

Hitchen, Lea

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Sent: Wednesday, October 6, 2021 9:51 PM
To: Hitchen, Lea; Andrew Teitz, Esq; erinnkate@aol.com; gm@prospectstudio.net; matthew@mcgeorgeai.com; nmcnamara@nixonpeabody.com
Subject: James Street application
Attachments: Notes on James Street.docx

Hello,
I am forwarding this email to you all in case I am running late to October HDC meeting since. I have to teach a design studio in Providence that doesn't end until 6pm that night. I am planning on attending and many of my neighbors will also be attendance.

The Vespa's connected with a few of the adjacent property owners to discuss their design for James Street. They also sent their design documents to a few of us via email and I replied with the following comments:

Many of us in the historic district and residence of Eldredge Avenue are all very concerned about the overall style and scale of the proposed house. Clearly, it is difficult site and placing such a large footprint on such a small lot is very concerning to the surrounding home owners. I am also concerned that the renderings are not a true depiction of scale.

Thank you for time and insight.

pam

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I want to start off by noting that I am in support of a structure being built on the site, and I am not interested in imitating historic styles, but I still find that there are three overriding concerns with the latest design that are still not *compatible* to the surrounding neighborhood. The word compatible is a point of focus for me with I am designing in the district. The three concerns are the still the relative scale, the orientation, and the "style" for the proposed design.

The length of the site and how it relates to the street is a very difficult design challenge. The proportion of the buildable footprint makes it difficult to maintain proportions that are familiar to the neighborhood. The overall orientation of the house relative to the road further exaggerates the disproportionate scale of this design and how it sits in relation to the surrounding buildings. The front elevation of your design is almost 4 times longer than most of the adjacent houses on Eldredge Avenue and the surrounding streets.

As we discussed in person, by detaching the garage you can reduce this extremely long 92'+ length by 26', and you have a house about 66' long with an open area between the house and the detached garage. As you can see in the neighborhood, attached garages are generally not found in the district and including an attached garage increases the scale of the building substantially. The scale should be in relation to the neighboring homes. The issue is that the design footprint is only related to O'Neil's house which is on Division Street and sits on a much larger lot with a greater set back from the road.

There are many different architectural styles being referenced or impacting the design and the swooped roof eaves and the variety of dormers and overhangs is busy in relation to the surrounding homes. The shape of the roof is a very important character of buildings, and the roof lines are not related to other roof shapes in the district. Following the form of neighboring homes, can help you solve the different styles at play here. By including recessed entries and porches you could adapt the design closer to the surrounding the buildings. Another recommendation is including a grander and more open front door entry would create a stronger relationship to other houses.

How exterior materials are used effects the way we perceive a home, and the current design does not have a water table trim board and almost every house surrounding the site has one. This feature would help to mediate the connection to the ground plane and address including some masonry as well as break up the overall height of the facades. This feature could be added on the first floor at the level of the windowsills. The rhythm of windows and door openings as well as trim details is very unrelated to the surrounding built language. Most of the surrounding buildings are mainly rectangular shaped that maintain a uniform solid and void ratio. Most the homes have been modified and added on to over years so that the masses and window sizes are less varied.

The design lends itself to be set in a more open, suburban context on a larger lot and not on a small lot surrounded by relatively modest size homes that do not include an attached garage. To build in a historic district one does not have to imitate historic styles, but new buildings should relate to the essential characteristics of the district. This requires a designer to read and understand the patterns underlying the character of the district, which are, the way it relates to the street, its scale, massing, and materials.... Contextual but not imitated.