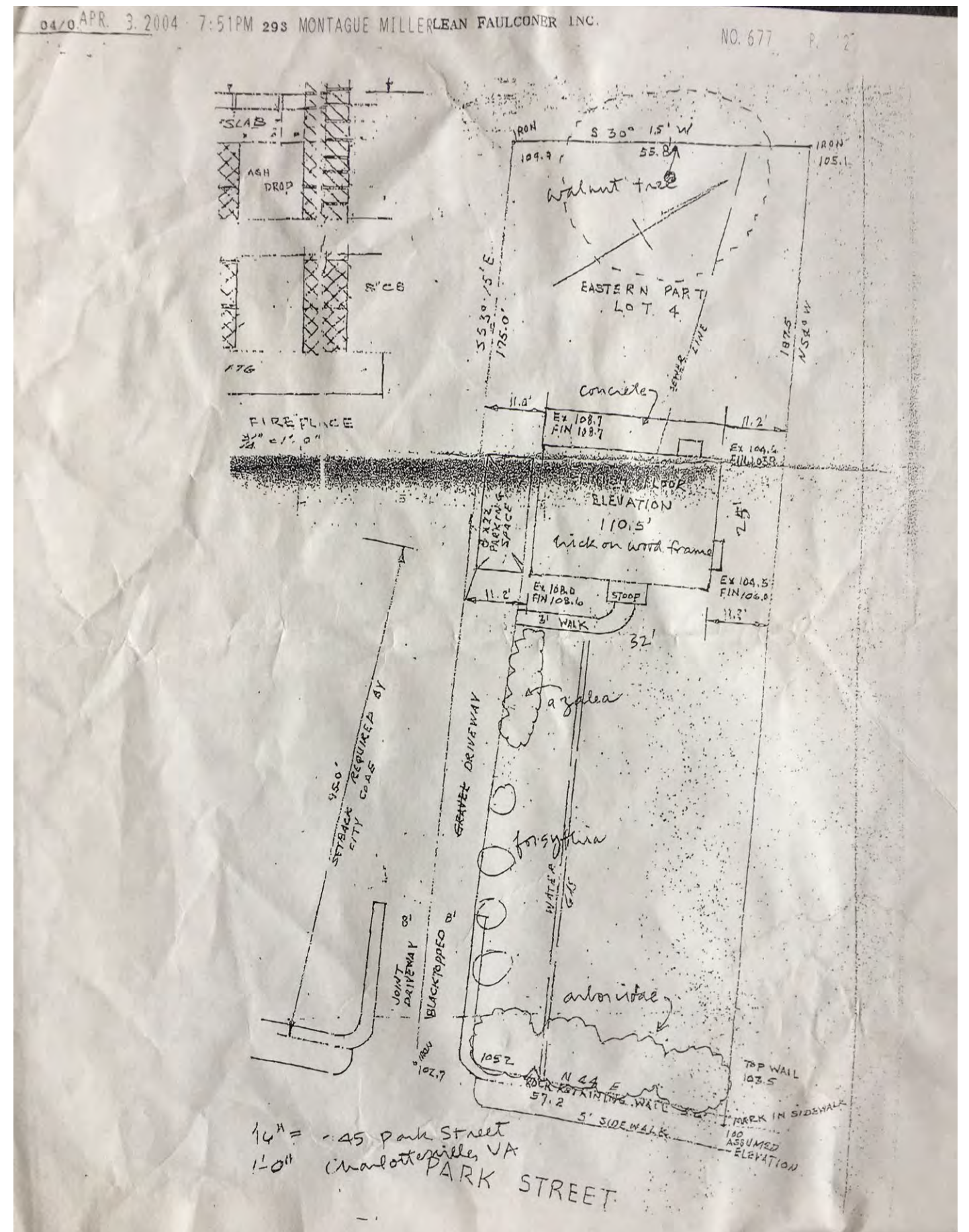
demolition

informal discussion



* We plan to have the property properly survey if we return with a formal application to demolish the house.

plat



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08/24/2021



existing conditions



existing conditions

745 PARK STREET

08/24/2021

Reason for demolition	<p>We are planning significant home improvements. The renovation process will involve so much removal and modification of the existing house that trying to retain some fraction of ground floor structure and exterior walls will make the project more cumbersome and expensive than simply tearing down to the foundations and starting over.</p> <p>We question the contributing role of the existing house. It has almost none of the attributes that form the historic fabric on this side of Park Street. In age and materials and style, it has far more in common with the houses on the opposite side of Park Street. Yet at the 700 and 800 blocks of Park Street, the properties on the east side are excluded from the North Downtown ADC. If the city had intended for a house like this to be protected, the east side of the street would have been included in the ADC.</p> <p>Architecturally, this house does not contribute to what makes the west side of Park Street exceptional. The only way in which it is compatible with neighboring houses is its deep siting, almost 100 feet from Park Street. Otherwise, it shares almost none of the characteristics that make most houses on this side of the street distinctive. Its size and proportions are not compatibale with the older houses. It lacks a spacious front porch. It lacks a pedestrian walk to the front door. The brick veneer is perfectly fine for its time, but it's nothing special: a standard running bond in an extremely common factory brick. It possesses none of the finer variations typical of older masonry. From the street, the asphalt shingles of the gable roof are prominent in a way that is unusual on this side of the block and not compatible with it.</p>
Age of the house	The house was built in 1957. This makes it unusually young to be included in the Park Street ADC. It's not even older than the majority of houses on the east side of the 700 block-- none of them included within the ADC.
Is it listed on any national or Virginia historic registers?	No.
Is the house associated with an historic person, architect or tradesman? Is it associated with an historic event?	No, to the best of our knowledge.
Does the house or any of its features represent an infrequent or the first or last remaining example of its kind within the city?	No. This house is not rare or singular. There are many dozens of houses in the city-- none of them protected within an ADC-- built in the same era and style of this house. They can be found in almost every corner of the city. Some are older. Some are younger. In some cases, entire streets are made up of variations of this house. Photographs of examples are included in later pages of this document.
Is the house of such old or distinctive design, texture or material that it could not be reproduced, or could be reproduced only with great difficulty?	No.
To what extent do distinguishing characteristics, qualities, features or materials remain?	The brick exterior, windows and doors appear to be original.
Is this house linked-- historically or aestheically-- to other buildings or structures within the ADC?	No.
Is it one of a group of properties within the district whose concentrations or continuity possess greater significance than many of its component buildings?	No.
Is it in good structural condition?	Yes, to the best of our knowledge.
To what extent does the applicant propose to preserve features or materials significant to the property's historic, architectural or cultural value?	The most distinctive and memorable aspects of this property-- the only ones through which it truly adds to the fabric of the west side of Park Street-- are landscape elements: the stone wall at the sidewalk and the huge arborvitae screening the yard. We will keep those.



examples of house type elsewhere north avenue

745 PARK STREET

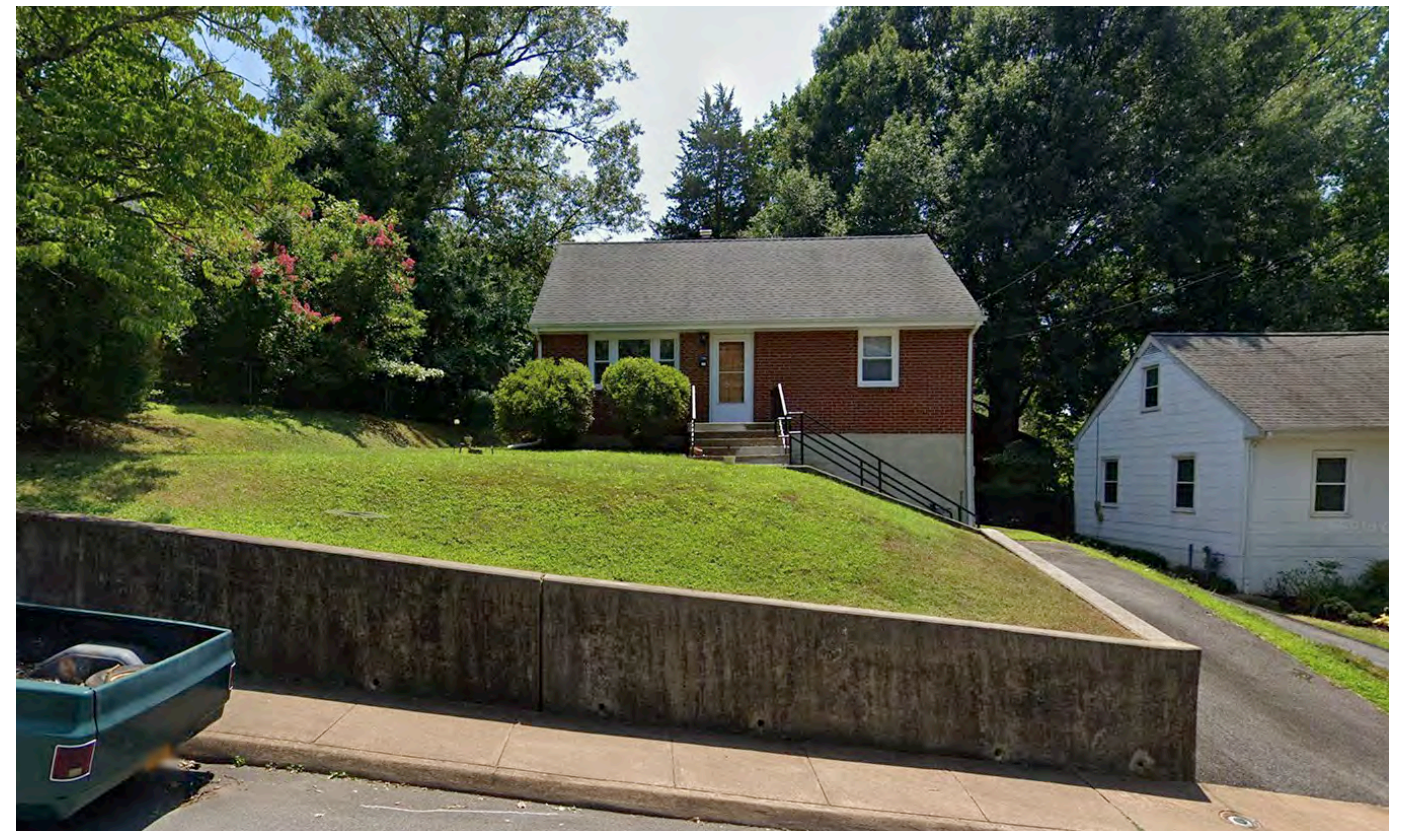
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examples of house type elsewhere willard drive

745 PARK STREET

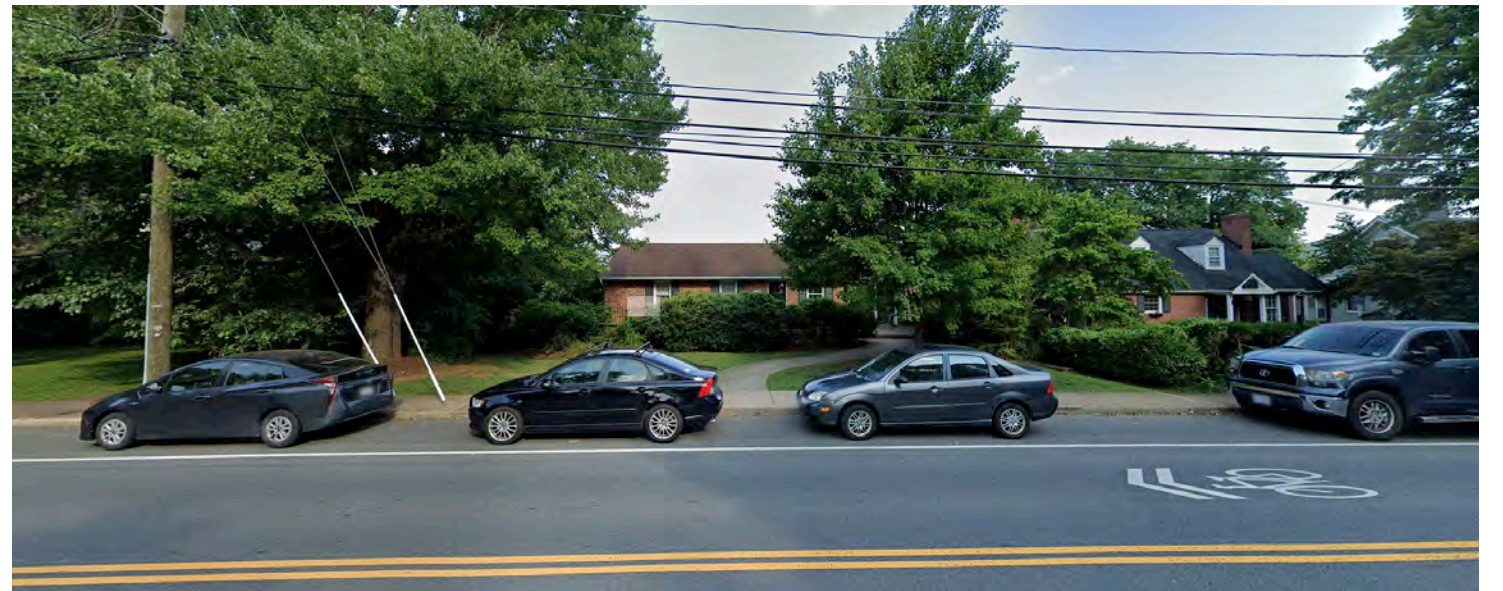
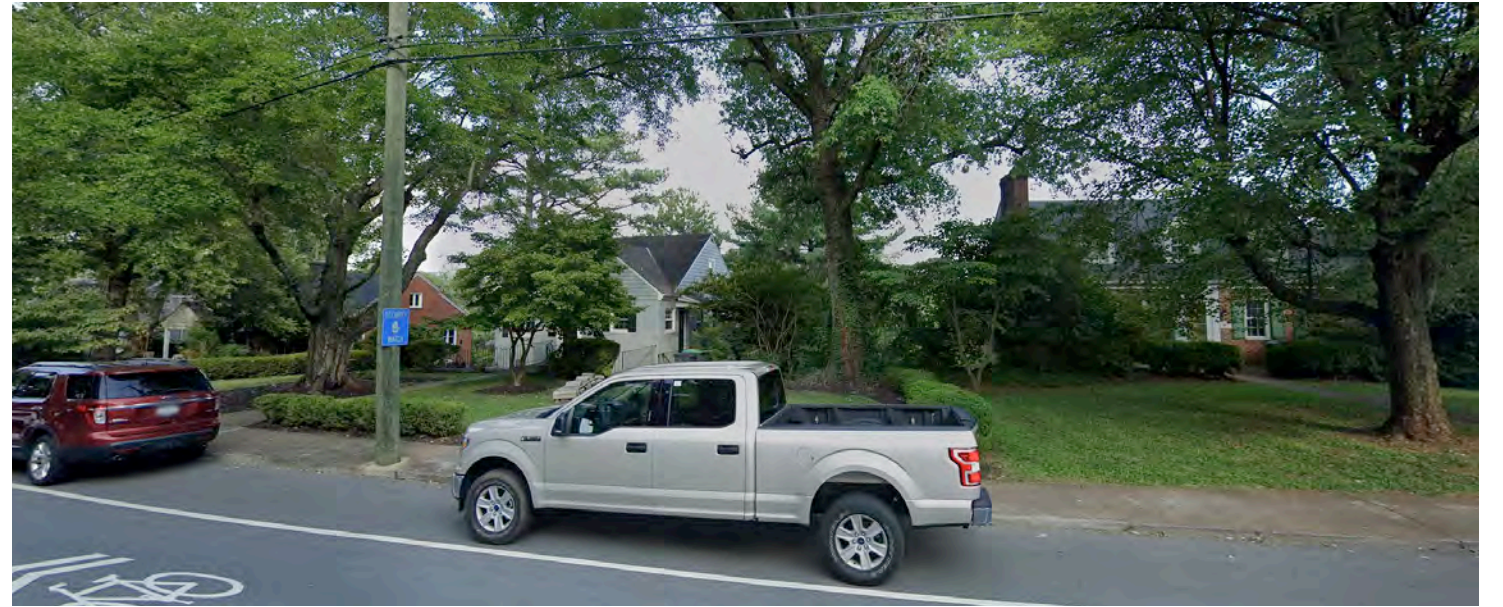
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examples of house type elsewhere forest hills avenue

745 PARK STREET

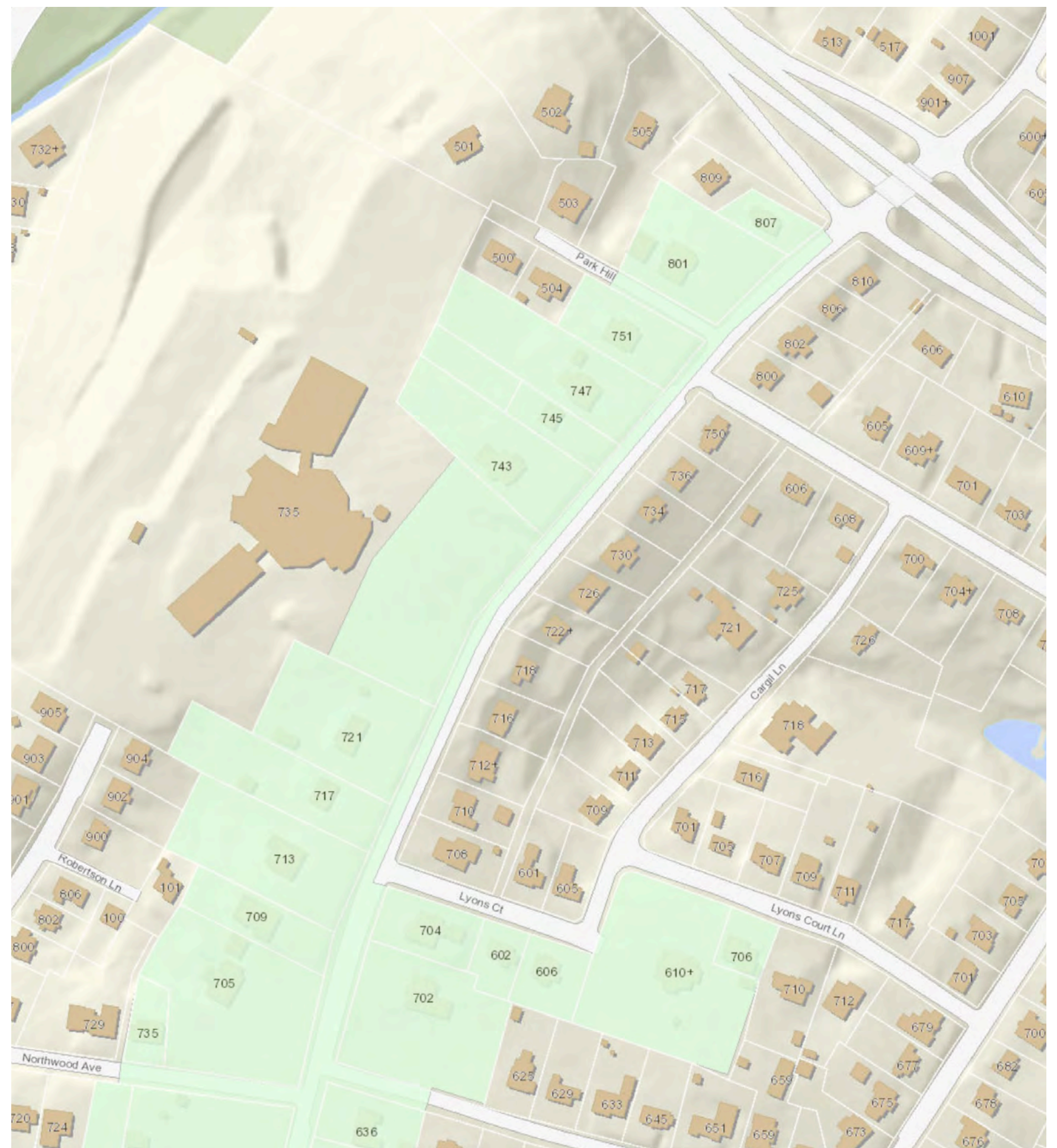
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700 block of park street, east

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north downtown ADC above 700 block

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