



**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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SR-2 – ADVISORY STAFF REPORT (03-06-2026)

This advisory report, prepared by staff, represents the opinion and advice of professional staff, and does not represent nor direct the separate review and decision of the Historic District Commission. This report serves as an addendum to SR-1, an objective staff summary of the proposal and property.

ADDRESS: 3116 PARK

MEETING DATE: 03-11-2026

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00693

SCOPE: COSTRUCT PARKING LOT

ADVISORY STAFF REPORT PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG

STAFF OBJECTIONS TO APPROVAL:

This first section describes itemized conclusions/concerns, which, in staff's professional opinion, would prevent the issue of an unconditional Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). "None" means staff has no objections and believes a COA is warranted, with no conditions. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.

1. A surface parking lot (disconnected with the rehabilitation of an existing historic building or not required by code as part of a project for an otherwise compatible new building), is in staff's opinion incompatible with the protected historic character of the Peterboro-Charlotte Historic District, whose significance is rooted in an older, pre-WWI urban pattern that predated the development of parking lots.
2. The recently submitted presentation deck appears to show an updated site plan design for the proposal at variance with the drawing originally submitted in November. Applicant/developer should clarify which design is under review and, if necessary, submit an updated formal site plan for the revised project.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

This second section expands on the reasoning and analysis leading to staff's conclusions given in the first section above. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.

- The Peterboro-Charlotte Historic District was established in 1984. Only one block in size, it included 14 buildings at designation. Only one, at 3126 Park (the concrete block “Union Hall” erected in 1945 and visible in blue ink on the 1951 Sanborn map), is no longer extant, and was described in the HDAB report as abutting “3120 Park but not compatible with it or the rest of the proposed district in age or design.” Based on this statement, and the remaining 13 buildings construction dates as given in the report, the effective Period of Significance is 1881-1908, or turn of the 20th century.
- 3120 Park, the thin brick building at the northern boundary of the proposed parking lot subject to this review and the only other extant building at this western edge of the district, was built in 1891 by Attorney Water Barlow, who once served as Chief Assistant Corporation Counsel of the City of Detroit. The building is described by HDAB as such:

This very narrow two story brick house has a three-sided bay on the first story of the north two-thirds of its front façade. The entrance is recessed on the southern third of the front façade; its southern corner is supported by a short Doric column. On the second story are three slightly bowed windows grouped together with a continuous lintel and sill. There is a row of brick arcading beneath the cornice of the parapet wall. 3120 Park is very urban in appearance due to its narrowness, its flat roof, and its high basement.



View of existing conditions at the northeast corner of Charlotte Street and Park Avenue, looking generally north along Park. 3120 Park is the (recently boarded) building bordering the northern boundary of the parcel. Staff photo, November 19, 2025.



View of existing conditions from mid-block along Park looking southeast, with subject parcel at center of image. 3120 Park, visible here at left, is the (recently boarded) building bordering the northern boundary of the parcel. Staff photo, November 19, 2025.



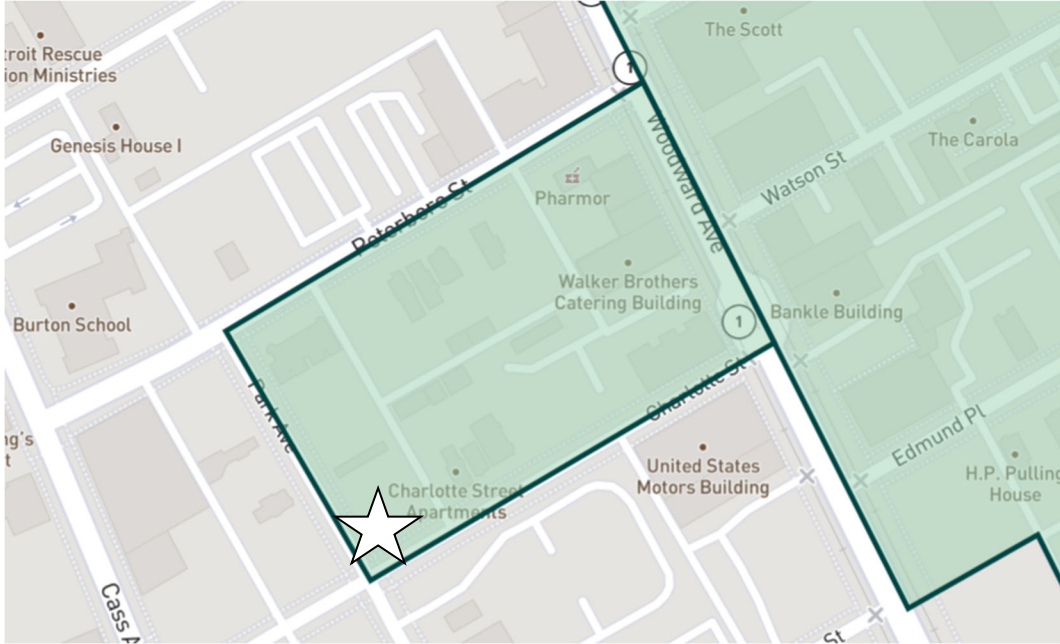
Same orientation as above image, showing subject parcel. Staff photo, November 19, 2025.



View to the north from Charlotte, showing remnant of curb cut, proposed for restoration. Staff photo, November 19, 2025.



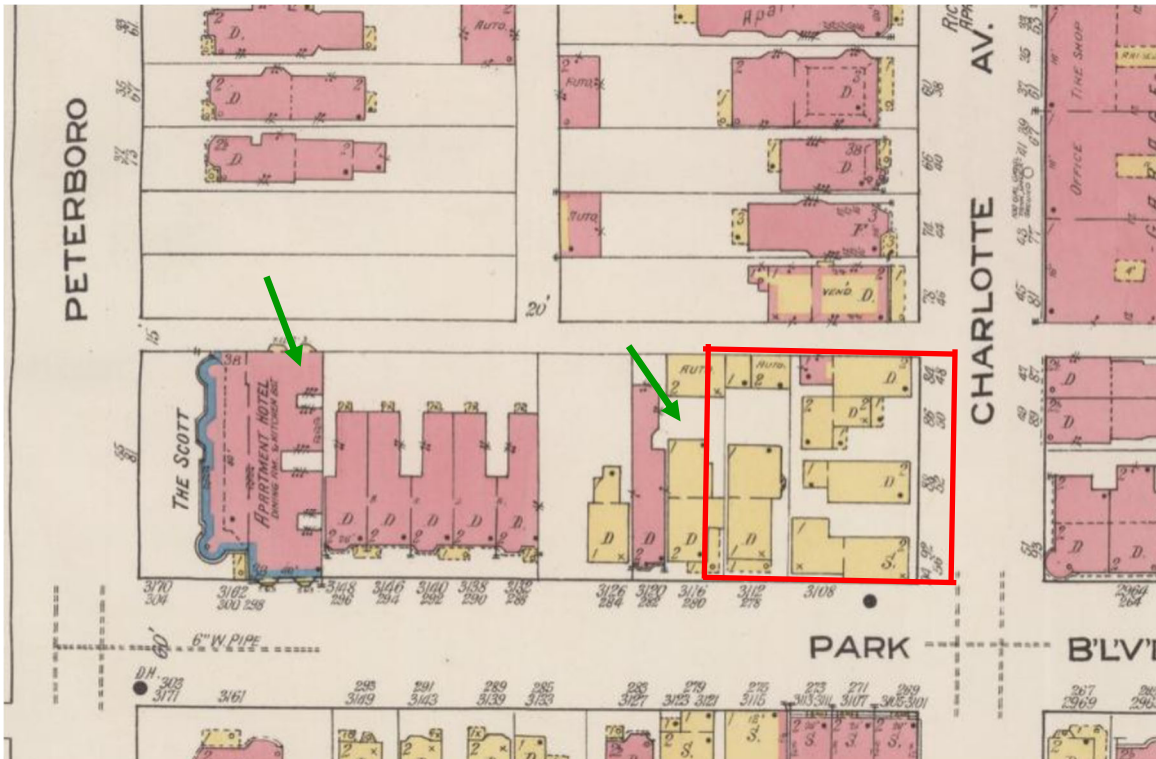
View to the east along Charlotte. Visible in this image, and that above, is some of the broken concrete paving on the parcel itself. Staff photo, November 19, 2025.



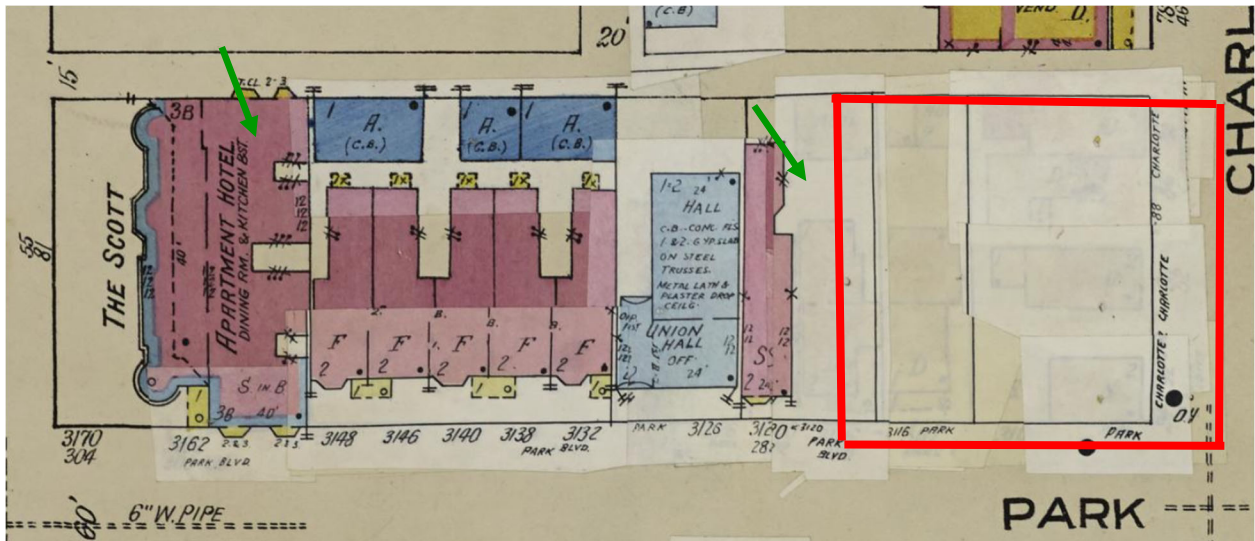
Extents of the Peterboro-Charlotte Historic District (green shading). The much larger Brush Park Historic District is also visible across Woodward to the east. Project location indicated by white star.



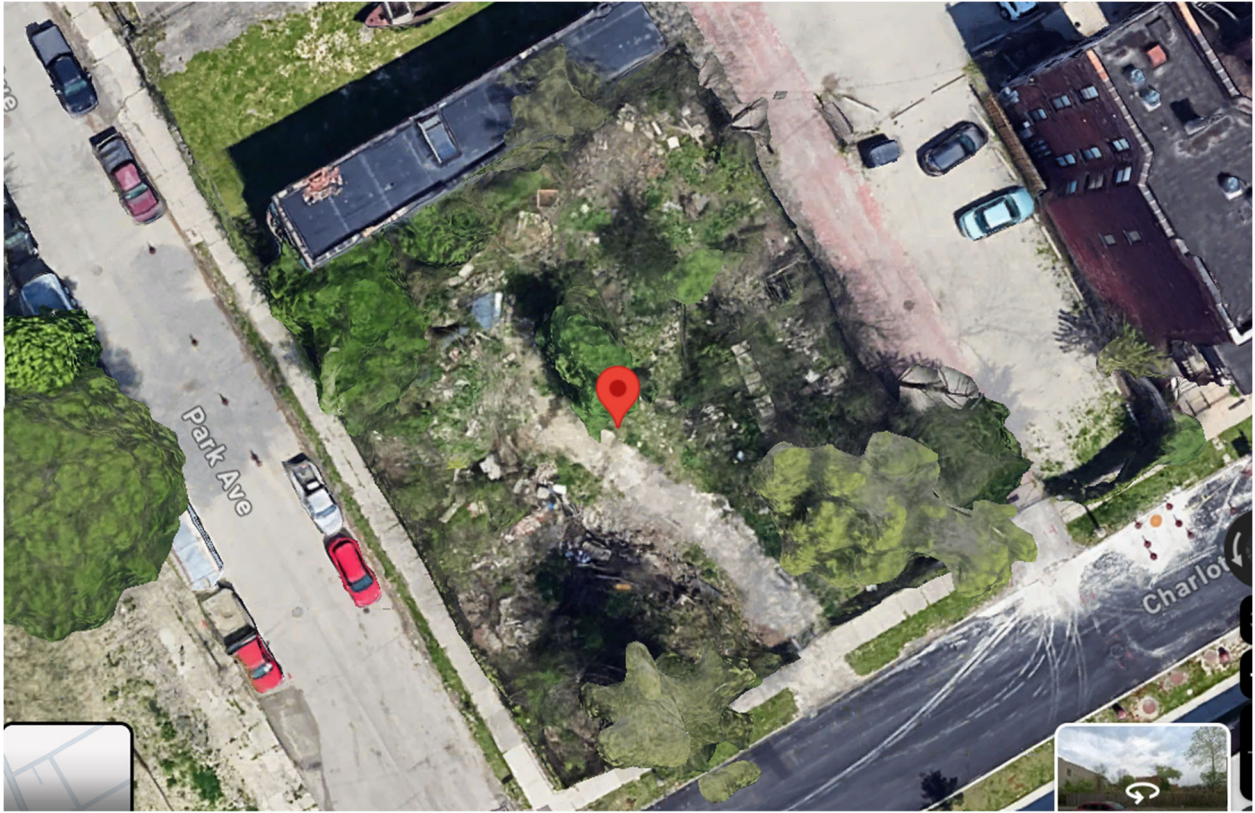
Modern aerial view of district with project parcel outlined in yellow. Note multiple existing parking lots.



1921 Sanborn map (north is to the left) showing block between Peterboro and Charlotte Streets. Subject parcel outlined in red; note all of the wood-framed (yellow) buildings are gone. The only two buildings (green arrows) on this block still extant in 2025 are 3120 Park, the long thin brick dwelling just north of the site and The Scott, the palatial and recently rehabilitated "Apartment Hotel" an early 20th century adaptive reuse of the James Scott Mansion, built in 1897 at Peterboro and Park.



By 1951, in this detail view of the later Sanborn map, much has changed. All the frame buildings on the subject parcel are gone, a possible clue to its use, and a concrete block Union Hall has appeared at 3126 Park. 3120 Park has become a (S)to^re instead of a (D)welling. Concrete block auto garages have also been added behind the former brick dwellings, now (F)lats at 3148-3132 Park, suggesting changing demographic and transportation demands on this aging urban neighborhood.



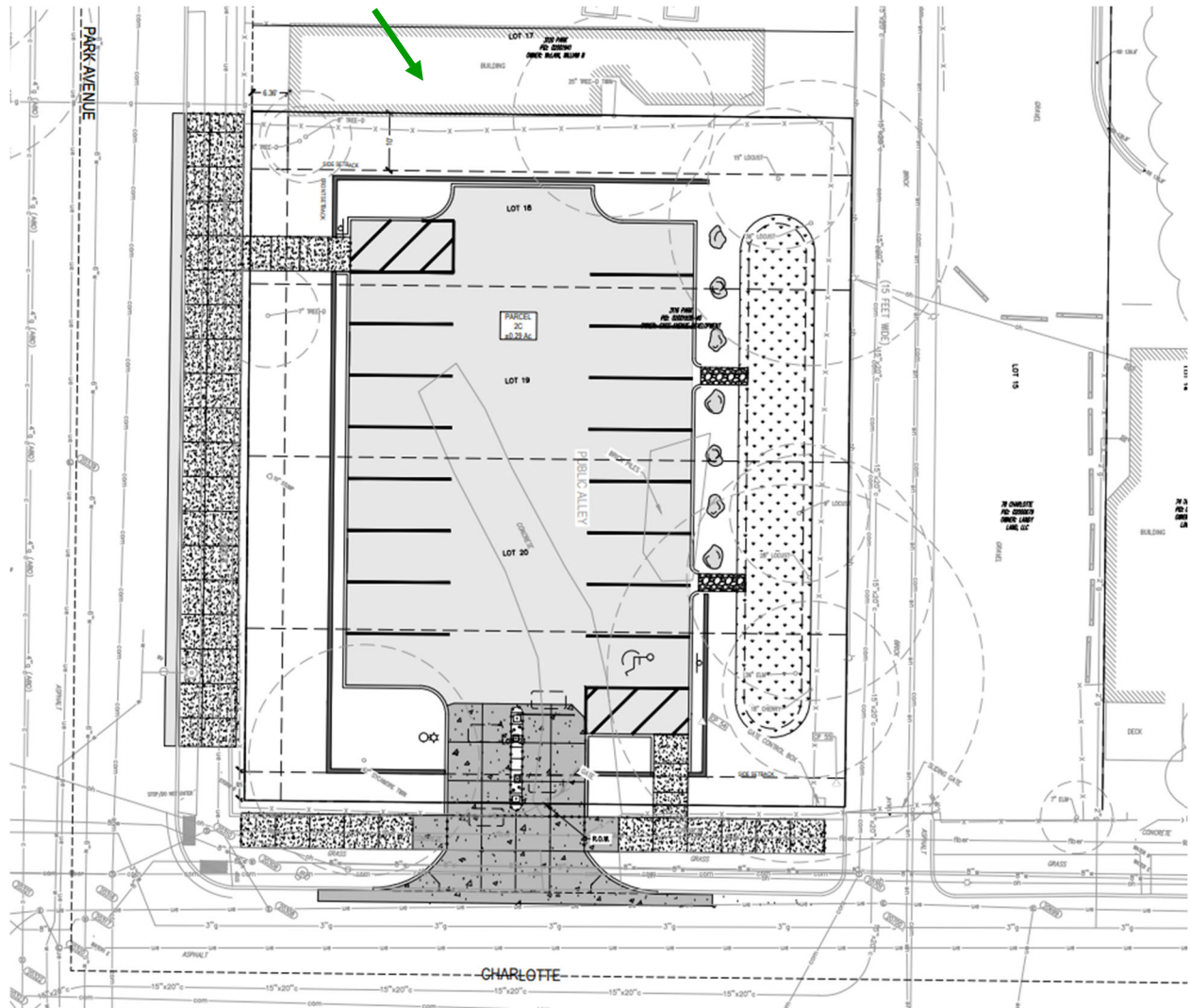
In recent years the subject parcel was heavily overgrown, as seen in the above aerial view (circa 2021) and the Google Street View image below. Compare to current conditions on previous pages. Note curb cut to Charlotte visible here, and a curving paved "road" into the parcel. The recent removal of the trees and ramshackle perimeter fence was not approved by the Commission.



View of the recently rehabilitated James Scott Mansion, at Park and Peterboro. Staff photo, August 1, 2025.



Seen here is the new parking lot behind the Scott, part of the rehabilitation approved by HDC. View to the west. Staff photo, August 1, 2025.



Site plan excerpt from submitted drawings. Green arrow, added by staff, indicates vacant historic building at 3120 Park, a separate parcel also owned by the applicant.

- As seen in the images earlier in this report, 3120 Park was recently boarded without Commission approval. The image below, taken by staff in August of this year, shows conditions prior to the work. Per city records, the buildings is owned by the same owner as the parcel under review for a parking lot. Staff is concerned that protected architectural detail may have been damaged and encourages the owner to submit a proper application for the boarding and subsequent rehabilitation work.



3120 Park on August 1, 2025. Staff photo.

- Concerning the parking lot proposal, a key variable for the Commission to understand will be the current legal use of the parcel. The Commission has typically only approved newly established parking lots that clearly serve another historic building, or when a lot is part of a new development. Independent parking lots for general use are rarely approved in historic districts, unless it can be shown that the parking lot was established and in use as such during the district's significant historic period, or that the use was duly established prior to designation of the historic district (in this case, 1984). In the case of Peterboro-Charlotte, we would look for a documented historic use prior to WWII, as the significant period covers the late 19th century and early 20th century.
- This application was originally received in November and docketed/scheduled for review at the December 2025 Regular Meeting of the Historic District Commission but was withdrawn by the applicant. Staff has had discussions with the developer concerning their other activities in the district and heard about discussions with stakeholders and other parties concerned about the proposal for a surface parking lot. In the last week, the Commission has received two additional files (presentation decks, posted on the website) providing additional context around the developer's plans and projects within the bounds of the Peterboro-Charlotte historic district. The developer wishes to discuss the parking lot proposal with the Commission within this larger context. Staff has observed that, contrary to expectations, there have been apparent minor changes in the site plan that are visible in one of the presentation decks but not reflected in the formal architectural drawing present in the current (November) application. The developer has been asked to coordinate the submission of an updated formal site plan to reflect the additional features (e.g., trees and additional site elements) visible in the presentation deck, if it is their intent to have these additional elements considered. At present, this staff report discusses only what is presented in the application (i.e., the original November/December design).
- We note that the application has an (undated) post-war aerial image and mentions "historic

records" that implies the site had a long term parking use prior to its abandonment. While post-war aerial photographs do show vehicles "parked" on the vacant lot, and there is evidence of a curb cut and at least some paving on the parcel, BSEED Zoning has informed HDC staff that "3116 Park is not a parking lot nor has it ever been a parking lot." (Email from BSEED Zoning Manager Jayda Philson, dated July 28, 2025)

- Staff assessed that there is no current legal use, and therefore for HDC purposes this is the "construction" of a parking lot rather than the paving or alteration of one, which are typically staff approvable. As such it was noticed for public hearing and presented to this body.
- As a *change of use* from vacant lot to parking lot, one of the critical applicable standards is Standard #1, which reads as such (bolded text by staff):

*A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the **defining characteristics** of the building and its site and environment.*

The "defining characteristics" highlighted above refer not to the "existing characteristics" of the district and its environment, but the *characteristics important to its historic significance*. As such the proposal should be judged against the historic environment, not the current-day environment.

- Staff has attached as a supplement to the staff report a list of recent parking lot cases in front of the Commission. *In the recent past, the Commission has approved surface parking lots in the city's historic districts only under the following conditions:*
 1. *The lot is located adjacent to, and directly supports, the proposed adaptive reuse or rehabilitation of a contributing historic building, and thus qualifies for a COA under the National Park Service guidelines concerning cumulative effect (noting that smaller portions of projects may be inappropriate, if the overall effect of the larger project is appropriate in the context of the specific conditions of the property)*
 2. *The lot is part of a new development project, providing required parking per City code, located in the historic district and approved for a COA or NTP.*
 3. *The lot is a pre-existing, legally established (permitted) use that predates the historic district, or was approved by the Commission at an earlier date.*
 4. *The lot is a temporary condition.*
- Staff has presented above historic Sanborn maps showing that the district was a dense, urban district during its pre-war Period of Significance. The Elements of Design for Peterboro-Charlotte (codified as Section 21-2-140), mention historic density in Elements (bold text highlighting by staff):
 - ***(5)Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets.** On Peterboro and Charlotte, the buildings are either centered on their 30 feet to 50 feet lots or are placed on the western lot line, creating very narrow side yards and a rhythmic progression of buildings along the streetscape. **The Scott Mansion at 81 Peterboro and the Addison Hotel at 14 Charlotte are visually removed from other buildings by vacant lots and alleys.** The Addison Hotel and the commercial buildings on Woodward Avenue, with the exception of the service station building, tend to occupy the width of their lots, **creating a continuous streetscape.***
 - ***(12)Walls of continuity.** The major wall of continuity is created by the buildings' façades with their fairly uniform setbacks on Peterboro, sections of Charlotte, and on Woodward Avenue. Residences of Charlotte have less uniform setbacks but are still fairly consistent with the exception of the Addison Hotel, on the corner of Woodward Avenue and*

*Charlotte, which is set at the sidewalk. Three commercial buildings on Woodward Avenue abut each other, forming a continuous street wall. **No wall of continuity exists on Park due to the amount of vacant land.***

- ***(13)Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments.*** ...*No notable landscaping on Charlotte or Park now exists. An iron fence encloses the property of the house on Park, and a chain-link fence encloses the vacant lot south of 3120 Park.... There are no driveways in the district; garages or carriage houses are reached off the rear brick paved alleys... **Although the district was once fully developed, vacant lots, some in use for parking, are noticeable features of the district.** ...*
 - ***(14)Relationship of open space to structures.*** *Vacant land in the district is due to housing demolition. Much land on Park and Peterboro is in use as parking lots. ... Vacant land at the end of the streets tends to isolate buildings in clusters or individually. ...*
 - ***(17)Rhythm of building setbacks.*** *On the south side of Peterboro, all residential buildings have consistent setbacks; on Charlotte, buildings have slightly varying setbacks... **There is no rhythm created on the east side of Park.***
 - ***(22)General environmental character.*** *The character of the district is that of a single block of late 19th Century to early 20th Century middle-class residential structures and their commercial frontage which has suffered from urban blight in more modern times. **A cohesiveness to the streetscape is achieved through fairly uniform setbacks, spacing of buildings on lots, and massing of buildings.** The streetscapes are very urban in character, due to the closeness of the buildings to each other and to the streets. ...*
- It is clear that a surface parking lot would not conform with the *characteristics significant to the appearance of the historic district* as codified in Elements 5, 12, 13, 14, 17, and 22 above, as neither the historically compatible rhythm of buildings, nor the historically compatible walls of continuity, historic landscape features/surface treatments, historic relationship of open space to structures, the historic rhythm of building setbacks or historically important environmental character are achieved or reinforced by this new construction proposal. The proposal instead reinforces the isolating, vacant character cited as negative or ahistorical within the Elements. As a surface parking lot would not have been compatible with the historic character of the district during its 1881-1908 Period of Significance, it is not now compatible with the historic district. None of the four staff conditions for parking lots cited above being applicable, staff does not recommend for approval.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

This third and final section takes staff's itemized "objections" identified in the first section, and presents them in the form of "conditions" in support of a proposed approval recommendation or "reasons" in support of a proposed denial recommendation, in the form required by Section 21-2-78 of the City Code. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

Recommendation 1 of 1, Denial

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Peterboro-Charlotte Historic District's Elements of Design, specifically Standards:

- (1) A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*
- (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 Elements of Design 5, 12, 13, 14, 17, and 22

For the following reasons:

- A surface parking lot (disconnected with the rehabilitation of an existing historic building or not required by code as part of a project for an approvable new building), is incompatible with the protected historic character of the Peterboro-Charlotte Historic District, whose significance is rooted in an older, pre-WWI urban pattern that predated the development of parking lots.