From: Mike Blackhurst
To: HPD Preservation
Cc: Elizabeth Hurley
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 6:43:43 AM

You don't often get email from [redacted]. Learn why this is important

External Email - Exercise Caution

Dear Sam Fahnestock

We are writing to officially object to the application for a certificate of appropriateness at 2506 Givens Ave (Review Case Number HR 23-132220). We own the adjacent property at [redacted]

The design conflicts with the Rogers Washington Holy Cross Historic District Design Standards in at least 3 ways, specifically the changes to the roofline, the new doors and windows on the front facade, and the proposed front facade where it is outside the extents of the existing carport. Admittedly, I do not have the resources to cross reference each design detail with the historic district standards, so there may be additional conflicts.

While we do not object to the design per se, we object to the manner in which the City administers applications for certificates of appropriateness (COA) in the context of historical district standards per the following.

1) Prior COA applications, including the above referenced case number, include neither details regarding the proposed scope of work nor summarize its appropriateness in light of historic district standards. When negotiating the content and passing of the historic district standards, City staff indicated they would review applications for appropriateness and share these reviews with impacted property owners. The City is not providing these services, implying such reviews are fully citizens' responsibility. Citizens are unlikely to have the resources to ensure compliance with historic district standards. At a minimum, the City should have completed a preliminary review by the Certificate of Appropriateness committee. We request copies of this review, including names of committee members, meeting dates, the results of their review, and any materials that support their results.

2) The property in question is not correctly indicated on the map included with the notice.

3) I communicated these concerns to the City when considering the prior notice submitted for this location, which was withdrawn without notifying us. However, the City has not taken these concerns into consideration in the current notice.

We understand well that compliance with the historic district standards may be very challenging and would generally like to approve of designs that conform with the spirit of the standards. However, the above concerns signal the City's process for administering historic district standards is opaque, unresponsive to citizens' concerns, and relies on citizens to perform technical work. The City's approach threatens the viability of the historical district standards. We are also concerned the City may also be administered the standards inequitably given the City's process for developing and approving of the standards was highly exclusive.

We would enthusiastically approve of the proposed design should the City document in writing its conflict with the historic district standards and a brief justification for these conflicts, which may be covered in the preliminary review requested above. Such documentation would allow other property owners to seek similar resolutions in the future.

Please confirm receipt of this email with sufficient time to follow up via snail mail in advance of the Feb 7, 2024 hearing as needed.

Sincerely,

Mike Blackhurst

CAUTION: This is an EXTERNAL email. Please use caution when clicking links or opening attachments. If you believe this to be a malicious or phishing email, please report it using the "Report Message" button in Outlook or forward to cybersecurity@austintexas.gov.