



Agenda Item #: 5

Project Title: 826 Williamson St and 302 S Paterson St - Land Combination in the Third Lake Ridge Hist. Dist.; 6th Ald. Dist.

Legistar File ID #: 73458

Prepared By: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner

Members: Present: Richard Arnesen, Edna Ely-Ledesma, Katie Kaliszewski, David McLean, Maurice Taylor, and Ald. Bill Tishler.
Excused: Molly Harris.

Summary

Lindsey Lee, registering in support and wishing to speak
William Ochowicz, registering in support and wishing to speak
Kevin Burow, registering in support and wishing to speak
Kris Warren, registering in support and wishing to speak
Jacob Morrison, registering in support and wishing to speak
Tyler Krupp, registering in support and available to answer questions
Matthew Tills, registering in support and available to answer questions
Cailey Jamison, registering in support and not wishing to speak
Ian Jamison, registering in support and not wishing to speak
Sally Jamison, registering in support and not wishing to speak
Mary Pustejovsky, registering in support and not wishing to speak

Kaliszewski opened the public hearing.

Bailey provided background information on the project.

Arnesen asked for a recap of what the Landmarks Commission previously approved in June. Bailey clarified that it was an approval to resolve the underlying lot lines on 826 Williamson Street.

Kris Warren said that when they could not retain the additional 14 feet in our last request to the commission, they decided to pursue using both parcels in order to make the parking work. Their architect will not be able to join tonight, but KBA will share a presentation on the report.

Kevin Burrow, KBA, presented images and maps related to the project, as well as background information on the history of the property. Based on their research, Struck & Irwin used this property as one business for over 80 years. They provided a comparable at 722 Williamson and 300 S Livingston, which was combined. Other examples provided include the Gateway Shopping Center and the Elks Club.

Jacob Morrison said they would like to argue that uses to the west and east of this side are similar. The boundary map shows clearly that portions of this district do extend past our site. The configuration of the old building showed the lot was used by the same business. They don't believe the proposed lot combination is incompatible with adjacent lot sizes because the western side is traditionally larger-sized lots. They feel there is historical precedent for a railroad-adjacent larger lot. Their goal is to create desperately needed new housing close to downtown. Any proposed building would come back for appropriateness of design. This proposal would allow them to build a larger underground parking garage.

Arnesen asked how tall the new building is. Morrison said that on the railroad side, it is five stories and steps down to the street at three stories. Arnesen asked if there were precedent for a five-story building in the historic district. Morrison said there is a possibility that one wouldn't need to move the historic district line if the buildings are not connected above ground, but only through underground parking. Kaliszewski said she was interested in what staff has to say about historic district lines. Bailey said the applicant is talking about a single lot, but two separate parcels. The historic districts follow the parcel line. We don't have precedent for them following parcel and not lot lines, but we can explore it.

Tishler had concerns about historic buildings being damaged by underground construction. If you can build underground and connect them, that building underground could damage the structures above. The problem with building underground and having two buildings on the surface is concerning. Arnesen said they will go underground in either scenario.

Kaliszewski requested clarification that the commission can only vote on what is before them and not what may come before them in the future. Bailey confirmed that was correct; the commission can consider if the resulting development may or may not fit in the district. Kaliszewski reminded the group that they do not have a proposal of what will happen on these lots.

Arnesen asked the applicants to refresh the commission on why they want to combine these parcels. Morrison said that there will be larger parking underneath for the units that go above it. If the parcels are not combined, they have to be separate and have to follow setbacks, which would require them to each have access coming off of their designated streets.

Arnesen asked if they could accomplish that with easements. Morrison said no, they are zoned ESS, which does not allow zero lot lines. Arnesen asked if they have explored the idea of a PUD.

William Ochowicz said that combining the lots would meet the standards laid out in the ordinance, and it is not even going to be the largest lot. As a layperson, they said that that something being out of character means that a singular use is much more important than the lot size or tax parcels. They think about how it is used, and it has been used as a single lot for many years. They don't know how the history to combine lots impacts this given that the Third Lake Ridge Historic District encompasses a lot of different types of histories. They said that it makes more sense to combine the lot, which seems in character with the district. It makes sense if it makes it easier to build the building and avoid having a driveway on Williamson Street, so they supported approving the CoA.

Lindsey Lee referenced written public comment they had submitted. They said that there is a lot of support for this project, and it is an obvious site of infill development for a higher density spot. Anyone in Madison would agree with this, MNA supports this, as does the alder, the adjacent property owners, and others. They asked the commission to explicitly describe how this proposal will adversely impact the historic character of the historic district. They said that many people would say that it will not affect the district. If there are two developments on this site, the views on this site will be the same, and there is no difference whether it is one parking garage or two. They said that splitting the development means two of everything, more driveways, and more concrete. They asked for an explanation to the neighborhood on why that is a good outcome, given that the viewshed from Williamson Street will be the same. They said that the family doing this project has been in the neighborhood for at least three generations; they are the right family to do this and this is the right idea.

Kaliszewski closed the public hearing.

Taylor asked Bailey to discuss the standards and staff's recommendation to deny this project a CoA.

Bailey said that the proposal is incompatible with adjacent lot sizes, and it will wrap around several much smaller lots. There are a variety of lot configurations on Williamson Street, but they do tend to get more regular with this block. There is a lot of unusual stuff in the far southwest corner with the very industrial properties, but the City intentionally made the boundaries this way. The tobacco warehouse is included as a remaining resource, otherwise the rest of the properties along the railroad were excluded from the boundary of the historic district. The commercial properties were included within the boundary. We are talking about reconfiguring the property and bringing this into the district. While there was the same ownership across the boundaries during the period of the significance for this district, they were very separate uses; one was industrial, and the other was commercial.

McLean agreed with Bailey's analysis of this lot. They said they have done some reading on the National Park Service guidelines on boundaries, and they mostly change when things grow. Historic districts are created to stop the erosion of these parts of the city. He didn't know if what happened to the west is eroding the district. He took a look at this property and agreed the viewshed may be the same, but as the district changes, if they allow larger and larger sites it will change the neighborhood. He also saw something on MNA future development where they were asking that the north side of this development be limited to three stories, which he wanted to note in case that might be an issue.

Tishler said that he was in favor of growing historic districts, but he thought having an underground garage be the purpose of that growth was odd. He saw the need for more housing, but he wished this were presented differently and not about convenience.

Ely-Ledesma agreed with Tishler that she had concerns about making a decision based on parking, and she wished there were a better driving force. She said that at the end of the day, the argument is whether it fails to maintain the lot sizes of the historic district or adjacent lots. Looking at the western side, she was convinced by the developer's argument about the use being contiguous. The use for that area as industrial/commercial could be seen as the historic precedent to be followed as to that being an aggregated parcel.

Arnesen said he didn't find the arguments all that compelling. If there is an option to do two buildings over one parking garage, he thought that could be a better development. The units would be nicer with more exterior access. It would be more likely to get the project done if the back parcel is not in a historic district, so the commission doesn't have to opine on the height of the building. He agreed with Heather's presentation, and he thought that the commission's hands were tied on this. Combining these lots would not maintain the general lot size pattern. He was supportive of more housing, but he thought there was a better way to go about this.

Kaliszewski said she didn't know how they could add the entire lot to this lot given they could not approve the previous 14-foot addition request. She didn't see a way forward with this proposal.

Taylor said he agreed with this land combination. Based on the use, he didn't see why they would not want this in the district, which already has odd district lines. There are other properties that are larger sizes, and he thought this request made sense.

Action

A motion was made by McLean, seconded by Arnesen, to Deny the request for the Certificate of Appropriateness for the land combination. The motion passed by the following vote:

Ayes: 4 - Bill Tishler, David McLean, Richard Arnesen, and Katie Kaliszewski

Noes: 2 - Maurice Taylor and Edna Ely-Ledesma

Excused: 1 - Molly Harris