

**STAFF REPORT:** 11-13-2019 MEETING  
**APPLICATION NUMBER:** 19-6534  
**ADDRESS:** 1554-1558 HUBBARD  
**HISTORIC DISTRICT:** HUBBARD FARMS  
**APPLICANT:** ROBERT HOCHSTADT  
**DATE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION:** 10-16-2019  
**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT:** 11/7/2019

**PREPARED BY:** J. ROSS

**SCOPE:** INSTALL SOLAR PANELS AT ROOFTOP

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The building located at 1554-1558 Hubbard is a two-story, duplex that was erected ca. 1910. The resource is rectangular in plan and is clad with brick. The primary roof is hipped and is topped with a hipped-roof dormer. Asphalt shingles cover the roof. Windows are double-hung, leaded-glass, wood-sash units. A partial-width, flat-roof entry porch with Ionic wood columns/supports and masonry stoop shelters the home's primary entrance.



### **PROPOSAL**

With the current proposal, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval to install solar panels at the

building's roof. Specifically, **as per the attached**, the applicant proposes to undertake the following work items:

### **Solar Array**

- Install a seventeen-panel, 22'-1" x 17'-4" x 47'-9" x 18'-9" array and associated flush-mounted rail system, at the south-facing roof surface

### **Solar Edge Inverter**

- Install equipment/solar edge inverter near the utility meter at the rear of the house (specific location is unclear/photos of specific location has not been submitted)

### **STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH**

- The solar array will be visible from the public right-of-way
- As per HDC resolution, HDC staff has the authority to approve new solar panel installations under the condition that they are not visible from the public right-of-way. Staff forwarded this application to the HDC for review because the solar array will be visible from the public right-of-way
- The application outlines the presence of two solar panel installations in the neighborhood (1551 Hubbard and 1520 Hubbard). The installation at 1551 Hubbard was approved by HDC staff on 10-1-2019 because the installation would not be visible from the public right-of-way. A review of the project files for 1520 Hubbard revealed that the Commission did not issue an approval for the installation of solar panels at 1520 Hubbard
- The Commission recently approved two applications for solar panel installations which are visible from the public right-of-way for the following reasons:
  - 4444 Second (Warren Prentis) - The building is industrial in nature, the prevailing character of the immediate environment is commercial in nature, and the panels were compatible with the diverse physical appearance of the adjacent architectural resources. The panels were **minimally-visible** from the right-of-way as they were pushed back 7'-0" from the roof edge, behind a 3'-0"-high parapet. Finally, a solar panel array which was installed at the building roof in 2010 (also visible from the public right-of-way) established a precedent for solar panels at the building.
  - 479 Prentis (Warren Prentis) – The building is located in a residential neighborhood, however, the array was set back 14'-9" from the house's front face, behind a chimney. The applicant's initial submittal did propose to install the array directly north of the chimney, in a location which would be highly visible from the public right-of-way. However, after discussion with HDC staff, the applicant repositioned the array to a less-visible location, behind the chimney/14'-9" from the house's front face. Also, the adjacent 4-story apartment building served to further minimize the visibility of the western roof slope and the proposed array. Staff therefore felt that the installation would be **minimally visible**/inconspicuous and would not detract from the building's or district's historic character.
- It is staff's opinion that the solar array will be visible from the public right-of-way. See the National Park Service Bulletin entitled "*Interpreting the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, # 52 Subject: Incorporating Solar Panels in a Rehabilitation Project*":

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS52-SolarPanels.pdf>

This bulletin notes that “properties with a hipped or gabled roof are **generally** not good candidates for a rooftop solar installation. Solar panels on historic buildings should not be visible from the public right of way such as nearby streets, sidewalks or other public spaces.” However, the below National Park Service publication entitled “*Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*” does cite two examples of solar installations that are “...**visible but not conspicuous**...” and thus meet the standards:

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/sustainability/new-technology/solar-on-historic.htm>

- Finally See the below link to the National Park Service publication entitled “*Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*” which outlines the “Recommended” and “Not Recommended” treatment re: the installation of new solar panel equipment at the exterior of historic buildings

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/guidelines/solar-technology.htm>

## ISSUES

- It is staff’s opinion that the proposed seventeen-panel array will be **conspicuous/visible** from the public right-of-way and is not appropriate within the building’s residential context/general environs
- When staff received the initial proposal, staff did counsel the applicant to seek an alternative location which might minimize the array’s appearance. It is unclear if the applicant undertook such analysis and exhausted all other options

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted above, it is staff’s opinion that the proposed solar array will be **conspicuously/visible** from the public right-of-way and is not appropriate within the building’s residential context/general environs. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission deny the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for this project because the work does not meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, standard # (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* and standard # (10) *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall 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.*