



Project Name/Address: 734 Williamson Street

Application Type: Certificate of Appropriateness for new development in a historic district adjacent to a landmark and on a landmark site

Legistar File ID # [34084](#)

Prepared By: Amy L. Scanlon, Preservation Planner, Planning Division

Summary

Project Applicant/Contact: Jim Bower, Baldwin Development Group, LLC

Requested Action/Proposal Summary: This development proposal requires multiple actions from the Landmarks Commission. This report covers the following actions:

The Landmarks Commission shall act on the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the following items as discussed in this staff report:

- New development in historic district

The Landmarks Commission shall also provide the Plan Commission and Urban Design Commission with advisory recommendations on the following items as discussed in this staff report:

- New development adjacent to a landmark site
- Land division/combination in a historic district and of a landmark site

The Landmarks Commission shall review the proposal as presented. Since the landmark site is proposed to be subdivided with six feet being transferred to the development site, a Certificate of Appropriateness for development on a landmark site is not included for review. If the subdivision does not occur, the project would need to return to the Landmarks Commission for review against those relevant criteria. Because the Certified Survey Map was not included in the submission materials, the Applicant shall return to the Landmarks Commission for action on this item in the future.

Background Information

Parcel Location: The subject site is located in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District adjacent to the Madison Candy Company (740 and 744 Williamson), a designated landmark and along the bike path. A portion of the landmark site is proposed to be subdivided and purchased for the new development. The MG&E power plant is located outside of the historic district on the north side of the bike path.

Relevant Landmarks Ordinance Sections:

33.19(11)(f) Guideline Criteria for new Development in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District - Parcels Zoned for Commercial Use.

1. Any new structures shall be evaluated according to both of the criteria listed in Sec. 33.01(11)(d); that is, compatibility of gross volume and height.
2. The rhythm of solids and voids in the street facade(s) of any new structure shall be compatible with the buildings within its visually related area.
3. The materials used in the street facade(s) of any new structure shall be compatible with those used in the buildings and environment within its visually related area.

4. The design of the roof of any new structure shall be compatible with those of the buildings and environment within its visually related area.
5. The rhythm of building masses and spaces created by the construction of a new structure shall be compatible with the existing rhythm of masses and spaces for those sites within its visually related area.

33.19(11)(d) Guideline Criteria for new Development in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District - Parcels Zoned for Manufacturing Use.

1. The gross volume of any new structure shall be visually compatible with the buildings and environment within its visually related area.
2. The height of any new structure shall be visually compatible with the buildings and environment within its visually related area.

28.144 DEVELOPMENT ADJACENT TO A LANDMARK OR LANDMARK SITE.

Any development on a zoning lot adjoining a landmark or landmark site for which Plan Commission or Urban Design Commission review is required shall be reviewed by the Landmarks Commission to determine whether the proposed development is so large or visually intrusive as to adversely affect the historic character and integrity of the adjoining landmark or landmark site. Landmarks Commission review shall be advisory to the Plan Commission and Urban Design Commission.

- 33.19(5)(i)1. Review proposed land divisions and subdivision plats of landmark sites and properties in Historic Districts to determine whether the proposed lot sizes negatively impact the historic character of significance of a landmark or landmark site and whether the proposed lot sizes are compatible with adjacent lot sizes and maintain the general lot size pattern of the Historic District. The Landmarks Commission review shall be advisory to the Plan Commission.

Analysis and Conclusion

The north side of Williamson Street is zoned Traditional Shopping Street (TSS). The south side of Williamson Street is zoned Traditional Residential (TR-V1). Each side of the street has a specific and consistent character and related scale.

The visually related area (VRA) map is attached to this report.

This development proposal is being constructed on a site that has been largely open/vacant for 70 years. The Sanborn map of 1942 with revisions to c. 1960 is attached to this report. The Sanborn map shows a building at 732 Williamson and another toward the rear of 734 Williamson. The north portion of the block along E Wilson Street contains three small buildings. The largest building is shown as auto body repair and storage. Under the later addition, one can make out that the earlier use for the north portion of the block was the Empire Fuel Company. There are round tanks located around the property. Sanborn maps before 1942 would need to be researched to determine the configuration of buildings that may have been on this site.

Each Certificate of Appropriateness and advisory recommendation will be discussed separately in this section.

Certificate of Appropriateness for New Development in a Historic District

A brief discussion of the new development standards 33.19(11)(f) follows:

1. Compatibility of gross volume and height:
The Ordinance references section 33.19(11)(d) which separates the gross volume standard from the height standard.

Gross Volume

The proposed building is obviously larger in mathematical volume than other buildings in the VRA; however, the proposed building forms are consistent with the forms of the existing industrial buildings within the VRA (rectilinear with parapets and flat roofs) and the Ordinance refers to the visually compatible volume.

The Ordinance language can be interpreted to mean that the building volume can be designed to be visually compatible with the other buildings in the VRA through architectural treatments, general massing, and material selections. The applicant has continued to refine the design to further minimize the appearance of the volume of the building by creating distinct massing elements. By creating smaller distinct massing elements, the building volume is visually reduced and becomes more visually compatible with other buildings in the VRA.

Height

The proposed building is obviously taller than other buildings in the VRA. The Ordinance does not specify what does or does not constitute a visually compatible height; therefore, the Commission should exercise its discretion when determining this criterion.

The height of the proposed building along Williamson Street is visually compatible with the adjacent buildings and with those within the VRA. The building height steps up toward the middle of the block. The applicant has used design techniques to reduce the visual appearance of this mid-block height through the use of massing, material selections, material treatments, and step-backs.

2. Rhythm of solids and voids in the street façade(s):
The existing buildings generally have grouped windows (voids) set within brick walls (solids). This rhythm has been reflected in the brick portion of the street façade of the proposed building. While the design of the rest of the street façade is more contemporary, the solids and voids are balanced.
3. Materials used in the street façade(s):
The existing buildings within the VRA are largely constructed of brick. The proposed building will also be largely constructed of brick which is compatible with other buildings in the VRA.
4. Design of the roof:
The existing buildings in the VRA have flat roofs with parapets. The proposed building also has a flat roof with parapets and some areas of handrail which is compatible with buildings in the VRA.
5. Rhythm of building masses and spaces:
There is not an existing consistent rhythm on this block in the VRA due to the large space (parking lot) between buildings. This space is not consistent with the character of the historic district or with the area just outside of the VRA. The proposed building combines with the existing buildings to create a more consistent rhythm along Williamson Street.

Advisory recommendation for development adjacent to a Landmark Site
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This development proposal is being constructed on a site that is adjacent to a landmark site. According to the Sanborn map, the landmark Madison Candy Company building existed on Williamson Street with neighboring residential buildings at 752 and 738 Williamson and commercial buildings at 730, 732 and 734 Williamson. The massing of the proposed building along Williamson Street is compatible with the landmark building. The bulk and visual impact of the proposed building massing is held at the middle of the block.

Recommendation

Each Certificate of Appropriateness and advisory recommendation will be discussed separately in this section.

Certificate of Appropriateness for New Development in Historic District

The mathematical gross volume of the proposed building is larger than the other buildings within the VRA; however, the applicant has continued to refine the design to further minimize the appearance of the volume of the building by creating distinct massing elements. By creating smaller distinct massing elements, the building volume is visually reduced and becomes more visually compatible with other buildings in the VRA. The height of the proposed building is lower along the Williamson Street frontage, but then increases toward the middle of the block. Staff believes that the applicants have successfully reduced the mass of the building so that the component parts can be found to be visually compatible with other buildings in the VRA. Staff also believes that the standards related to the rhythm of solids and voids in the street façades, the materials used in the street façades, the design of the roof and the rhythm of masses and spaces seem to be met. If the Landmarks Commission finds that the standards are met, staff recommends that the motion include the following conditions of approval:

1. The applicant shall further reduce the visual appearance of the Building 4 mass to have a visual size that is more consistent with the other masses. This reduction should be achieved through material selections, building articulation, change in vocabulary, and the use of other architectural treatments.
2. The applicant shall provide staff with proposed building materials for final review and approval if they are different from those discussed and shown during the meeting.
3. The applicant shall receive approval by the Landmarks Commission or designee on any deviations from the design as submitted to and reviewed by the Landmarks Commission before a building permit is obtained.
4. The Certificate of Appropriateness shall be contingent on the recording of the Certified Survey Map.

Advisory recommendation for development adjacent to a Landmark Site

Staff believes the proposed development is not so large or visually intrusive and does not adversely affect the historic character and integrity of the adjoining landmark or landmark site and recommends that the Landmarks Commission provide a similar recommendation to the Plan Commission.