**S A L T  L A K E  C I T Y**
**H I S T O R I C  L A N D M A R K  C O M M I S S I O N**

**REQUEST BY JOHN COLLIER, FOR APPROVAL TO CONSTRUCT THREE TOWN HOMES AT 253 E. FIRST AVENUE IN THE AVENUES HISTORIC DISTRICT**
**CASE NO. 021-06**
**WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2006**

## OVERVIEW

Mr. John Collier, is requesting approval to build three town homes, of approximately 4,200 square feet per unit, on a vacant corner lot at the intersection of B Street and First Avenue in the Avenues Historic District. The property is zoned RMF-35, the purpose of which is to provide an environment suitable for a variety of moderate density housing types, including multifamily housing. (Salt Lake City Ordinance 21A.24.130.A)

## BACKGROUND

This lot is located on the northeast corner of the intersection of B Street and First Avenue. The property now lies vacant, but was once the home of the McCune Family and the site of an imposing mansion. The mansion was demolished in 1964.


## PROPOSAL

The applicant is proposing to construct three town homes. The units would have hipped roofs, separated by an entranceway with flat roofs. The units would be two-and-a-half stories in height with underground parking, accessed as separate garages from B Street. The proposed materials include split-faced sandstone on the ground level, smooth limestone on the first story, and smooth stucco on the second story. The applicants are proposing to install aluminum-clad wood windows and architectural shingles for the roof. The size of the property is 10,018 square feet.

## ANALYSIS

### REQUIREMENTS OF THE ZONING ORDINANCE

### ZONING REQUIREMENTS

The base yard and bulk requirements of the RMF-35 zone include the following:

- Minimum lot area for single-family attached dwellings is 3,000 square feet per unit. This lot is approximately 10,018 square feet. Minimum lot width is 32 feet for the corner lot, and 22 feet for the interior lots. This lot is 123.75 feet in width, and the applicant meets this requirement.
- Maximum building height in an RMF-35 district is 35'-0", measured to the mid-point of the roof, or two-and-a-half stories, whichever is less. The drawings show that the house is two-and-a-half stories and 35' to the mid-point of the roof. The proposed work meets this requirement.
- Setback requirements in an RMF-35 zone are 20'-0" in the front yard; 4'-0" on an interior side yard and 10'-0" on a corner side yard; and a rear yard of 25 percent of the lot depth, but not less than less than 20'-0" and need not be more than 25'-0." The proposed building has setbacks of 20'-0" in the front (west) yard, 10'-0" on the north side (interior side yard), 10' on the south side (corner side yard), and 20 feet in the rear yard. The applicant will need to revise the plans to meet the rear yard requirement (in this case 21 feet); aside from this, the proposed work meets these requirements.

### ZONING ORDINANCE AND DESIGN GUIDELINES:

*21A.34.020 H Historic Preservation Overlay District:*

*H. Standards for Certificate of Appropriateness Involving New Construction or Alteration of a Noncontributing Structure. In considering an application for a certificate of appropriateness involving new construction, or alterations of noncontributing structures, the historic landmark commission, or planning director when the application involves the alteration of a noncontributing structure, shall determine whether the project substantially complies with all of the following standards that pertain to the application, is visually compatible with surrounding structures and streetscape as illustrated in any design standards adopted by the historic landmark commission and city council and is in the best interest of the city.*

*1. Scale and Form.*

*a. Height and Width. The proposed height and width shall be visually compatible with surrounding structures and streetscape;*

*b. Proportion of Principal Facades. The relationship of the width to the height of the principal elevations shall be in scale with surrounding structures and streetscape;*

*c. Roof Shape. The roof shape of a structure shall be visually compatible with the surrounding structures and streetscape; and*

*d. Scale of a Structure. The size and mass of the structures shall be visually compatible with the size and mass of surrounding structure and streetscape.*

**APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:**

***Mass and Scale***

**11.4 Construct a new building to reinforce a sense of human scale.**

A new building may convey a sense of human scale by employing techniques such as these:
- Using building materials that are of traditional dimensions.
- Providing a one-story porch that is similar to that seen traditionally.
- Using a building mass that is similar in size to those seen traditionally.
- Using a solid-to-void that is similar to that seen traditionally and using window openings that are similar in size to those seen traditionally.

**11.5 Construct a new building to appear similar in scale to the scale that is established in the block.**

Subdivide larger masses into smaller "modules" that are similar in size to buildings seen traditionally.

**11.6 Design a front elevation to be similar in scale to those seen traditionally in the block.**

The front shall include a one-story element, such as a porch. The primary plane of the front should not appear taller than those of typical historic structures in the block. A single wall plane should not exceed the typical maximum facade width in the district.

***Height***

**11.7 Build to heights that appear similar to those found historically in the district.**

This is an important standard which should be met in all projects.

**11.8 The back side of a building may be taller than the established norm if the change in scale will not be perceived from public ways.**

***Width***

**11.9 Design a new building to appear similar in width to that of nearby historic buildings.**

If a building would be wider overall than structures seen historically, the facade should be divided into subordinate planes that are similar in width to those of the context.

***Building form standards***

**11.11 Use building forms that are similar to those seen traditionally on the block.**

Simple rectangular solids are typically appropriate.

**11.12 Use roof forms that are similar to those seen traditionally in the block.**

Visually, the roof is the single most important element in an overall building form. Gable and hip roofs are appropriate for primary roof forms in most residential areas. Shed roofs are appropriate for some additions. Roof pitches should be 6:12 or greater. Flat roofs should be used only in areas where it is appropriate to the context. They are appropriate for multiple

apartment buildings, duplexes, and fourplexes. In commercial areas, a wider variety of roof forms may occur.

***Avenues Historic District Architectural Standards***

**13.8 Design new buildings to be similar in scale to the scale that was seen traditionally on the block.**
Historically, most houses in the Avenues appeared to have a height of one, one-and-a-half or two stories. Front facades should appear similar in height to hose seen historically in the block. Taller portions should be set back farther on the lot. Story heights should appear similar to those seen historically. Use architectural details to convey a sense of the traditional scale of the block.

**DISCUSSION:** This area of the Avenues Historic District is architecturally very eclectic. The Cathedral of the Madeleine is located to the south. The Cathedral Choir School is located to the west; however, the streetscape of the school on this block face consists of adaptively-reused homes. A two-and-a-half story apartment building is directly north, along with a two-story home and the Caithness Condominiums. Directly east is a U-shaped apartment building, that is one-story and was constructed in the 1950's. East of this are the Villa Andrea Apartments, three-and-a-half stories in height. Thus, no one standard for height, width, roof shape and scale exist in the immediate vicinity of the subject property.

From the south and north, the proposed structure will be in keeping with the height of the surrounding structures. It will be higher than the U-shaped building to the east, but similar in scale and massing to that of the Villa Andrea Apartments. The building is wider than the former single-family homes on the Cathedral School campus, and wider than the buildings on either side of the subject property. The massing of the proposed building; however, will be broken up by the recessed entrance bays provided for each unit, dividing the building into subordinate planes. The Villa Andrea apartment building is similar in scale to the proposed project; the Caithness Condominiums are larger. The surrounding properties have a variety of roof forms; the apartment building next door to the north has a hipped roof.

**FINDING:** The proposed new house is similar in terms of Height and Width, Proportion of Principal Facades, Roof Shape, and Scale to the surrounding structures and typical structures in this part of the Avenues Historic District.

*2. Composition of Principal Facades.*

*a. Proportion of Openings. The relationship of the width to the height of windows and doors of the structure shall be visually compatible with surrounding structures and streetscape;*

*b. Rhythm of Solids to Voids in Facades. The relationship of solids to voids in the facade of the structure shall be visually compatible with surrounding structures and streetscape;*

*c. Rhythm of Entrance Porch and Other Projections. The relationship of entrances and other projections to sidewalks shall be visually compatible with surrounding structures and streetscape; and*

*d. Relationship of Materials. The relationship of the color and texture of materials (other than paint color) of the facade shall be visually compatible with the predominant materials used in surrounding structures and streetscape.*

**APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:**

***Solid-to-void ratio***

**11.10 Use a ratio of wall-to-window (solid to void) that is similar to that found on historic structures in the district.**

Large surfaces of glass are inappropriate in residential structures. Divide large glass surfaces into smaller windows.

***Proportion of building facade elements***

**11.13 Design overall facade proportions to be similar to those of historic buildings in the neighborhood.**

The "overall proportion" is the ratio of the width to height of the building, especially the front facade. See the discussions of individual districts and of typical historic building styles for more details about facade proportions.

***Rhythm and spacing***

**11.14 Keep the proportions of window and door openings similar to those of historic buildings in the area.**

This is an important design standard because these details strongly influence the compatibility of a building within its context. Large expanses of glass, either vertical or horizontal, are generally inappropriate on new buildings in the historic districts.

***Primary entrance***

**13.25 Clearly define the primary entrance to the house.**

Use a porch, stoop, portico or similar one-story feature to indicate the entry. Orienting the entry to the street is preferred. Establishing a "progression" of entry elements, including walkway, landscape elements and porch also is encouraged.

***Materials***

**11.15 Use building materials that contribute to the traditional sense of scale of the block.**

This will reinforce the sense of visual continuity in the district.

**11.16 New materials that are similar in character to traditional materials may be acceptable with appropriate detailing.**

Alternative materials should appear similar in scale, proportion, texture and finish to those used historically. They also must have a proven durability in similar locations in this climate. Metal products are allowed for soffits and eaves only.

**13.20 Use building materials that are similar to those used historically.**
Appropriate primary building materials include brick, stucco and painted wood. Substitute materials may be considered under some circumstances. See Sections 2.0 and 6.0 and page 126.

***Architectural Character***
**11.17 Use building components that are similar in size and shape to those found historically along the street.**
These include windows, doors, and porches.

**11.18 If they are to be used, design ornamental elements, such as brackets and porches to be in scale with similar historic features.**
Thin, fake brackets and strap work applied to the surface of a building are inappropriate uses of these traditional details.

**11.19 Contemporary interpretations of traditional details are encouraged.**
New designs for window moldings and door surrounds, for example, can provide visual interest while helping to convey the fact that the building is new. Contemporary details for porch railings and columns are other examples. New soffit details and dormer designs also could be used to create interest while expressing a new, compatible style.

**11.20 The imitation of older historic styles is discouraged.**
One should not replicate historic styles, because this blurs the distinction between old and new buildings, as well as making it more difficult to visually interpret the architectural evolution of the district. Interpretations of historic styles may be considered if they are subtly distinguishable as new.

***Windows***
**11.21 Windows with vertical emphasis are encouraged.**
A general rule is that the height of the window should be twice the dimension of the width in most residential contexts.

**11.22 Frame windows and doors in materials that appear similar in scale, proportion and character to those used traditionally in the neighborhood.**
Double-hung windows with traditional depth and trim are preferred in most districts.

**11.23 Windows shall be simple in shape.**
Odd window shapes such as octagons, circles, diamonds, etc. are discouraged.

> **DISCUSSION:** The materials proposed for the building are split-faced sandstone on the ground story, smooth limestone on the first story, and stucco on the second. The use of large, sandstone blocks on the first story is unusual in this area for residential construction, but given the variety of materials and architecture in this area of the Avenues Historic District, and the proximity of the Cathedral of the Madeleine, Staff finds the use of the materials to be warranted. Wide entablatures are proposed at the juncture of the roof and the walls; oversized brackets are indicated on the entrance bays (which have flat roofs), and under the

first stories of the east elevation. The stories are divided by belt courses. Double-doors on the first story have small balconies; wide balconies are proposed on the rear, or east, elevation. With the exception of the oculus windows above the entrance doors, the windows are vertically oriented.

The small balconies and individual landings are similar to those seen on the nearby Villa Andrea Apartments, 265-269 E. First Avenue. They are typical of those found on numerous historic multi-family buildings around Salt Lake City.

The windows are proposed to be aluminum-clad wood windows. From the drawings supplied with this application, it is apparent that the proportion of openings and ratio of solids to voids on the building are regular, and in keeping with those seen on this streetscape. The windows are multiple paned. If the windows are subdivided, simulated, between-the-glass munitins should not be used because they fail to show the shadow lines of true dividers. Further details on the proposed doors are needed.

The amount of glass in relation to wall material is similar to that seen on historic buildings in the Avenues Historic District. There are fewer windows on the north elevation than were typically seen on similar structures, but this side is not prominent from the street, and the neighboring apartment building is only approximately twenty feet from the proposed project. Staff is of the opinion that greater flexibility in the ratio of solid to void is justified on this elevation for those reasons.

**FINDING:** Further detail is needed on the proposed window styles and types, and the proposed doors. Otherwise, the proposed building is similar to surrounding structures in terms of Proportion of Openings, Rhythm of Solids to Voids in Facades, Rhythm of Entrance Porch and Other Projections, and Relationship of Materials.

*3. Relationship to Street.*

*a. Walls of Continuity. Facades and site structures, such as walls, fences and landscape masses shall, when it is characteristic of the area, form continuity along a street to ensure visual compatibility with the structures, public ways and places to which such elements are visually related;*

*b. Rhythm of Spacing and Structures on Streets. The relationship of a structure or object to the open space between it and adjoining structures or objects shall be visually compatible with the structures, objects, public ways and places to which it is visually related;*

*c. Directional Expression of Principal Elevation. A structure shall be visually compatible with the structures, public ways and places to which it is visually related in its orientation toward the street; and*

*d. Streetscape-Pedestrian Improvements. Streetscape and pedestrian improvements and any change in its appearance shall be compatible to the historic character of the landmark site or H historic preservation overlay district.*

**APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:**

***Avenues Historic District Architectural Standards***

**13.1 Where a sidewalk exists, maintain its historic materials and position, usually detached from the curb, and separated by a planting buffer.**
Keep planting materials in the buffer as low as possible to maintain visibility. Also, preserve historic paving material, such as sandstone sidewalks, where it exists.

**13.2 Provide a walk to the primary building entry from the public sidewalk.**
The walkway should be distinct from any driveway. Concrete is the dominant material; however, other materials, including modular pavers, also are more appropriate.

**13.3 Minimize the use of curb cuts in the Avenues District.**
In an effort to rpeserve the character of the sidewalk and the adjoining streetscape, avoid installing new curb cuts, whenever feasible. Historically, the use of curb cuts was quite limited. New Cub cuts will interrupt the continuity of the sidewalks, and will potentially destroy historic paving material where it exists.

**DISCUSSION:** The setbacks of the proposed units along B Street and First Avenue are similar to others on the block. The proposed town homes are sited on the lot in a similar location and orientation as others on the block on B Street. The south elevation, seen from First Avenue, does not include an entrance (other than the garage) but this is typical for corner properties. The fenestration and visibility of the rear balcony allows the southern-most unit to maintain a human-scale street presence from this vantage point. The proposed units will reinforce the street wall of multi-family buildings in this vicinity, without overwhelming the scale of the existing structures.

Parking for the proposed project will be located off B Street for two of the units, and off First Avenue for the corner unit. This is generally not in keeping with the site layout of the Avenues Historic District, but the garages are partially below grade and thus minimize the impact on the streetscape. Although the proposed project will require additional curb cuts, the curb cuts are spread between the two streets. There are few curb cuts on the block face of B Street. The addition of the curb cuts for the driveways will not overload this block face.

The applicant is not proposing traditional porches for the street elevation; however, the use of the shallow balconies is consistent with town home development, and the small landings of the entrances will provide a transitional element between the street and the dwellings. Walkways from the sidewalks to each primary entrance will be separate from the driveways.

**FINDING:** The setbacks of the proposed house from the street, property lines and nearby structures of the proposed house is similar to nearby buildings and other

historic examples in the Avenues Historic District. The main facade of the residences toward B Street is oriented in a similar way as other houses on the street, and the fenestration along the First Avenue side, the variety of building materials, and the landscaping, will break up the south wall area sufficiently so as not to be overwhelming on First Avenue. The proposed project meets the standards of the ordinance in terms of directional expression of the principal elevation, rhythm of spacing and structures on streets, and walls of continuity.

*4. Subdivision of Lots. The planning director shall review subdivision plats proposed for property within an H historic preservation overlay district or of a landmark site and may require changes to ensure the proposed subdivision will be compatible with the historic character of the district and/or site(s).*

**DISCUSSION AND FINDING:** The town homes will require subdivision.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the findings of fact in this staff report and the information supplied by the applicant, Staff recommends approval of the design and referral to the Planning Division Staff for refinement of details, including the following:

1. Additional details, such as product brochures or cut sheets, regarding the selected windows and doors and balconies. Windows should not have simulated, between-the-glass muntins because they fail to replicate the shadow lines of true divided lights;

2. Any other items raised by the Commission during its discussion.

3. This approval is for design only; all other city requirements must be met prior to obtaining a building permit. If any substantial changes are required as a result of other city requirements, staff shall refer the proposal back to the full commission for final review

Elizabeth Giraud, AICP
Senior Planner
May 17, 2006

Attachments: Exhibit A: Photographs of Subject Property and Surrounding Area
Exhibit B: Submitted Plans
Exhibit C: Historic Information on the McCune Mansion

# Exhibit A
# Photographs of Subject Property and Surrounding Area

# Exhibit B
# Submitted Plans

# Exhibit C
# Historic Information on the McCune Mansion