

LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING REPORT

March 10, 2025



Agenda Item #: 5

Project Title: 124 E Gorham St - Land Combination and New Construction in the Mansion Hill Historic District (District 2)

Legistar File ID #: 87103

Prepared By: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner

Members: Present: Richard Arnesen, Edna Ely-Ledesma, Molly Harris, Katie Kaliszewski, Ald. Amani Latimer Burris, Jacob Morrison, and Maurice Taylor

Summary

Joel Koeppen, registering in support and wishing to speak
Robert Klebba, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Bruce Bosben, registering in support and wishing to speak
Diego Huacuja Bucay, registering neither in support nor in opposition and not wishing to speak

Bailey provided background information on the proposed project, noting concerns about the architectural character, scale, front setback, and connection to the historic carriage house.

Joel Koeppen, applicant, spoke about the project.

Regarding the land combination, Morrison said they will need to consider the lot sizes of the surrounding neighborhood to ensure it is compatible. He thought the applicant seemed to be respecting the openings and existing details and fabric of the carriage house. The connector to the carriage house is tricky, and he recommended designing it in a way that it could be disconnected in the future without altering the carriage house. He said that it was great to lower the roofline with the dormers because the building is quite tall compared to the buildings around it. He also agreed that they should reference the details of the nearby Italianate house while not replicating it. He thought the window proportions looked small on the elevation facing the street. He understood they were trying to reference the building next door, but it looked like a lot of wall and recommended they look at the proportion of windows to walls rather than the size of the windows themselves. He thought that it felt a little crowded on the site, and while he understood the need to maximize space, it does crowd out the carriage house in the back.

Robert Klebba spoke in opposition. Bruce Bosben, property owner, spoke in support.

Arnesen said that the overall design seemed fine, but it was shoehorned in and too big for the site, resulting in it crowding the carriage house. He asked if they had thought about brick size. Koeppen said they were considering modular brick because they wanted it to be complimentary to the existing property, carriage house, and 116 E Gorham in order to bring unity to the site. Arnesen encouraged a modular size, and Morrison agreed.

Taylor said that overall, he liked how the building looked visually.

Ely-Ledesma asked about the reasoning behind the land combination. Bailey said that the applicant is proposing a land combination in order to accommodate the drive aisle for the proposed parking ramp because it would cross the property line, which does not meet zoning code.

Harris asked if staff thought the land combination was appropriate. Bailey said that historically, these were platted as two separate lots but operated as a single parcel. Sometime around the mid-century, the 66-foot-wide lot with the

carriage house was conveyed separately. The Brown House at 116 E Gorham and carriage house were built at the same time as part of the same property. Looking at the standards for historic lot development patterns, historically, these were one property. If the lots were combined, then the entire property would become a landmark site, and they would follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. If the lots remain separate, then they would follow the Mansion Hill Standards. The carriage house was not part of the landmark designation, and currently 116 E Gorham is the only landmark. Harris said that if they were to be combined, she was concerned with Secretary of the Interior's Standards 9 and 10 where the massing of the new construction overwhelms the carriage house, and they needed to consider how it connects to the carriage house. She agreed with Arnesen and Morrison's comments on the scale of the building. Regarding the architectural character, we would primarily be considering the Brown House and carriage house rather than the surrounding buildings.

Kaliszewski raised concerns about the front of the building because it is difficult to tell which side is the driveway and which is the pedestrian entrance. She suggested they make the front entrance look less like a driveway and more like the entry to a home. She said that if the land combination were approved, the character of the building is too modern and flat, and it needs some articulation to put it better in character with the Brown House and carriage house. She added that the porches also read as too modern and need more detailing; currently, they read as 1970s and flat, and the square long-running pillars feel modern. There is a way to allow this to read as contemporary while still calling back to those details on the other buildings rather than trying to call back to the more modern apartment buildings within the historic district. She asked if it was set back the same distance as the other buildings or if it is closer to the street. Koeppen said they are using a 15-foot setback set by the zoning code. Kaliszewski asked if it would cause them to lose units if they pushed it back to be more in line with the neighboring buildings. Koeppen confirmed that they would lose units. Kaliszewski said she had concerns regarding the setback.

Morrison pointed out that they could potentially approve the land combination, but then not approve the design, which would trigger a different design on an approved combined lot.

Action

No action was taken.