

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
PERMITS IN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICTS
NOVEMBER 2, 2022
HR-2022-156263
CONGRESS AVENUE
308 CONGRESS AVENUE

PROPOSAL

Construct a new tower addition to the W. B. Smith Building and adjacent historic age buildings.

PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

Reconstruct the street-facing east façade and demolish the remainder of the building to accommodate the new tower. Construct a new mixed-use tower set back 15 feet.

ARCHITECTURE

Two-part commercial block with dentil ornamentation, corbelled accents, and decorative pilasters on the first floor. Balanced storefront with central door flanked by transom windows on the first floor with 2:2 arched hooded windows above. A small ground-floor entrance door provides access to upper the upper floors located on the far right (as viewed from the street) of the composition of the street-facing façade.

DESIGN STANDARDS

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 in National Register districts. The following standards apply to the proposed project:

Commercial additions

1. Location

- 1.1 Locate additions at the rear and sides of historic buildings to minimize visual impact.*
- 1.2 Set back additions from the front wall at a distance that preserves the perceived massing of the historic building, considering the pedestrian view from the opposite side of the primary street.*
 - a. Additions must be set back at least 20' from the front wall of the historic building.*
- 1.3 Minimize the loss of historic fabric by connecting additions to the existing building through the most noninvasive location and methods.*
- 1.4 Additions are not appropriate for all historic landmarks and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.*

The addition is located at the rear of the property and is setback initially 15 feet from the historic façade, which the proposed project deconstructs and reconstructs. However, there is a total loss of fabric in all other locations, including the rear and side walls.

2. Scale, massing, and height

- 2.1 Design the addition to complement the scale and massing of the historic building.*
- 2.2 Design the addition to appear subordinate to the historic building.*
- 2.3 Minimize the appearance of the addition from the primary street(s). The historic building's overall shape as viewed from the opposite side of the primary street must appear relatively unaltered.*
- 2.4 Additions are subject to a 20' setback. They may be cantilevered 5' towards the front wall, but may not extend closer than 15' behind the front wall. The cantilevered portion must begin above the historic building's roof:*
 - a. At least 2 times the height of the historic building, for buildings that are one or two stories high.*
 - b. At least 1 time the height of the historic building, for buildings that are more than two stories high.*
- 2.5 Match floor-to-floor heights as closely as possible with an adjacent historic building, if extant.*

Other Regulations: Buildings in the Congress Avenue combining district must be at least 30' high and no taller than 90' high. This applies to new buildings within 60' of the west side of Congress Avenue and within 40' of the east side of Congress Avenue. See regulations for the Congress Avenue (CA) combining district for more information.

The addition is not subordinate and doesn't complement the historic building. It is not set back 20 feet beyond the front wall of the building. The addition alters the shape of the entire block. Congress Avenue Combining District prohibits buildings over 90 feet in height.

3. Design and style, 4. Roofs, and 5. Materials

- 3.1 Design proportions and patterns such as window-to-wall area ratios, floor-to-floor heights, fenestration patterns, and bay divisions to be compatible with the historic building.*
- 3.2 Take cues for design elements and patterns from the historic building.*
- 3.3 Do not replicate the design or details of the existing building to a degree that the addition might be mistaken as historic.*
- 3.4 No particular architectural style is required for addition design. Designs in both traditional and contemporary styles can successfully achieve compatibility and differentiation with historic buildings.*
- 3.5 The historic primary entrance must remain the most prominent.*
- 3.6 If windows on an addition will be visible from a primary street, use windows that are compatible with those on the historic building in terms of fenestration pattern, size, configuration, and profile.*

Elevations and materials have not been provided. However, preliminary renderings indicate a method of setbacks from the historic façade starting at 15'.

7. Rooftop patios

- 7.1 Design and locate rooftop patio structures to be subordinate to the historic building; minimize visibility from the street.*
- 7.2 Design rooftop patio structures to be compatible with the historic building in terms of design, size, style, materials, and proportions.*
- 7.3 Design rooftop patio structures to be differentiated from the historic building, so that it does not appear they are part of historic-age construction.*
- 7.4 Set back rooftop patio structures, railings, lighting, and mechanical equipment from the front wall a distance equal to 15' or half the width of the front wall, whichever is greater.*
- 7.5 Use a visually light railing that does not distract from the historic building.*
- 7.6 Install rooftop patio structures so that they can be removed without permanent damage to the historic building.*
- 7.7 Keep rooftop plantings low so that they are not visible over the parapet from the opposite side of the street.*

Provided materials do not indicate the extent of visibility from a pedestrian view.

Summary

The project does not meet the applicable standards.

PROPERTY EVALUATION

The property appears to contribute to the Congress Avenue National Register district.

Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark

- 1) The building is more than 50 years old.
- 2) The building appears to retain high integrity.
- 3) Properties must meet two criteria for landmark designation (LDC §25-2-352).
 - a. Architecture. The building is a good example of a two-part Italianate commercial block.
 - b. Historical association. The property still needs to be evaluated for potential historical associations.

- c.* Archaeology. The property was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
- d.* Community value. The property has not been evaluated for a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image, or cultural identity of the city, the neighborhood, or a particular demographic group.
- e.* Landscape feature. The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

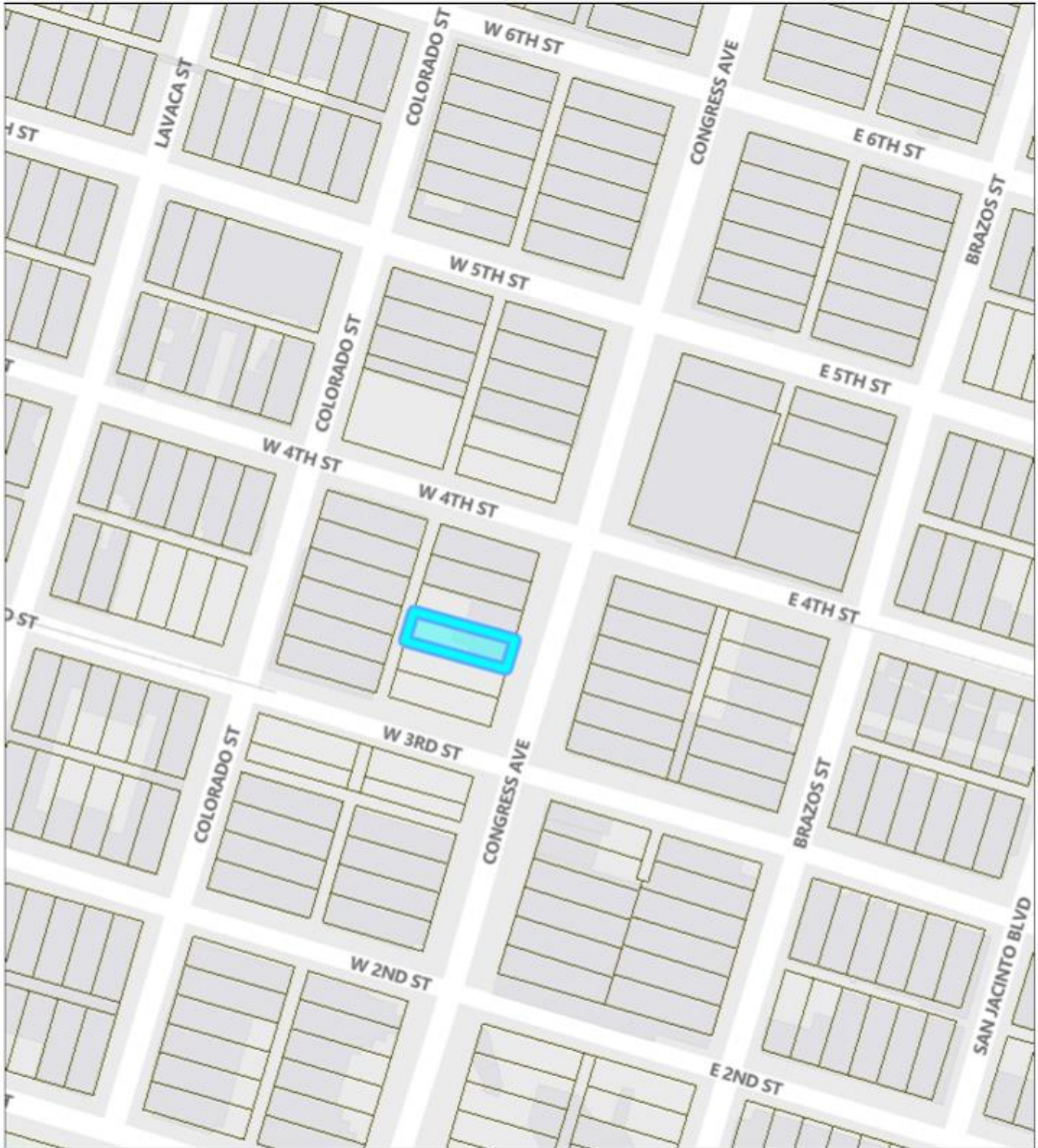
COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

Implement a deeper setback. Restore or incorporate adjacent buildings—do not deconstruct or demolish. New construction should be subordinate to the historic buildings on the block, including the adjacent Koppel building. Retain streetscape, setback and height, massing, and fenestration patterns.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Postpone to December 14th, 2022, and refer to the next upcoming Architectural Review Committee meeting to allow the applicant time to provide additional materials, including elevations and material details, and to refine the design to better comply with the Citywide Historic Design Standards.

LOCATION MAP



Lot Lines

Lot Line



1: 2400

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10/19/2022

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Photos

*Google, 2022*