

LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING REPORT

August 29, 2022



Agenda Item #: 2

Project Title: 2125 Van Hise Ave - Demolition of existing additions and construction of a new addition in the University Heights Hist. Dist.; 5th Ald. Dist.

Legistar File ID #: 73113

Prepared By: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner

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

Summary

Leif Backus, registering in support and available to answer questions

Robert Grizzard, registering in support and available to answer questions

Kaliszewski opened the public hearing.

Bailey provided background information on the project.

Tishler asked if the existing garage would become an ADU. Backus said that it was not intended to become an ADU at the moment, but they are incorporating plumbing and improving the thermal performance because it would make it easier to create an ADU in the future should they decide to do so. Backus added that they were happy to work with the commission on a solution for the bay window.

Harris arrived at 5:15 pm.

Ely-Ledesma asked if the addition would use the same materials as the house. Backus confirmed it would; the mixture is Chicago Common brick.

Kaliszewski closed the public hearing.

McLean said he was not a fan of the bay window because it looks like an attachment that is not integral to the structure given other fenestration on building. He agreed with staff's recommendation to stick with like window types that are existing to the 1915 structure. Kaliszewski agreed, pointing out that it is more reminiscent of later Colonial Revivals as opposed to something this early.

Leif Backus discussed redesigning the bay as a box bay, suggesting that would be more in keeping with a bay window from the period. They said that the existing house is a very plain geometry with a myriad of additions at the side and rear, so it is difficult to find any vocabulary on the existing house other than the saltbox geometry.

Kaliszewski asked if there would be similar windows in the proposed bay, and Backus confirmed they would be similar. McLean asked if the muntin patterns in the bay were similar to the rest of the house and whether the first floor windows by the front door had previously been replaced. Backus said they had been replaced. McLean asked if any existing windows were historic. Backus said the only original windows were the quarter rounds in the attic and the unusually narrow door they are converting to a window.

McLean said the bay looks big and out of scale compared to the other window openings, pointing out that it dwarfs the garage doors. He said that he was concerned with the size, scale, and proportion to the rest of the structure, including other window openings and elements around it because it was dominating that elevation.

Tishler said the existing windows give the house personality, but the bay window did not. He asked about the change in grade with the amount of concrete and how water would drain. Backus said there is a new large sump pit planned between the motor court and rear yard, so the majority of water will be diverted there.

Ely-Ledesma agreed with the staff recommendation regarding the bay window. She said that there was a patchwork of additions over time, but the proposed bay window disrupts the cleanup that has been done through the design of the addition in synergy with the architectural language of the existing structure. She said that having the bay window as a protrusion of the existing façade does not add to that quality.

Kaliszewski agreed and suggested it could be because the bay window is off center, and the Colonial Revival is so hinged on symmetry. She said that she assumed it was a bay window for a specific reason, whether to create more light or space. Backus confirmed that they did have plans for that space in the kitchen. Backus agreed that Colonial Revivals have plain geometry and symmetry, especially on the front façade, but they said the side façade may not have the same clear symmetry. They pointed out that the side porch will be extended and will mask the bay window from the front right of way.

McLean asked if a box bay would be an appropriate architectural detail for this era of this construction and style. Kaliszewski said it would be a better fit than the canted bay being proposed.

McLean asked whether the glass garage door was a concern. Bailey said that the building is no longer functioning as a garage that would house a car, and the proposed glass door will allow it to continue to read as a void. She said that it is not about creating a period-appropriate garage, but about an alteration that will allow it to continue to convey its historic association. Kaliszewski asked if it was a modern garage, and Bailey said that she didn't know the date of construction but given its size, she couldn't believe it would be original.

Action

A motion was made by Tishler, seconded by McLean, to approve the request for the Certificate of Appropriateness with the condition that the applicant work with staff to modify the bay window to be in keeping with the historic character of the building. The motion passed by voice vote/other.