

HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE (DRC) MEETING

October 21, 2020

Action Minutes

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Saum and Raynsford

AGENDA

Meeting Goal: Discuss preliminary project design and provide comments to staff and applicants.

Proposed Projects for Review:

1. **PRE20-117:** Provide comment on Focused Preliminary Review for remodel and addition to 236 E. Empire Street, listed in the Historic Resources Inventory as a Contributing Structure to the Hensley Historic Landmark District and located in the CN Commercial Neighborhood Zoning District.

PROJECT MANAGER, RINA SHAH

Attachments:

1. Initial Submittal Application
2. Plan Set
3. Code Violations

Chair Saum called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and read the first item on the agenda.

Rina Shah, Project Manager, introduced the item and explained that the single-family house was on a small commercial lot in the CN Commercial Neighborhood district. Architect, Thornton Weiler, representing the applicant, introduced the project. The project presentation included a 3-D model of the house and showed plans for reconstruction, relocation and rehabilitation. He explained the projects design stating that it was shifted to the left to allow for a driveway, for parking towards the rear, and the notched side walls to prevent encroaching into the railway tracks. He explained the condition of the structure was dilapidated, and the house had been vacant for a while. The structure had exterior redwood shiplap siding and windowsills and trim around the windows which would be retained. The

front wall was balloon framed and the wall studs were completely warped. The structure needed new studs. He further explained that a second story and a basement were being added to the house, and the height will increase from approximately 20 feet to 23 feet. He also added that the structure was similar to a façade of the house down the block on sixth street.

Commissioner Raynsford appreciated the work proposed to the house and was glad that the house would be reconstructed and modified with historic material integrated, as feasible. He suggested keeping as much of the materials as possible and adding a front entry porch to the front façade as well as a second story window at the new second-story.

Chair Saum stated that he was very familiar with the site and agreed that the building was pretty dilapidated. He agreed with Commissioner Raynsford's suggestions about adding a second story window at the front façade. He thought it made sense to add one. He also expressed concern about shifting of the driveway curb cut and was concerned about finalizing the design and then having to change it because of the Public Works department requirements.

Dana Peak, Historic Preservation Planner, reminded Commission members that since this was just a Preliminary Review, the applicant will be made aware to work with other departments. She also suggested that he should review the 1986 DPR on file for a picture showing ornate details around the door, which were more Italianate in style. She added that the front porch could also have a small portico or a canopy. Chair Saum agreed stating that the intent was to retain some of the historical material. Commissioner Raynsford added that the porch addition should be in the period specific (1880's). The applicant said that the existing storefront façade of the house made him think that the house might have been used for commercial purposes. Dana Peak added that the one thing they would require with the formal application was a historical evaluation of the house and the site and that such research would contribute to a better understanding of the property.

Ed Saum agreed and added that a small window and porch at the front entry façade would be a delicate approach to the house design. Ed Saum commended the applicant and staff to allow the project to be heard at DRC and taking part in the early discussion process.

*Mike Sadgreen representing PAC*SJ appreciated the applicant, Robert Balina, and staff for their time towards the project. He stated that he was happy to see the 3-D model of the house that the architect had presented. He wanted to know more about the software used and whether the measurements were scaled off the building. He suggested keeping some of the fabric of the building for eligibility towards Landmark status. Architect, Thornton Weiler, explained that he had used HOVER software and had scaled and entered the house measurements into the software. He went on to add that Apple was coming up with LIDAR technology which would be available on iPhone and laptops and that is already beneficially changing the industry.*

*Ben Leech, Executive Director PAC*SJ, commented that he was also recommending more research and history of the building so that more informed choices could be made moving forward. For example, appropriateness of second story window addition to the front façade of the building. He was also interested in understanding a better historic connection of the site to the rail roads.*

Chair, Ed Saum, agreed and closed the public hearing on this item and moved on to the next one on the agenda.

2. **HPA16-004-01:** Provide comment on compliance with Condition 3 (Conformance with Plans) regarding Oakmont of Evergreen landscape plan dated May 21, 2019 and the proposed removal of one Blue Gum tree, approximately 170 inches in circumference, located in the front landscaped area of an adjacent medical office on a 0.29 gross acre site, in the CO Commercial Office Zoning District. The existing tree is part of the historic setting of the Smith House, a City Landmark located at **3556 San Felipe Road**, and considered in conjunction with the subject Historic Preservation Permit for a 6-foot wall along the lot line.

PROJECT MANAGER, RINA SHAH

Attachments:

1. [Project Application Summary](#)
2. [Arborist Report](#)
3. [Exhibit M](#)
4. [Exhibit S](#)
5. [Plan Set](#)

Rina Shah, Project Manager, introduced the project and added that the Blue Gum tree was straddling two property lines. She explained that the subject tree was used in the context of the staff report for the Historical Landmark Amendment for the Smith House and was used to explain the green landscape backdrop as well as show the background photo landscape images for the project.

The applicant of the smaller adjacent parcel was requesting removal of that tree and others on the site. This tree removal was brought forward because it was once on the Landmark site.

She requested feedback and comments on whether the tree should be removed and what the DRC members suggestions were on that matter.

Commissioner Raynsford brought up the fact that there were seven trees proposed for removal per the site plan. But since this tree was straddling property lines, it had come before them. He suggested that instead of removing the tree, every effort should be made to protect it, unless the condition of the tree was really bad. The applicant, Deepak Patankar, confirmed that this particular tree was straddling the property line and would encroach into their driveway because the trunk and the canopy were huge. He continued stating that the condition of the tree was initially defined as “good,” but it had been re-evaluated by the project arborist who had visited the site that day and changed his assessment of the tree to “fair.” Also, the top branches were dying, and a large dirt pile had been pressed against the tree.

Project arborist, Neal Kramer, stated that they would have to cut the roots of the tree to salvage it, but that would be very problematic. They were open to planting additional trees on the neighbor’s side. Commissioner Raynsford suggested that the mitigation should be to replace the tree after construction. The arborist said they can only have a maximum eight feet of additional room before they would have to cut roots. His previous assessment was done from one side, but since then a major branch had fallen and the tree had outgrown its space. There was also decay and a shallow cavity present which had further downgraded the tree’s condition from good to fair. Since the tree condition was declining, his recommendation was to remove it and plant new replacement trees.

Commissioner Raynsford at that point said he would leave it to expert judgement and also his preference was planting new Eucalyptus trees as a reminder of the activity that once occurred on the historic site.

Neal Kramer the arborist said that Eucalyptus trees were problematic because of the sap that they drop, and it gets cost prohibitive to clean up. They were also non-native trees. His suggestion was to plant Native Valley or Coast Live Oak trees. He felt that oaks would be more appropriate to plant in that space especially because of the riparian corridor nearby. The applicant also chimed in that the biological report was requiring them to plant native trees. Commissioner Raynsford stated that landscape had changed historically, and Eucalyptus trees had formed the original landscape on the site and his suggestion still stands to plant them.

Chair Saum recalled the development on the parcel and different things that occurred due to changes to the relocation of the Smith House on the parcel including the retaining wall and landscaping. The two biggest trees are now coming down and at first his decision was to reject the proposition. But after listening to the applicant, he feels that it is unfair to burden him with the preservation of his side due to benefits enjoyed by the owners of the Smith House with Mills Act contract, etc. He then inquired about when that parcel was subdivided. Staff responded that the parcel had been subdivided before the relocation of the Smith house and boundary changes had been approved. Staff was not aware of the development on that parcel or the condition of the subject tree in question and needed DRC's feedback on the current situation.

Chair Saum added that the Smith House owners should be more responsible for preservation and Historic Preservation should not cause burden upon the adjacent parcel owners. He added that the trees seem to have deteriorated in health and he did not want the adjacent development to tweak their plans to accommodate the tree, if in the future it has to be removed because of deteriorating health. He recommends removal of the tree and replacement with the required ratio per the Tree Ordinance. The good thing about the DRC is that they could provide comments and did not have to come to a consensus. He thanked staff and applicants for having brought the issue before them.

Meeting adjourned at 2:08 p.m.