

**SALT LAKE CITY
HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION**

**REQUEST BY FRANK BERNARD TO CONSTRUCT A BASEMENT-LEVEL
ADDITION THAT WILL ACCOMMODATE A SINGLE CAR GARAGE AT 415-417
NO. CENTER STREET, IN THE CAPITOL HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT
CASE NO. 032-05
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2006**

OVERVIEW

The applicant, Frank Bernard is requesting approval to construct a basement-level addition to accommodate a single car garage at 417 No. Center Street. The building is located in the Capitol Hill Historic District, which was locally designated as a historic district in May of 1984. The base zoning of the property is SR-1, Special Development Pattern Residential, the purpose of which is “to maintain the unique character of older, predominantly single-family neighborhoods that display a variety of yard, lot sizes and bulk characteristics.” The zone allows single-family and twin homes as permitted uses.



BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

According to the historic site form completed in 1979, this brick Victorian duplex was constructed in 1903 for Alexander Edward who worked in Salt Lake City as a carpenter. The one-and-one-half-story structure consists of two rectangular twin dwellings that share a party wall. Each unit has a gable roof with a gabled projecting front bay. The hipped roof front porches have turned porch posts and decorative woodwork. Character defining elements of the building also include a molded cornice, stone foundation and segmented and arched windows.

In this area of the Capitol Hill Historic District, the orientation of buildings to the street and front yard setbacks vary. An irregular development pattern exists because of the angle of the streets distinguishing this part of the district. Steep topography has also affected the development pattern of the area. It resulted in construction features such as high foundation walls, raised entries, sloped walkways and retaining walls.

On-site parking is currently unavailable on the subject property. The existing building essentially extends the width of the property aligning diagonally with the street, and limiting access to the rear of the lot from the street. Nor is there a rear alley that could be used to access a garage behind the house. Characteristic of the neighborhood, a portion of the front yard is bound by a retaining wall because of the natural slope of the yard. The applicant proposes to construct an addition to the northern unit by inserting a basement-level single car garage below the front porch. The submitted plans show a new progression of spaces between the street and house including a driveway, series of steps and landings, guardrail, and retaining wall. These alterations address the grade changes necessary to build a lower-level addition to the building.

ANALYSIS

REQUIREMENTS OF THE ZONING ORDINANCE

ZONING REQUIREMENTS

All proposed work must comply with height, yard and bulk requirements of the SR-1 zoning district.

ZONING ORDINANCE AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

21A.34.020 H Historic Preservation Overlay District:

G. Standards for Certificate of Appropriateness for Alteration of a Landmark Site or Contributing Structure. In considering an application for a certificate of appropriateness for alteration of a landmark site or contributing structure, the historic landmark commission, or the planning director, for administrative decisions, shall find that the project substantially

complies with all of the following general standards that pertain to the application and that the decision is in the best interest of the city:

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be used for a purpose that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment;

DISCUSSION: No changes are proposed in the use of the building for residential purposes.

FINDING: The proposed project is consistent with this standard.

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;

DISCUSSION: A series of spaces between the street and house is typical of most historic property. This progression of streetscape features is important because it contributes strongly to the historic character of the site and creates a sense of visual continuity on the block and within the historic district. Staff is of the opinion that the established relationship between the building and site features should be respected. Landscape features that are important in defining the historic character of a building site may include fences, walkways, steps, landings, and porches, as well as unique trees, bushes and topography. The design guidelines offer the following guidance on the preservation of character-defining elements.

Design Standards for Site Features

1.1 Preserve historically significant features. These may include historic retaining walls, irrigation ditches, gardens, driveways and walkways. Fences and street trees are also examples of original site features that should be preserved. Sidewalks, parkways, planting strips, street trees and street lighting are examples of historic streetscape elements that should be considered in all civic projects.

1.8 Preserve the historic grading design of the site. Altering the overall appearance of the historic grading is inappropriate. While some changes may be considered, these should remain subordinate and the overall historic grading character shall be preserved.

Design Standards for Additions

8.1 Design an addition to a historic structure such that it will not destroy or obscure historically important architectural features. For example, loss or alteration of architectural details, cornices and eavelines should be avoided.

Ground Level Additions

8.14 Keep a new addition physically and visually subordinate to the historic building. The addition shall be set back significantly from primary facades. A minimum setback of 10 feet is recommended. The addition should be consistent with the scale and character of the historic building or structure. Large additions should be separated from the historic building by using a smaller connecting element to link the two.

FINDING: The site, including its associated features, contributes to the overall character of this historic property, streetscape and district. Changing the grade adjacent to the building to allow development of a formerly below-grade area would drastically alter the historic relationship between the building and the site and diminish the historic integrity of the property and its context. The proposed work is not consistent with this standard of the ordinance and the design guidelines. New parking should be planned so that it is as unobtrusive as possible and does not cause significant changes to historic site features.

3. All sites, structures and objects shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create a false sense of history or architecture are not allowed;

DISCUSSION: A 1994 article by a former city preservation planner describes the history and typical characteristics of garages in the city's historic districts (Exhibit 4). The garage as a building type is considered to have evolved from the horse barn/carriage house. Such structures were traditionally set a good distance away from the house for safety reasons, and reflected the architectural style of the primary structure. Beginning in the 1920s, as automobile ownership became more widespread, garages were less frequently located to the rear of the property. The once detached accessory structure was increasingly linked to the main building, and eventually became an integral part of the house.

The need for on-site parking was never anticipated when this property was developed. The property owner proposes an uncharacteristic new design element for an early twentieth century building to meet today's parking needs. The proposed basement-level garage is clearly distinguished from the original building, but staff considers it an inappropriate alteration because of its proposed location at the front of the structure. The design guidelines recommend the following with respect to the design of an addition.

Standards for Additions

8.4 Design a new addition to be recognized as a product of its own time. An addition shall be made distinguishable from the historic building, while also remaining visually compatible with these earlier features. A change in

setbacks of the addition from the historic building, a subtle change in material, or a differentiation between historic and more current styles are all techniques that may be considered to help define a change from old to new construction. Creating a jog in the foundation between the original building and the addition also may establish a more sound structural design to resist earthquake damage, while helping to define it as a later addition.

8.6 Do not construct a new addition or alteration that will hinder one's ability to interpret the historic character of the building or structure. A new addition that creates an appearance inconsistent with the historic character of the building is inappropriate. An alteration that seeks to imply an earlier period than that of the building is inappropriate. In addition, an alteration that seeks to imply an inaccurate variation on the historic style is inappropriate. An alteration that covers historically significant features is inappropriate as well.

FINDING: Introducing new construction for a modern use (garage) differentiates the proposed improvements from the historic portion of the structure. The proposed addition will be recognizable as a product of its own time and is consistent with this standard of the ordinance. The overall impact of the proposed addition on the property and streetscape, however, will be substantial given the proposed changes to the site, the size of the new opening, and visibility of the proposed improvements from the public way. Proposed additions should be compatible with the historic character of a building and site, and preserve the historic relationship between the building and site features.

4. Alterations or additions that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved;

FINDING: The removal of alterations and additions that have acquired historic significance in their own right is not part of this request.

5. Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved;

DISCUSSION: The applicant proposes a reconfiguration of the historic progression of entry elements that defines the front of this property. The submitted plans show a new series of spaces between the street and house including a driveway, series of steps and landings, guardrail, and retaining wall. Staff views the historic progression of entry elements a character-defining feature of this site that should be retained. The design guidelines offer the following guidance on retaining the historic character of a property.

Design Standards for Additions

8.2 Design an addition to be compatible in size and scale with the main building. Set back an addition from historically important primary facades in order to allow the original proportions and character to remain prominent. Keep the addition visually subordinate to the historic building. If it is necessary to design an addition that is taller than the historic building, set it back substantially from significant facades and use a “connector” to link it.

8.7 When planning an addition to a building, preserve historic alignments that may exist on the street. Some roof lines and porch eaves on historic buildings in the area may align at approximately the same height. An addition shall not be placed in a location where these relationships would be altered or obscured.

Standards for Accessory Structures

9.3 Do not attach garages and carports to the primary structure. Traditionally, garages were sited as a separate structure at the rear of the lot; this pattern should be maintained. The allowance of attached accessory structures is reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

FINDING: Inserting a basement-level garage at the front of the building will cause the removal and reconfiguration of significant site features. The proposed improvements fail to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment, and are inconsistent with this standard of the ordinance and the design guidelines.

6. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced wherever feasible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, texture and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historic, physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other structures or objects;

DISCUSSION: The proposed scope of work includes replacement of the front walkway, front porch decking and railing with similar elements. The width of the entry progression will be altered to accommodate a new retaining wall and garage door. As a result of narrowing the opening to the porch, the relationship between the front door opening and porch railing will be changed. Since preserving existing historic alignments is the preferred approach, staff finds the proposed porch treatment inconsistent with the design guidelines. The design guidelines recommend the following with respect to porch alterations.

Design Standards for Porches

5.1 Preserve an original porch when feasible. Replace missing posts and railings when necessary. Match the original proportions and spacing of balusters when replacing missing ones. Unless used historically, wrought iron, especially the “licorice stick” style that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, is not allowed.

5.2 Avoid removing or covering historic materials and details on a porch. Removing an original balustrade, for example, is inappropriate.

5.3 If the porch replacement is necessary, reconstruct it to match the original in form and detail when feasible. Use materials similar to the original whenever feasible. On contributing buildings, where no evidence of the historic porch exists, a new porch may be considered that is similar in character to those found on comparable buildings. Speculative construction of a porch on a contributing building is discouraged. Avoid applying decorative elements that are not known to have been used on your house or others like it. While matching original materials is preferred, when detailed correctly and painted appropriately, fiberglass columns may be acceptable. The height of the railing and the spacing of balusters should appear similar to those used historically.

FINDING: The proposed changes to the front porch are inconsistent with this standard of the ordinance and the design guidelines because the relationship between the front door opening and porch railing will change and the new elements do not resemble the original in form.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible;

DISCUSSION: No chemical or physical treatments are proposed as part of this request.

FINDING: This standard is not an issue for the proposed project.

8. Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant cultural, historical, architectural or archaeological material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property, neighborhood or environment;

DISCUSSION: This guideline regarding contemporary designs for alterations has typically been applied to new work on non-character defining elevations. Although a

modern design, the proposed addition at the front of the structure would cause the reconfiguration of significant site features.

FINDING: The proposed addition would change character-defining features of the property including the primary façade and series of spaces between the street and the house. In fact, the proposed addition would detract from the historic appearance of the property and streetscape, and is inconsistent with this standard of the ordinance.

9. Additions or alterations to structures and objects shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible in massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment;

DISCUSSION: Historic features of the property would be altered by the proposed alterations as discussed under Standards 2 and 3 (page 2-3). Since following a course of protecting the historic character of a property is preferred, staff finds the proposed addition inconsistent with the design guidelines. The design guidelines offer the following guidance for constructing new additions:

Design Standards for Additions

8.3 Place an addition at the rear of a building or set it back from the front to minimize the visual impact on the historic structure and to allow the original proportions and character to remain prominent. Locating an addition at the front of a structure is inappropriate.

FINDING: The proposed addition is generally inconsistent with this standard of the ordinance and the design guidelines because the primary façade and character-defining elements of the site as seen from the street will be negatively affected by the construction of a basement-level single-car garage. The new work is distinguishable from the old and it would be possible, although not likely, to remove the addition. The proposed project is consistent with the standard in this area.

10. Certain building materials are prohibited including the following:

a. Vinyl or aluminum cladding when applied directly to an original or historic material, and

b. Any other imitation siding material designed to look like wood siding but fabricated from an imitation material or materials;

DISCUSSION: No prohibited building materials are proposed.

FINDING: The proposed project is consistent with this standard.

11. Any new sign and any change in the appearance of any existing sign located on a landmark site or within the H historic preservation overlay district, which is visible from any public way or open space shall be consistent with the historic character of the landmark site or H historic preservation overlay district and shall comply with the standards outlined in Part IV, Chapter 21A.46, Signs;

DISCUSSION: Signage is not a component of this project.

FINDING: The standard does not apply to this project.

12. Additional design standards adopted by the historic landmark commission and city council.

DISCUSSION: The Historic Landmark Commission's *Design Guidelines for Residential Historic Districts in Salt Lake City* is applicable in this case. The design of the addition fails to make use of the basic principles recommended by the City's design guidelines to ensure that the essential form and integrity of contributing buildings will not be adversely affected by new construction. Because the proposed alterations are to the front of the property and cause the removal and reconfiguration of significant site features, the proposed project is incompatible in massing, form, and as an architectural feature with the historic home.

FINDING: The proposed project would disrupt the symmetry of form and massing associated with this duplex type building, and alters the transitional space between the street and building created by the diagonal orientation of the street and topography of the site that is typically associated with the development of this neighborhood. The proposed project is not in keeping with the design standards as discussed in this staff report.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Staff has made the following findings:

1. The proposed project fails to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment. Changing the grade adjacent to the building to allow development of a formerly below-grade area would drastically alter the historic relationship between the building and the site and diminish the historic integrity of the property and its context.
2. The proposed addition fails to retain and preserve character-defining features of the property including the primary façade and series of spaces between the street and the building. The overall impact of the proposed addition on the property and streetscape will be substantial given the proposed changes to the site, the size of the new opening, and visibility of the proposed improvements from the public way.

RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the comments, analysis and findings of fact noted above, Planning Staff does not support the proposed design for a basement-level single-car garage at 417 No. Center Street. If the Commission decides to deny the request, it should adopt findings supported by substantial evidence.

Janice Lew
Planning Division
January 25, 2006

Attachments: Exhibit 1: Submittal
Exhibit 2: Historical Documentation
Exhibit 3: Photographs
Exhibit 4: Article: Garages in Historic Districts

**Exhibit 1
Submittal**

Exhibit 2
Historical Documentation

Exhibit 3 Photographs

Exhibit 4
Garages in Historic Districts