

**Certificate of Review [Preliminary]**

Commercial Corner Addresses 11 Brown St.  
105 Washington Grove Lane  
[formerly Oddfellows Hall]

**Application for Building Permit**

HPC2008-0219-01

Plans to renovate a building facade and entry area were submitted to the Town Office on February 19, 2008 by Steve Beck (property manager) and forwarded by the Planning Commission for a preliminary review by the HPC at its monthly meeting on February 19, 2008. The HPC encourages the use of preliminary reviews as they occur early in the planning process and allow for the inclusion of HPC advice into the final plans of a property owner who will be applying for a building permit. Final plans will then be reviewed for consistency by the HPC during the regular permit application process.

**General Description:** The architectural plans submitted show renovations to be made to the façade and entry areas of the buildings collectively termed the Commercial Corner of Washington Grove. The HPC was asked to do a preliminary review of the plans and to focus on the portion of the proposed initial phase of construction, that being the addresses referenced above. This portion of the plan includes only the two-story structure on the right side of the elevation toward Railroad Street. The one-story structure to the left (109-113 Washington Grove Lane) is to be renovated at a later time.

The plans show the area above the second story to have a built out façade with curvilinear lines at its top, extending the entire width of the second floor. It is to be covered with a cementitious 6” lap siding and edged with aluminum. The façade will cover the original gabled roof line, pictured with a dashed line in the façade area. There will be three sets of concrete steps leading up to a front entry area to be covered with a steeply gabled roof in the center area with a shed roof covering the areas to the left and right. The roof structure is to be supported by ten-inch round smooth fiberglass structural columns, two under each side of the gable and one on each end of the shed roof structure. The column bases will be 24” x 24” split face CMU. The roof will be standing seam metal. There will be an aluminum gutter and fascia system, a painted porch board ceiling, new wood clad doors and windows in the original openings and cementitious stucco will be used to cover the existing brick. There is an access ramp pictured on the right side of the structure running up to the raised entry area. (The town office later received verbal information that a mechanical lift would be used instead of the ramp.)

The one-story structure to the left of the first phase of construction is pictured on the plan as having a rectilinear façade up to the height equivalent to the top of the second story. There is a shed roof covering the front area of the structure along its entire length interrupted at two points by double side-by-side gables. The roof structures are to be supported by posts and bases which are the same or similar to those referenced above.

**Adequacy of the Documents Submitted:** The HPC received architectural drawings showing the layout of the structures on the lots, the front elevations of the property addresses of the Commercial Corner and side elevations of the front façade, roof, roof support structure, entry area, steps, posts, and side access ramp. The documents submitted lacked information such as the owner’s name(s) and address(es) and submission date. The documents were submitted for a preliminary review and were adequate for that purpose.

**Visibility from public ways:** The Commercial Corner is located along two heavily traveled transportation arteries, Washington Grove Lane and Railroad St, which lie approximately to the South and West of the area respectively. Hickory Road runs behind the properties, while Brown Street ends near the Southeast corner of the Commercial Corner.

**Contributing structure:** The structure which is the subject of the review (11 Brown St./105 Washington Grove Lane) is a contributing structure. It was built around 1920 and originally was the location of Washington Grove’s Oddfellows lodge.

**Nearby Contributing Structures:** These include 103 Brown Street, 115 and 120 Chestnut Avenue.

**Compatibility with existing structure and historic district:** With regard to 11 Brown St/ 105 Washington Grove Lane, the HPC found that the curvilinear edge at the top of the facade was out of place within the style of the drawing itself, as all other design features were rectilinear in character, including roof lines and window/door treatments. It was suggested that the owner consider a treatment using a stepped straight line façade at the top of the structure, that is, it would start at a certain height at both sides running for a short distance toward the center of the building and then step up to form a higher straight line section in the middle. Further consideration resulted in the suggestion to eliminate the upper façade altogether and expose the original gabled roof. This might in turn expose a hidden gable window or vent. A photo of the original structure was not available but this is being pursued. In considering the roof structure and supports over the entry areas (and here the HPC began to tie the remaining buildings into the review because of their obvious relationship within the design) it was suggested that the gabled roof over the main entry be eliminated in order to simplify the overall design. Further consideration also resulted in suggesting the elimination of the gables on the left side of the design (the phase of construction planned for the future) in order to reduce the overall impact of too great a scale. Although the steep gable roof is a dominant feature in older grove cottages, the simpler appearance of the shed roof seemed more in keeping with these buildings themselves and the simpler designs of the post WWII structures along Washington Grove Lane. The overall height of the façade above the shed roof in this area reaches the height of the second story. This element also adds significant and unnecessary mass to the overall design. This peaked element is integral to the cottage design but is out of place and inappropriate in this context. The HPC also felt that the post structures were too massive in scale (10" round). A more modest size should be considered. Alternatively, square posts of appropriate structural strength could be used to lessen visual impact. Window/door design was not specified beyond that they would be wood clad. The use of a painted porch board ceiling in the entry areas is a commendable application. The applicant did not specify whether the concrete block wall façade on the Railroad Street side of the structure would be maintained in its original form. This would also be a commendable approach.

**HPC Recommendations:** The HPC recommends and following changes and approaches to the renovation of the façade of the Commercial Corner properties:

[A] The overall reduction in scale and simplification in design in the renovation of the structures in first phase and the future phase(s) of construction

[B] The applicant is encouraged to examine original design elements of the structure. The HPC can help with this research. In addition to the town archives, there are several former town residents who can be contacted for photo resources. In Phil Edwards' second book on Washington Grove there is a picture on page 100 which shows a small portion of the Oddfellows Hall as it appeared in the 1950's. A portion of the front façade can be seen and it appears to have the two-stepped design that was suggested in the review.

[C] Reducing the height of the linear façade on the left and lowering the grade of the entire shed roof would help to reduce the scale of these elements. Eliminating the gable roof portions in favor of a continuous shed roof would help achieve this goal. This would also simplify water drainage and snow removal. The reduction of the size of the columns or the use of wood square posts as supports for the roof system onto less massive bases is also recommended.

[D] Retain and restore original building features as much as possible and if practical, such as refraining from covering brick with stucco unless it was an original application. This could also include exposing original brickwork in the upper facade area around the second story front windows. It appears that the façade pictured in the 1950's began above a narrow trim band which was above the upper windows.

[E] Examine the possibility of coordinating the project with the Maryland Historic Trust. <http://www.marylandhistoricaltrust.net> If the overall project becomes one of restoration, not renovation, there may be monetary benefits available to the applicant. The process is not a simple one, but HPC and/or certain town residents who have gone through this process could provide some guidance in the effort.

[F] The HPC encourages the applicant to meet with the HPC to further discuss the overall project in preparation for a final review. In addition, those town residents involved in Master Plan development and town officials could be available for advice and discussion.

*Please note that the Historic Preservation Commission acts only in an advisory capacity to both applicants and the Planning Commission. The reviews undertaken are designed to assist homeowners in their projects, to provide input to deliberations of the Planning Commission and, more generally, to contribute to historic preservation in Washington Grove.*

*Further information regarding the scope, powers, duties, and structure of the Historic Preservation Commission may be found in Article XV of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Washington Grove. Section 5 (a) of Article XV describes the powers and duties of the Historic Preservation Commission in the building permit process. This section reads as follows:*

*The Commission shall review all applications for building permits filed with the Town Planning Commission which would involve any change to a structure or site visible from any public way for historical accuracy, integrity, or compatibility with the neighborhood and improvements therein. The Commission may recommend to an applicant alternative historical designs, materials and sources for the same which may be more historically compatible. The Commission shall forward its recommendations regarding the same, if any, in an advisory capacity, to the Planning Commission for consideration by the Planning Commission within thirty (30) days from the Commission's receipt of the application from the Planning Commission.*

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Edward J. Mroczka,  
for the Historic Preservation Commission

Date  
March 4, 2008

cc: Planning Commission  
Applicant  
HPC members  
HPC File  
Mayor John Compton  
Master Plan Focus Group-Commercial Corner  
Town File  
Town Web Site, Bill Saar