



Project Name/Address: 134-140 S Blair Street and 506-518 E Wilson Street
Application Type: Land Combination & New Construction
Legistar File ID # [55514](#)
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Summary

Project Applicant/Contact: Lance McGrath
Requested Action: The Landmarks Commission is considering a land combination and construction of new principal structure in the First Settlement Historic District.

Background Information

Parcel Location: The subject sites are located in the First Settlement Historic District.

Relevant Landmarks Ordinance Sections:

41.12 CONSTRUCTING, ALTERING, OR DEMOLISHING STRUCTURES IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS.

No person may do any of the following in a historic district without a certificate of appropriateness issued under Subchapter F:

- (1) Construct a new structure.
- (2) Materially alter the exterior of an existing structure.
- (3) Demolish or relocate an existing structure.
- (4) Install a sign.
- (5) Divide any lot, consolidate any lot, or voluntarily grant any easement on any lot if doing so may distract from the historic character of the district.

41.18 STANDARDS FOR GRANTING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS. A certificate of appropriateness shall be granted only if the proposed project complies with this chapter, including all of the following standards that apply.

- (4) Land Divisions and Combinations. The commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for land divisions, combinations, and subdivision plats of landmark sites and properties in historic districts, unless it finds that the proposed lot sizes adversely impact the historic character or significance of a landmark, are incompatible with adjacent lot sizes, or fail to maintain the general lot size pattern of the historic district.

41.26 FIRST SETTLEMENT HISTORIC DISTRICT.

- (4) Standards for the Review of New Principal Structures.
 - (a) Structure Height, Scale, Proportion and Rhythm. New principal structures shall be similar in height to the structures directly adjacent to each side. If the structures directly adjacent to each side are different in height, the new structure shall be of a height compatible with the structures within two hundred (200) feet of the proposed structure. New principal structures shall be compatible with the scale, proportion, and rhythm of

- masses and spaces of structures within two hundred (200) feet of the proposed structure.
- (b) Siding Materials. Narrow gauge clapboards made of wood, composite wood material, or concrete, and/or brick and stone may be permitted. Stucco and split-faced concrete block may be permitted only as trim, rather than the primary siding material. Stucco panels and pebble dash are prohibited. If the first two floors of a proposed structure are masonry, the Landmarks Commission may permit the use of artificial siding (i.e. vinyl or aluminum) on the upper floor or floors. In such circumstances, the artificial siding must conform to the following requirements:
1. The material shall be of the highest grade offered by the manufacturer.
 2. The material shall have a minimum gauge of .042.
 3. The color and sheen of the siding shall be consistent with those used in the era in which adjacent structures were constructed.
 4. The siding shall not have a false wood grain.
 5. The width of each apparent clapboard shall not exceed four (4) inches.
 6. The use of visible j-channel trim and other prefabricated elements that differ in appearance from those used on historic structures in the neighborhood is prohibited.
- (c) Roof Materials. Roofing materials shall be asphalt shingles; fiberglass or other composition shingles similar in appearance to multi-layered architectural shingles or 3-in-1 tab; or Dutch lap, French method or interlock shingles. Sawn wood shingles may also be approved. Thick wood shakes are prohibited. Vents shall be located as inconspicuously as possible and shall be similar in color to the color of the roof. Rolled roofing, tar-and-gravel, rubberized membranes and other similar roofing materials are prohibited except that such materials may be used on flat or slightly sloped roofs that are not visible from the ground.
- (d) Roof Shape. If a principal structure does not have a flat roof, the pitch of the new roof shall be no less than 4-in-12.
- (e) Facade Design. Street facades shall be modulated with setbacks incorporated into the design at the first floor level. The entrance shall either be inset or projecting from the plane of the main facade. Porches on main entrances are encouraged. Street facades shall reflect the rhythm and directional expression of pre-1930 structures within two hundred (200) feet of the subject property.
- (f) Windows and Doors. The proportion of width to height of doors and windows and the proportion and rhythm of solids to voids in the front and side facade designs shall be similar to pre-1930 structures within two hundred (200) feet of the subject property. Windows trimmed with bead molds similar in design to other pre-1930 window trim in the district and windows and doors shall be inset at least one (1) inch from the exterior trim. The main entrance to the structure shall be on the front facade. Garage doors shall be located on the side or rear facades whenever feasible. If it is not feasible to locate the garage door on the sides or rear facades, one-car garage doors will be permitted on the front facade.

Analysis and Conclusion

The current proposal includes combination of 8 lots, three of which are included within the First Settlement Historic District. The newly created lot would feature a single building, which would have portions within the First Settlement Historic District and portions adjacent to the district. The building has frontages on East Wilson Street, which is outside of the local historic district, and on South Blair Street.

The Landmarks Commission is able to provide comments on the portion of the building within the East Wilson National Register District, which will be forwarded to the Urban Design Commission and the Plan Commission. However, the Landmarks Commission does not have jurisdiction over new construction in National Register districts if they are not also local historic districts. The commission has already fulfilled its role pertaining (both per MGO 28.185 and as a Certified Local Government) to the proposed demolitions on East Wilson associated with this project in providing comments on the associated demolition report at its May 6, 2019, meeting.

For this project, the Landmarks Commission is tasked with considering the portions for which they have the responsibility to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for:

1. land combination in a historic district
2. construction of a new principal structure in the First Settlement Historic District

Land Combination

The goal of both 41.12 and 41.18 is to maintain lot sizes to support development that is of comparable scale as those structures within the historic district. Even if the commission were to only consider the part of the project within the First Settlement Historic District, the portion of the lot within the local district would be incompatible with adjacent lot sizes and diverge from the lot size pattern of the historic district. While the proposal does not appear to meet the criteria for approval, staff believes that the land combination could be approved on the condition that a Certificate of Appropriateness for a new principal structure that meets the First Settlement Historic District Standards be granted. In that way, a proposed parcel or parcels would be encumbered with a development that is in character with the local historic district, thereby fulfilling the intent of the standards in 41.12 and 41.18.

A discussion of the pertinent code section follows:

41.12 CONSTRUCTING, ALTERING, OR DEMOLISHING STRUCTURES IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS.

No person may do any of the following in a historic district without a certificate of appropriateness issued under Subchapter F:

- (5) The Landmarks Commission can approve a lot consolidation if doing so will not distract from the historic character of the district. As such, if the overall project is in keeping with the First Settlement Historic District standards and is appropriate for the neighborhood, then the commission could conditionally approve the combination of lots for a development that does not distract from the historic character of the district.

41.18 STANDARDS FOR GRANTING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS. A certificate of appropriateness shall be granted only if the proposed project complies with this chapter, including all of the following standards that apply.

- (4) Land Divisions and Combinations. The proposed lot combination would include areas that are within and outside of the historic district. Of the lots in the district, while the underlying lot lines reflect the original development of the historic district, the parcel at 132 S Blair is the largest in the district. Expanding the size of the parcel, could encourage development that is out of scale with the resources in the district. The new parcel is not generally compatible with adjacent (meaning directly abutting) lot sizes and also would fail to maintain the general lot size pattern of the historic district.

Construction of a New Principal Structure

The proposed new structure faces several challenges in terms of meeting the First Settlement Historic District standards. For some of the standards, the commission needs to take into consideration all structures within 200 feet of the property, which includes resources outside of the district. For some of the standards, the commission

need to take into consideration only the pre-1930 structures within 200 feet. For the alternative siding standard, the commission can only take into account those structures which are adjacent to the subject property.

While staff has provided feedback on compliance with the ordinance to the applicant, it would be helpful for the commission to also provide feedback. The spaces the applicant is proposing for redevelopment within First Settlement contain a surface parking lot, which is not in character with the historic district. This is a large area with a great deal of potential for creating a structure or structures that would meet the standards and provide appropriate infill.

A discussion of the pertinent code section follows:

41.26 FIRST SETTLEMENT HISTORIC DISTRICT.

- (4) Standards for the Review of New Principal Structures.
 - (a) Structure Height, Scale, Proportion and Rhythm. The structures directly adjacent to the subject property are of different heights. As such, the proposal takes into account all of the structures within 200 feet of the portion of the property located within the First Settlement Historic District. Of those structures within 200 feet, the proposal is supposed to be compatible with them. The proposal is for a building that is substantially taller than any of the adjacent structures, but of a similar height to three properties within 200 feet (Cardinal Hotel, the 1980s wing of the MG&E complex, and 115 S Franklin St. Condominiums). Of the structures located within 200 feet, this proposal fills most of the parcel, which is not typical of the structures within 200 feet (with the exception of 514-524 E Wilson St.). The Cardinal Hotel and the 115 S Franklin St. Condominiums have a substantially smaller footprints and therefore convey a smaller scale. The MG&E complex has a 1980s wing that is of similar scale, but it is substantially set back from S Blair, so it does not dominate the street frontage. The MG&E complex features two historic buildings that are approximately two stories in height and the 1980s wing is hyphenated off the back of those buildings, which allows for the large mass of that addition to not overwhelm the street frontage. This proposal is for a building that is as tall as three of the approximately 30 buildings within 200 feet. Most of the buildings are 2-3 stories in height. The proposed new structure would read as the largest building in the vicinity due to its height, scale, and proportions (which are pushed to dominate the frontage on S Blair). The rhythm of masses and spaces in the vicinity generally have a smaller percentage of building footprint on the parcel, with the proportions being more discreet.
 - (b) Siding Materials. The brick and fiber cement clapboards are allowed per this standard. The anodized aluminum panels do not appear to meet the requirements of this standard as they are not found as siding on adjacent structures (meaning structures on properties that are directly abutting the subject property) and the dimensions do not meet the specific requirements below for artificial siding materials. The provisions for artificial siding assume it will mimic a clapboard appearance.
 - 1. The applicant specifies that the anodized aluminum panels are of the highest quality.
 - 2. The applicant assures that the anodized aluminum panels shall have a minimum gauge of .042.
 - 3. There is no precedent for these bronze-colored metal siding panels on the adjacent structures (meaning structures on properties that are directly abutting the subject property), either within the era of their construction or currently.
 - 4. The anodized panels do not have a false wood grain.
 - 5. The width of the exposure is 14 inches and the standard specifies that aluminum clapboards can be no wider than a 4 inch exposure.

6. The application does not have information on the types of trim proposed.
- (c) Roof Materials. On the elevations visible from the street, the building has membrane roofing, which is allowed for flat roofs. On some of the areas on the back of the building, there is a green roof. This standard allows for materials that are otherwise prohibited when the roofing material is not visible from the ground. The green roof will not be visible from the ground.
 - (d) Roof Shape. The structure meets this standard by having a flat roof.
 - (e) Façade Design. Staff has prepared a comparable of the pre-1930 structures that are located within the 200-foot buffer of the portions of the subject property within the First Settlement Historic District (see attached). The applicant's narrative discusses the project's relationship to several structures that are post-1930. The contemporary design of the façade is reflective of the architectural character of Madison's urban design corridors, but does not have the same architectural vocabulary as the first Settlement Historic District. While there are storefronts on the southern half of the S. Blair frontage, there does not appear to be a main entrance to the building (but the E Wilson frontage, which is outside the district, does have that design element). Porches are encouraged on main entrances, but the design does not feature porches. The storefronts on the south end of the S Blair façade provide a level of articulation that also does not seem to have precedent on the pre-1930 structures. The deeply recessed space on the northern half of the S Blair frontage that is devoted to automotive use does not have precedent. On the upper floors, the deeply recessed openings are also without precedent and do not reflect the rhythm and directional expression of pre-1930 structures in the vicinity.
 - (f) Windows and Doors. There does not seem to be a precedent for the rhythm of solids and voids for the S Blair front façade. There is little ornamentation on the sides of the structure, but the rhythm of windows on the upper stories is more in keeping with the pre-1930 commercial buildings. The entrance and exit to the underground parking is the width of a single car, so could potentially meet the standard's allowance for a single-car garage door on front facades when it is not possible to have a garage door on the side or rear. However, the large recessed parking area on the front of the northern half of the S Blair does not have precedent on any of the buildings within 200 feet, and especially not the pre-1930 buildings. The proposed windows do not have bead molds, but the standard suggests a 1-inch inset in those instances. Rather, the proposal is for deeply recessed window areas and balconies, which do not have precedent in the district.

Recommendation

Land Combination

Staff does not believe that the proposal meets the standards for a land combination in a historic district and recommends that the Landmarks Commission refer consideration of a Certificate of Appropriateness until a decision is made on granting a Certificate of Appropriateness for a new principal structure(s) on the site.

Construction of a New Principal Structure

In its current iteration, staff does not believe that the proposal meets the standards for construction of a new principal structure in the First Settlement Historic District. Staff recommends that the Landmarks Commission provide detailed feedback to the applicant on potential changes to the project that could enable it to meet the standards and refer the matter to a future meeting.