



DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA DATE: DECEMBER 7, 2016
TO: Chair Fox and Members of the Design Review Committee
THRU: Anna Pehoushek, Assistant Community Development Director
FROM: Marissa Moshier, Historic Preservation Planner
SUBJECT: **DRC No. 4880-16 – Elson Residence**

SUMMARY

The applicant proposes to reconstruct an existing rear service porch and replace a non-historic front porch column with a pair of new columns and a guardrail on a contributing property within the Old Towne Historic District.

RECOMMENDED ACTION – FINAL DETERMINATION

Staff recommends that the Design Review Committee approve the proposed project subject to conditions of approval contained in the staff report and any conditions that the DRC determines appropriate to support the required findings.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Applicant/Owner: Robert Elson
Property Location: 268 N. Grand Street
General Plan Designation: Low Density Residential 2-6 du/acre
Zoning Classification: Single Family Residential R-1-6
Existing Development: 1,043 SF residence with a 621 SF accessory second unit and 294 SF garage at rear
Property Size: 6,500 SF
Associated Applications: None
Previous DRC Review: N/A
Previous Entitlements: None

PUBLIC NOTICE

No Public Notice was required for this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Categorical Exemption: The proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per State CEQA Section 15301 (Existing Facilities) and Section 15331 (Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation), because the project is limited to the reconstruction of a 194 square foot section of an existing residence, in conformance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to undertake the following scope of work to the subject property:

- Dismantle and reconstruct the existing 194 square foot service porch on the rear (west) elevation of the residence.
 - A new concrete foundation will be added to stabilize the structure.
 - Original materials will be salvaged where possible for reuse on the reconstruction. A table on Sheet A2.1 shows the approximate percentages of the reused original materials. New replacement materials will match the historic materials.
 - The door opening in the service porch will be moved to a new location on the west elevation.
 - Two sections of the existing windows will be infilled with vertical siding to match a similar condition on the north elevation.
 - The pitch of the roof will change slightly due to the new foundation and the leveling of the floor.
- Remove the non-historic column on the front porch and replace with a pair of tapered columns with a guardrail.
- No changes are proposed to the other structures on the property.

The proposed work meets the development standards for the R-1-6 zoning district and the Old Towne Design Standards.

EXISTING SITE

The property is a contributor to the National Register-listed Old Towne Historic District. The site is developed with a 1,043 square foot single-family residence constructed circa 1904. Behind the

residence, the property contains a 621 square foot accessory second unit and a 294 square foot garage. The residence retains a high degree of integrity with minor alterations, such as the replacement of the front porch column.

As with many service porches in the Old Towne Historic District, it appears likely that the service porch on this building was originally constructed as an open back porch, early in the building's history. The porch was likely screened in and then enclosed over time. Historic aerial photographs and Sanborn Fire Insurance maps do not provide enough information to accurately date the service porch. Based on an examination of the structure and materials, it appears to date to at least the 1920s with later alterations.

EXISTING AREA CONTEXT

The subject property is located on N. Grand Street between Maple and Palm avenues in the residential area of the Old Towne Historic District. The property is surrounded by comparable single and multi-family historic properties zoned R-1-6. To the north, across Palm Avenue is the Chapman University Specific Plan Area. To the south, across Maple Avenue are properties zoned Old Towne Mixed Use 15.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Orange Municipal Code (OMC) Section 17.10.070 establishes the general criteria the DRC should use when reviewing the project. This section states the following:

The project shall have an internally consistent, integrated design theme, which is reflected in the following elements:

1. **Architectural Features.**
 - a. The architectural features shall reflect a similar design style or period.
 - b. Creative building elements and identifying features should be used to create a high quality project with visual interest and an architectural style.
2. **Landscape.**
 - a. The type, size and location of landscape materials shall support the project's overall design concept.
 - b. Landscaping shall not obstruct visibility of required addressing, nor shall it obstruct the vision of motorists or pedestrians in proximity to the site.
 - c. Landscape areas shall be provided in and around parking lots to break up the appearance of large expanses of hardscape.

3. **Signage.** All signage shall be compatible with the building(s) design, scale, colors, materials and lighting.
4. **Secondary Functional and Accessory Features.** Trash receptacles, storage and loading areas, transformers and mechanical equipment shall be screened in a manner, which is architecturally compatible with the principal building(s).

ANALYSIS/STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES

The proposed replacement of the front porch column removes a non-historic, later addition to the historic building. The design of the tapered column is based on the front porch features of comparable historic buildings in the Old Towne Historic District and is compatible with the architectural style of the property. The new wood picket guardrail is similarly compatible with the historic building.

Staff recommends that this scope of work is in conformance with the Old Towne Design Standards and the *Secretary's Standards*. However, given the substantial nature of the proposed reconstruction of the service porch, staff has provided a more in depth discussion on this proposal in order for the Design Review Committee to make the required findings for approval of this project.

Issue #1: Dismantling/Reconstruction of Service Porch

As part of the scope of work, the applicant proposes to dismantle the existing service porch in order to reconstruct it on a new foundation. At staff's request, the applicant engaged a structural engineer to review the condition of the service porch. The applicant's consultant provided documentation that the construction and condition of the service porch makes it infeasible to lift up the existing structure in order to construct a new foundation. The consultant's report and additional photographs of the service porch, included as Attachment 3, illustrate this condition.

The addition, or subsequent enclosure, of service porches to residences is a common, early alteration to many contributing historic residences within the Old Towne Historic District. Staff typically treats an intact service porch as a character-defining feature of the historic building. As such, any modifications to an existing service porch must be well documented and undertaken in keeping with the best practice standards recommended in the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* as well as in the Old Towne Design Standards.

Standard #6 of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* states:

Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

Staff recommends that the applicant has sufficiently documented the condition of the existing service porch to support their request to dismantle the structure as part of the proposed project. The structure lacks a foundation and is in poor condition, with visible water, mold and termite damage. Attempting to repair the existing structure in place would not adequately address the structural issues that have developed over time, including the buckling floor and walls separating from the main house. This would compromise the safety of the structure and its longevity in the future. The applicant has also proposed to salvage and reuse as much original material as possible, and replace what cannot be reused to match the existing.

As part of the reconstruction, the applicant proposes to move the existing door opening to a new location on the west elevation and to infill two sections of the existing windows with vertical siding. The trim around these infilled openings will be retained. The existing band of windows on the service porch likely began as screens that were eventually filled in with glazing. It is not unusual for these openings to be filled with siding as the service porch was turned into habitable space. This condition is already present on the north side of the building. Infilling the window openings with vertical siding is a reversible approach that continues to reflect the history of this section of the building as a service porch.

Therefore, the proposed treatment for the service porch is in conformance with the required historic preservation standards, and may be approved by the Design Review Committee.

ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

None required.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND REQUIRED FINDINGS

The courts define a “Finding” as a conclusion which describes the method of analysis decision makers utilize to make the final decision. A decision making body “makes a Finding,” or draws a conclusion, through identifying evidence in the record (i.e., testimony, reports, environmental documents, etc.) and should not contain unsupported statements. The statements which support the Findings bridge the gap between the raw data and the ultimate decision, thereby showing the rational decision making process that took place. The “Findings” are, in essence, the ultimate conclusions which must be reached in order to approve (or recommend approval of) a project. The same holds true if denying a project; the decision making body must detail why it cannot make the Findings.

The Findings are applied as appropriate to each project. Below are the four findings that, as applicable, are used to determine whether a project meets the intent of the code related to design review and historic preservation guidelines. Based on the following Findings and statements in support of such Findings, staff recommends the DRC approve the project with recommended conditions.

1. *In the Old Towne Historic District, the proposed work conforms to the prescriptive standards and design criteria referenced and/or recommended by the DRC or other reviewing body for the project (OMC 17.10.070.G.1).*

The proposed project is in conformance with the Old Towne Design Standards. As discussed in the Analysis section of this staff report, the proposed reconstruction of the original service porch meets the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. The existing condition and proposed alterations to the structure have been documented, changes will be made in a manner consistent with the original form of the porch, original materials will be reused where possible and materials will be replaced to match the existing only where required. The proposed front porch alterations also comply with the Standards, as the front porch columns and guardrail are designed to be compatible with the architectural style of the building, using materials that are typical of comparable historic front porches in the Historic District.

2. *In any National Register Historic District, the proposed work complies with the Secretary of the Interior's standards and guidelines (OMC 17.10.070.G.2).*

The project is in conformance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. In conformance with Standard 6, the reconstruction of the original service porch have been sufficiently documented by the applicant, and materials will be replaced to match the existing in order to retain the original appearance of the porch. In conformance with Standards 9 and 10, the new front porch columns and guardrail will not remove or destroy original historic materials of the building and could be removed in the future with changing the essential form and integrity of the building.

3. *The project design upholds community aesthetics through the use of an internally consistent, integrated design theme and is consistent with all adopted specific plans, applicable design standards, and their required findings (OMC 17.10.070.G.3).*

As described above, the proposed work conforms to the prescriptive standards set forth in the Old Towne Design Standards and Orange Municipal Code.

4. *For infill residential development, as specified in the City of Orange Infill Residential Design Guidelines, the new structure(s) or addition are compatible with the scale, massing, orientation, and articulation of the surrounding development and will preserve or enhance existing neighborhood character (OMC 17.10.070.G.4).*

The Infill Design Guidelines are not applicable to this project, as the proposal does not include new structures or additions to the existing building.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

The approval of this project is subject to the following conditions:

1. This project is approved as a precise plan. All work shall conform in substance and be maintained in general conformance with plans and exhibits labeled as Attachment 5 (date stamped November 21, 2016), including modifications required by the conditions of approval,

and as recommended for approval by the Design Review Committee. Any changes from the approved plans may be subject to subsequent review and approval by the Design Review Committee.

2. Except as otherwise provided herein, this project is approved as a precise plan. After any application has been approved, if changes are proposed regarding the location or alteration of any use or structure, a changed plan may be submitted to the Community Development Director for approval. If the Community Development Director determines that the proposed change complies with the provisions and the spirit and intent of the approval action, and that the action would have been the same for the changed plan as for the approved plot plan, the Community Development Director may approve the changed plan without requiring a new public hearing.
3. The applicant agrees to indemnify, hold harmless, and defend the City, its officers, agents and employees from any and all liability or claims that may be brought against the City arising out of its approval of this permit, save and except that caused by the City's active negligence.
4. Construction permits shall be obtained for all future construction work, as required by the City of Orange, Community Development Department's Building Division. Failure to obtain the required building permits will be cause for revocation of this permit.
5. If not utilized, project approval expires twenty-four months from the approval date. Extensions of time may be granted in accordance with OMC Section 17.08.060. The Planning entitlements expire unless Building Permits are pulled within 2 years of the original approval.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. Photographs of 268 N. Grand Street
3. Applicant's Letter and Consultant's Report
4. DPR Form for 268 N. Grand Street
5. Proposed Plans (date stamped November 21, 2016)

cc: Robert Elson
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