

May 21, 2018

Address: #522 Simonton Street
Owner: Glenn Anderson
HARC Case: H18-03-0020

Subject: Feedback on Staff Comments

Summary of project:

- Demo of three neglected and dilapidated additions at rear of home – one, two story addition (historic), two, one floor additions built after 1962
- Rebuild the additions in the proposed format and add a deck

Staff comments and responses:

It is staff's opinion that the proposed design is inconsistent with many of the cited guidelines and with the SOIS for Rehabilitation.

- Thought not listed in her comments, when we reviewed the project, Enid mentioned concerns with guidelines 1, 4, 6, & 8. Based on her staff comments, she might also have issue with 2 and possibly 5.
- The following sections will first address her specific comments from the staff report and then provide feedback on the various guidelines she indicated the board might have concerns with.

Sentences 1 & 2: *The existing house and its additions have been standing in their actual configuration since, at least 1912. Although the additions are not original to the houses, they have acquired historic significance by their own and shall be retained or reconstructed in the same three-dimensional envelope.*

- Not accurate. A structure or structures on the rear of the house have been documented on each of the Sanborn maps. However the two one-floor structures are not historic. They were completely rebuilt sometime after 1962. Most notably, both are currently more than doubled the size of what is depicted on the 1962 Sanborn map. Close inspection indicate these two were completely rebuilt. Piers, floor, walls, roof all are recent. Construction also utilized modern joist and rafter hangers. Subflooring is particle board with laminate surface. Walls are drywall. Summary: there have been structures at the rear of the house for a period of time, but not these structures.
- We agree that the two floor rear addition likely has some elderly components such as two windows and some timbers in two walls in the upper story but overall the structure has been heavily modified from whatever was originally built. The entire first floor appears to have been rebuilt when the other two rear additions were added using common studs, joist hangers, particle board subflooring and drywall. The roof has also been mostly rebuilt. This work was presumably performed when the roof was installed in 2002. Also, the 2nd floor of this addition is unfinished. No interior finishing (upstairs) other than flooring, which is not salvageable. The exterior siding on this and the other two structures is also not salvageable.

Sentence 3: *It is staff's opinion that the actual roof and building forms of the two united houses are character defining features that should not be lost by demolishing the rear historic additions and building a new addition that will increase the mass of the historic fabric.*

- If we understand the usage of the term “houses” correctly there are actually three “houses.” The original Bahama house started in 1869, the frame vernacular addition to the left/front of the house built around 1900 and the rear shed additions.
- Character defining structure and roof
 - o What is character defining for this house? Everything? We think not, or the Secretary of Interior guidelines would say that.
 - o So what is character defining for this house? We feel that it is those elements that identify the Bahama and Frame Vernacular sides of the house on the front of the structure. Which we totally agree includes the front and side gables. The shed additions conform to neither of these styles. If anything, the poor quality and design detract from the character of the two historic structures that made up the main house.
 - o However, because the 2 story rear addition had a shed roof, we proposed to keep the roof over most of this section as a shed style roof.
- The total proposed increased floor space is less than 8%
- Character defining structure and roof – We agree that the roof lines of the front roofs are character defining but disagree that changes to the roofs of rear additions can be made. There are plenty of recent examples around town such as 828 Elizabeth.
- We believe that the proposed form of the replacement addition allows us to maintain the integrity and feel of the historic front rooms without any impact to the character of the home.

Sentence 4: *Moreover, the design requires the demolition of a rear wall that is original to the fabric.*

- Not accurate but we appreciate being able to discuss. The design does not require the demo of the rear wall of the house. In fact I did not ask for that permission. I did mention that, given the option, we would like to be able to move siding from the rear wall of the original house and reuse it in places on the front and sides where replacement siding is needed. This is contingent on the rear siding being in usable condition. The reuse of the siding elsewhere would leave the wall structure intact. – this is something that we see happening right now at other rebuilds. Example 423 Simonton.

Sentence 5: *Although the addition will be located in, the rear of the main house staff finds that much historic fabric and significant architectural features will be lost for the need of adding new spaces to the house. The scale, mass, and proportions of the addition will be larger than the actual norther portion of the house.*

- We do not understand this and will appreciate hearing specific examples of what will be lost.
- It must be stressed that 3 quarters of the house including the entire front and historic sides will remain untouched by this project. Zero fabric will be lost.
- No usable historic fabric remains from the rear additions. To suggest “significant features” will be lost by rebuilding them is difficult to understand. In fact, the new roof over the portion of the two floor addition will remain shed though re-engineered for better drainage. This means minimal change to the shape and form of the structure.

- As pointed out above, the net change to the floorplan of the house is less than 8 percent. Virtually every project presented to this board involves larger increases to the home's floorplan.

Review and comment on guidelines: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, & 8

Guideline 1: Additions shall require no or minimal changes to the character defining features of a building and its site.

- There are no hard rules for what defines the character of a house other than it is certainly not the entire house or "everything." Especially with a house that is not on the national register. Certain elements should be identified as character defining.
- In our case we have a Bahama house (right side when looking at the house) that has a Frame Vernacular added on to it (left side) with rear additions. The defining characteristics of this home are those which are associated with the Bahama and Frame Vernacular homes. These character defining elements can be found on the front, sides and roof of the main structure.
- The rear additions do not match in any way nor do they add in any way to the defining characteristics of the main home. Other than adding mass and scale to the overall structure.
- Even so, with our proposed addition we have chosen to keep the shape and scale similar and the roof line on the right rear side.

Guideline 2: The removal of historic elements or material or the alteration of a feature that characterizes a building or its site must be avoided.

- Two of the three additions are not historic in the slightest
- The two floor historic addition has minimal, if any, exterior remaining exterior features
- As mentioned the main (historic) home will remain unchanged by this process
- The only potential and recommended change is the usage of hidden siding from the interior of the house to replace rotted siding on the sides of the historic portion of the home – again, something is commonly done.

Guideline 4: Additions to a historic building that have acquired historic significance shall be retained and preserved. If an addition is deteriorated to a point that it cannot be salvaged, it may be rebuilt and shall match the original addition in design, color, textures, and visual quality.

- We believe the intent behind this guideline is to protect true character defining features such as the Frame Vernacular addition to the front of the home that was completely around 1905 not an unfinished shed lean-to at the rear of a home.

Guideline 5: Additions to a building must be designed in a manner that if removed in the future, the essential character defining features and the integrity of the form of the building and its site will be unimpaired. Whenever possible it is preferable to create a small connector or use an existing non-historic rear addition to attach a new addition.

- This is not an issue. The rear wall of the main house will remain structurally intact. Though it is recommended that we be allowed to reuse any usable siding that is inside the home to replace siding on the historic portion of the home.

Guideline 6: Any proposed addition shall be attached to less public elevations. Whenever possible, additions shall be attached to the rear or least conspicuous side of an existing building. On a corner lot, an addition shall be located to be unobtrusive when viewed from either adjoining streets.

- This is not an issue. The addition is at the rear of the house. It needs to be pointed out that this guideline clearly suggests, contrary to guideline 4, that additions to a historic home are perfectly acceptable.

Guideline 8: Additions proposed over an existing contributing or historic building or structure is prohibited, unless the proposed addition is attached over a non-historic portion of the building and it is not visible from any street.

- This is not an issue. The expansion of the second floor is entirely over non-historic additions. And is not visible from the street.

We look forward to reviewing this and our design package with you Wednesday evening.

Sincerely,

Glenn R Anderson
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