
[EXTERNAL] HDC Meeting - Opposition to Application 3116 Park Ave

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To Historic District Commission (Staff) <hdc@detroitmi.gov>

Dear Commissioners,

The Brush Park Neighborhood Association is writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed application to establish a surface parking lot at 3116 Park Ave. in the Peterboro-Charlotte Historic District, which will be reviewed on 3/11 by the Historic District Commission.

As a community who walks this block every day, this block, on Charlotte between John R and Woodward, represents one of the last intact remnants of Peterboro-Charlotte historic district in an area otherwise plagued by surface lots.

We urge the Commission to apply the standard found in previous HDC decisions regarding surface lots, and we submit that the proposal violates the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The proposed establishment of a surface parking lot places the property in a new use that is incompatible with the defining characteristics of the district, alters features and spaces that characterize a property, and is incompatible with the historic integrity of the Peterboro-Charlotte Historic District

- The property is not being placed in a new use that requires minimal change; it is being paved over, which is a maximal change to the site's environment.
- The historic character is not being preserved; the spatial relationships of the yard and streetscape are being erased.
- A flat expanse of pavement has no massing and creates a "missing tooth" in the streetscape. This destroys the spatial relationships the district was designed to protect.

Moreover, the applicant is further eroding the historic district with:

- Widening Curb Cuts: The applicant proposes widening the curb cut to facilitate cars. As noted in previous decisions, this "further degrades the historic context" by prioritizing vehicle storage over the historic pedestrian fabric and compromising safety.
- Lack of Screening: The applicant proposes no screening or fencing on the Charlotte side. This leaves an open, unsightly void that degrades the pedestrian experience.
- Failure to Meet Modern Standards: This proposal does not even comply with the recent screening requirements currently before City Council. Under those evolving standards, this site would be subject to Type 3 screening for off-street parking in a residential district, requiring a significant landscape buffer, trees, shrubs, and fencing.

The applicant's justification that this site "used to be a parking lot" is a fallacy of logic. That previous parking lot was likely a scar left by the demolitions of the mid-20th century—the very erosion of history that this Commission was established to halt. The Peterboro-Charlotte Historic District is defined by its dense, urban rhythm of late-Victorian homes and early-20th-century apartments. To approve this application is to confuse "past use" with "historic significance."

Lastly, the developer is Landy Land LLC, who acquired the vast expanse of Joel Landy's property holdings after his passing. Joel Landy saved so many historic homes in the area, including several on Charlotte St. that sit adjacent to

the developer's proposed parking lot. We hope that the commission sees the irony that the very historic district he sought to save is now under threat through the developer who presently controls his estate.

While BSEED has regrettably given approval for for Landy Land LLC to construct a surface lot across the street (116 Charlotte St.), that decision should serve as a warning, not a precedent. We must not replicate that mistake here. To approve this application is to permanently cement a non-contributing use into the district and prevent the future, appropriate infill development.

We respectfully request that the Commission issue a Denial for the subject work.

Sincerely,
Brush Park Neighborhood Association
Board of Directors