

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
APRIL 26, 2021
HR-2021-050823
KOHN HOUSE
5312 SHOAL CREEK BLVD.

PROPOSAL

Construct an addition and landscape modifications at a proposed landmark.

PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

- 1) Construct an addition to the side and rear of an existing second-story tower. The addition has a hipped roof with compositions shingles to match the existing house, dark gray vertical metal panels as cladding, divided light steel windows, and a wood deck with screened porch at the ground level.
- 2) Install landscape modifications, including an ell-shaped limestone wall and outdoor kitchen in front of the house, weathering steel mesh fencing with limestone piers and a mesh gate at the street, a 6' tall steel and aluminum fence at the front corner of the house, an enlarged gravel driveway to replace the existing asphalt driveway, and a wood deck, pool, paths, plantings, and other landscaping at the rear of the house.

ARCHITECTURE

Eclectic in its design, this one-story house is T-shaped, with a long side-gabled volume facing the street and a rear hipped-roof wing. A two-story square tower with a pyramidal roof is asymmetrically placed near the north end of the house. The house is predominantly clad in random ashlar limestone with quoins at the corners and a stone chimney; a portion of the rear elevation is clad in horizontal wood siding. Wrapping the southeast end of the house is a porch with square wood posts and curved brackets; its gable end has waney-edge siding. Varied fenestration includes multi-light casements, a bay window with a metal roof, round portholes, and 1:1 double-hung wood windows. To the rear of the house, the site also includes a side-gabled accessory building, clad in board-and-batten on the front under the full-width porch and horizontal wood siding on the other sides.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW

The City of Austin's Historic Design Standards (March 2021) are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and are used to evaluate projects at historic landmarks. The following standards apply to the proposed project:

Repair and alterations

10.1 Whenever possible, retain and repair existing historic accessory buildings.

The historic accessory building will be retained and restored.

Residential additions

1.1 Locate additions to the rear and sides of historic buildings to minimize visual impact.

1.3 If an addition adds a story to the historic building, set it back from the front wall to minimize visual impact. a. If an addition adds a story to the historic building, set it back from the front wall to minimize visual impact. If the historic building has a side-gabled, cross-gabled, hipped, or pyramidal roof form, set the addition behind the roof ridge line or peak.

The second-story addition is set 6" behind the ridge line of the side-gabled roof and pulled in 1'-0" from the roof edge.

1.5 Minimize the loss of historic fabric by connecting additions to the existing building through the least possible invasive location and means.

The addition involves limited demolition of the northwest corner of the first floor and the roof framing in this area. These changes occur in an area converted from covered parking to an enclosed den around the 1960s. The wall to be removed is clad in metal siding at the rear; a short section of limestone wall added at as part of the den enclosure will be removed and the quoining at the original back corner of the house will be restored. A portion of the roof framing to be removed, namely the section with a broken pitch, is also part of the den enclosure.

1.6 Additions are not appropriate for all historic landmarks and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

The proposed addition would be compatible if evaluated as a contributing property in a historic district; however, it is at the Commission's discretion to determine whether the proposed two-story addition is appropriate or would compromise the

ability of the applicant to seek historic landmark status. A particular concern to the Architectural Review Committee was that the second-story addition diminishes the expression of the historic two-story tower as a standalone feature. Modifications made in response to that feedback are relatively subtle and may not fully address the Committee's concerns.

2.1 Design an addition to complement the scale and massing of the historic building, including height. The addition must appear subordinate to the historic building.

2.2 (b) Minimize the appearance of the addition from the street faced by the historic building's front wall. The historic building's overall shape as viewed from the street must appear relatively unaltered.

The roof of the addition ties in at the peak of the tower's pyramidal roof and slopes down to be of a lower height over the one-story side-gabled portion of the house. Material and design choices make the addition visually recede.

3.1 Design additions to be compatible with and differentiated from the historic building, if they are visible from the street.

The addition is differentiated through material choices but overall is of a compatible design to the historic house.

4.1 If an addition will be visible from a street on the front or side, design its roof form and slope to complement the roof on the historic building.

The roof slope matches that of the house. Use of a hipped rather than gabled roof form serves to diminish the overall massing of the addition.

4.2 Use roof materials that match or have similar color, texture, and other visual qualities as the roof on the historic building.

The roof of the addition will match the existing composition shingles of the house.

5.1 If an addition will be visible from a street on the front or side, use exterior wall materials that are compatible with those on the historic building, as well as with the character of the district, in scale, type, material, size, finish, and texture.

5.2 Differentiate the exterior wall materials of the addition from those of the historic building. This could be accomplished by using different materials, using the same materials with different dimensions, or changing trim type or dimensions.

The exterior walls will be vertical metal panels. This material is not used elsewhere on the house, and although modern, has some similarity to the board-and-batten siding of the historic accessory building. It is a compatible material choice.

6.1 If an addition will be visible from a street on the front or side, use windows that are compatible with those on the existing building in terms of material, fenestration pattern, size, proportion, configuration, and profile.

The addition uses divided-light steel windows that are limited in size on the front elevation and more expansive at the rear. These have a similar character to the steel casement windows of the house but would not be mistaken for historic elements.

7.2 If new back porches and decks will be visible from the street, design them to be compatible with the historic building in terms of size, style, materials, and proportions.

The rear deck is situated within the rear ell of the house and is a compatible new feature.

Sites and streetscapes

1.2 Retain permanent landscape features that define the character of the property and the district. Protect them when constructing new buildings or additions.

1.3 (Additional standards for historic landmarks) If the property had a grassy, open front lawn when constructed, maintain that context. Do not replace the lawn with paving or gravel.

The open front lawn and mature trees are character-defining features of the site, which was selected by the Kohns as the prime lot within the Shoalmont Addition. While not paving or gravel, the proposed design introduces a fence along the street that disrupts the open character of the lawn. A limestone wall and outdoor kitchen also represent landscape modifications in front of the house, but these elements are relatively low in height and softened through tall grasses and other plantings.

2.4 If constructing a new street-side fence or site wall, design it so that the materials, style, and scale are compatible with and differentiated from the architectural style and period of the building and are in keeping with historic fence styles and heights in the historic district. a. New front fences must be no more than 4' high and have a high degree of transparency.

Recommendations: If a street-side fence or site wall was not historically present and is not part of the historic development pattern of the district, do not construct one.

While the proposed fence is low in height and perforated to allow visibility, it nevertheless interrupts the open front lawn. Further, street-side fencing is not part of the historic development patterns in the area. Homes in Shoalmont, particularly along Shoal Creek Blvd., are characterized by their deep setbacks and generous, open lawns.

In summary, additions to historic landmarks should be evaluated individually based on the characteristics that make the property significant. The addition is a major modification to a proposed landmark that will be visible from the street. While the construction of the addition will not result in the removal of any character-defining features, it will have some impact on the expression of the tower, currently the only two-story element of the house. Some landscape elements also disrupt the historic character of the site.

COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

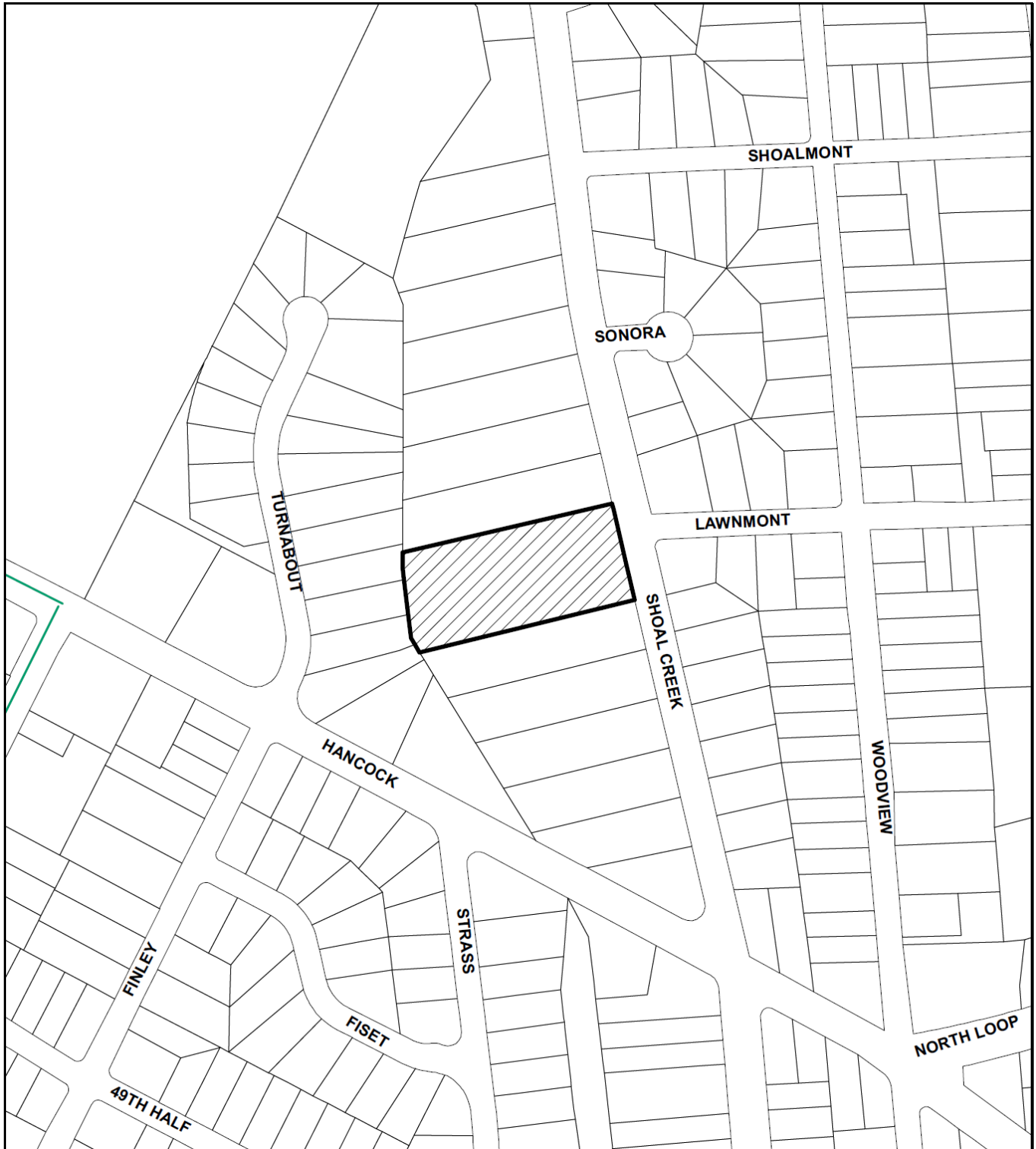
The committee reviewed a previous design set at their April 12, 2021 meeting. Committee members acknowledged that the addition visually recedes based on its complimentary design and dark siding color, but it nevertheless competes with the tower as a primary character-defining feature of the house. Specific concerns include placement of the addition's front wall at the ridge of the side-gabled main roof rather than further back, which inhibits the ability to read the tower as an independent volume. The landscaping plan also is a dramatic change from the natural state of the front yard. The trellis and benches in the front block the main façade. Overall, the committee expressed concerns regarding the applicant's ability to obtain landmark status with the proposed changes.

The applicant has made design changes in response to the committee's feedback, including reducing the overall height of the addition, setting the addition behind the ridgeline of the side-gabled roof, and stepping in the end wall from the gable end. However, these changes are relatively subtle. The trellis is no longer proposed in the front yard.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Consider approval of the addition; request modifications to the landscape design, particularly removal of the fence at the front of the property, prior to approval. Alternately, postpone the case to the May 24, 2021 Historic Landmark Commission meeting with a referral to the May Architectural Review Committee meeting.

LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HR 21-050823

LOCATION: 5312 SHOAL CREEK BLVD



1" = 250'

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PROPERTY INFORMATION

Photos



North and east elevations. Photograph provided by applicant.



South and east elevations. Photograph provided by applicant.



West elevation. Photograph provided by applicant.



North elevation. Photograph provided by applicant.