

Landmarks Commission  
Meeting of November 5, 2018  
Legistar #53566, 952-956 Spaight St - Exterior Alteration

The owner replaced a double-hung window with glass block (without permission) and is also seeking to replace a side door. The staff report states: "Although these alterations are not historically appropriate, they are not on a street façade."

I urge the Commission to not accept this analysis. Perhaps the Commission will find another reason to find that the glass block meets the district standards. But the staff report's analysis is not how the Commission has interpreted "street façade" in the past.

One of the most articulate explanations of why the Commission should not accept this analysis is from 2008 when the owners of a Pinckney Street home (Mansion Hill district) took down a chimney. The chimney was on the side of the home, but visible from the street. The Preservation Planner said:

"The decorative chimney did contribute to the historic character of the house and to the historic character of the district as a whole. The destruction of original historic parts of a building in an historic district clearly harms the historic appearance and character of the district. The preservation of historic elements of a building or an historic neighborhood is the main mission of the Landmarks Commission. I recommend that the Landmarks Commission order the owner to rebuild the chimney to replicate its original appearance."

The Commission denied a Certificate of Appropriateness and gave the Preservation Planner authority to approve the replacement chimney. Legistar 11859.

The Mansion Hill standards, like the Third Lake standards, refer to "street facades." The Commission has taken jurisdiction over Third Lake alterations on properties when the property (not just the proposed alteration) is visible from the street. A few examples include:

- 939 Jenifer, Legistar 24990, the Commission denied a CoA to remove a chimney that was on the side of the home.
- 1335 Jenifer, Legistar 26971, the Commission approved a new rear deck and required staining and clarification of certain details.
- 1210 Jenifer, Legistar 27956, the Commission required that the 2 side windows near the rear of the home be reviewed by staff for size.
- 848 Spaight, Legistar 37901, 6 windows not facing the street could be replaced, but needed to retain the window trim and opening sizes.
- 620 S Brearly, Legistar 38197, for the lake-facing side of a home, the Commission approved replacement of lower-level windows with a sliding patio door, requiring that the actual proportion of the glass divisions be verified against the existing divisions of adjacent windows.

- 921 Jenifer, Legistar 51561, the Commission approved a second-story addition on the back of the house.
- 1138 Jenifer, Legistar 20330, the Commission approved a change in roof slope between two side dormers, which the staff report said was needed to remedy water issues and the proposed alteration was “difficult to see.”
- 506 S Baldwin, Legistar 37487, skylight locations needed to be revised so they were less visible from the street.

In Legistar 34516, the Commission specifically discussed “street façade” for a home that was not on a street. The report states: “Levitan explained that if you can’t see the house from the street then there’s no street façade. Levitan explained that the ordinance references the commercial standards for a residential property and that the residential standards are stricter.” The Commission approved the window replacement and dormer residing because of the lack of a street façade.

952-956 Spaight does have a street façade. (The glass block replacement window and proposed door are on the side of the home next to the neighbor’s driveway.)



If the Commission accepts staff’s rationale that only the portion of a building directly facing the street is subject to the Commission’s jurisdiction, then chimneys could be removed (which the Commission denied in Legistar 24990), side dormers and rear additions would not require Commission oversight, nor would roofing material on houses that have the gable end facing the street.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Linda Lehnertz