



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Planning Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: The Urbana Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Jeff Engstrom, Planner I

DATE: November 2, 2007

SUBJECT: HP 2007-COA-01, Wakeland Single-Family Home Construction at 807½ W. Main Street.

Introduction

On September 17, 2007 Howard Wakeland/Wakeland Construction submitted an application for a building permit, including plans, to construct a single-family house on a vacant lot at 807½ West Main Street. The 800 block of West Main Street is currently under consideration by the Urbana City Council for designation as a local historic district. As per Urbana Zoning Ordinance Section XII-6.C, the application must be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA).

Even though this property does not contribute to the historic integrity of the district, construction of a new structure is considered a major works project, and requires a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission.

Background

On August 13, 2007, Daniel Folk submitted an application to designate the 800 block of West Main Street as a local historic district. The Historic Preservation Commission on September 13, 2007 made a preliminary determination that the proposed historic district met the necessary criteria for designation and then held a public hearing on October 3, 2007. Following the public hearing, the Commission recommended that the Urbana City Council approve the designation of the 800 block of West Main Street as a local historic district.

At the October 15, 2007, City Council meeting, the application was not approved. Since there was a valid protest of the nomination, a two-thirds majority was required for passage. However, Council agreed to reconsider the motion at their November 5, 2007 meeting. If the City Council does not approve the proposed historic district or if 807 ½ West Main Street is not included in an approved historic district, the Historic Preservation Commission will not need to issue a COA. City staff will provide a verbal report at the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on November 7, 2007 regarding the City Council's decision regarding the proposed historic district.

Description of the Proposed Changes

The petitioner has submitted an application for a permit to build a two-story single-family rental house on the property, as shown in Exhibit “C”. The property is currently vacant, but had contained a house which was recently demolished. The lot is 49.5 feet wide and 140 feet deep. The house will be set back 25 feet from the front property line, according to the site plan on page five of the application. It will be a wood-frame construction on a concrete-block foundation, clad in vinyl siding and will have a four-car garage in the rear that will not be visible from the street. The roof will be hipped with a front gable, and will be sheathed with asphalt shingles. The house will have a crawl space instead of a basement.

Discussion

Requirements for a Certificate of Appropriateness

According to Section XII-6.B.2 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, the criteria to be used by the Preservation Commission in making its determination for a Certificate of Appropriateness shall include:

- 1) The maintenance of the significant original qualities or character of the buildings, structures, sites or objects including, if significant, its appurtenances. The removal or alteration of any historic or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.*

807 ½ W. Main is currently a vacant lot. The application is for the construction of a new single-family home. This criterion, therefore, does not apply.

- 2) The compatibility of proposed new additions and new construction to the original architecture of the landmark shall be evaluated against general guidelines of height, proportions of the structure’s front façade, proportions of openings into the facility, the relationship of building masses and spaces, roof shapes, appurtenances, the scale of building or structure, and the directional expression of front elevation.*

These criteria do apply, as this project is a new construction and not an alteration to a historic property. The proposed building generally meets these criteria. It will be two stories in height, roughly 30 feet tall. This is compatible with the surrounding buildings in the district, most of which are also two stories tall. The front façade will be proportionate to the surrounding homes. The house will be three bays wide, which is the same proportion of openings as contributing homes to the west and across the street. The massing, scale, and directional expression are all compatible with the district.

The roof will have a front gable, echoing many of the district’s contributing structures. Other appurtenances include faux shutters and an octagonal attic vent on the primary façade. The house will also have two front porches, both featuring a column and railing, in harmony with other porches in the district. Each of the front porches has an entry door into the home. The design of the house is such that the two front doors open into an entry area that contains a closet and the staircase to the upper floor, as shown on page 2 of the submitted building plan. As a result, the front door is perpendicular to the street. While most of the front doors on contributing structures within the district are parallel with the street,

some non-contributing structures do have front doors that do not face the street. This is found on 811 West Main Street, which has a similar entrance area as the proposed house, and 813 West Main Street, which contains apartments that face the adjoining property instead of the street. Since these other non-contributing properties have a similar orientation of the front door, staff does not consider the proposed orientation of the doors to be detrimental to the district.

3) *The Secretary of the Interior’s “Standards for Historic Preservation Projects,” as revised.*

The final criterion relate to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for alterations to historic properties, and does not specifically apply to this project. However, this project does meet two of these criteria. First, the property is being re-used for its original purpose, which was a single-family home. Second, the house will be “a product of its own time” in that it will not be designed to imitate a historic vernacular. Instead it will fit within the district through other design features such as massing and scale.

Options

The Historic Preservation Commission has the following options in this case:

1. Grant the requested Certificate of Appropriateness..
2. Grant the requested Certificate of Appropriateness subject to certain conditions.
3. Deny the requested Certificate of Appropriateness. If the Commission finds the application is inconsistent with the criteria and denies the application, the Commission should provide the reasons for denial and may recommend to the applicant ways to comply with the criteria.

Should the Historic Preservation Commission choose to deny this application, the petitioner would have three options: (1) re-design the house to fit in the context of the district and amend his application for a Certificate of Appropriateness within 60 days, (2) apply for a Certificate of Economic Hardship with evidence that denial of this application is financially infeasible, or (3) appeal to City Council within 30 days.

Under all options, the Preservation Commission may make recommendations to the applicant with respect to “the appropriateness of design, arrangement, texture, scale, material, color of material, location or other elements of appearance” of the new home to be constructed.

Staff Recommendation

Based on the findings outlined herein, and without the benefit of considering additional evidence that may be presented at the public hearing, City staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission **GRANT** the requested Certificate of Appropriateness as being consistent with the review criteria of Section XII-6.B of the Zoning Ordinance.

Attachments:

Exhibit A: Location Map

Exhibit B: Photographs of Properties in the Proposed Historic District

Exhibit C: Application (including plans and renderings)

cc:

Howard Wakeland

Gordon Skinner, Building Safety Division Manager

Steve Cochran, Building Safety Inspector

Exhibit B: Photographs of Properties in the
Proposed 800 W. Main Street Historic District



807 1/2 W Main



807 W. Main



809 W. Main



811 W. Main



813 W. Main



816 W. Main



814 W. Main



812 W. Main



810 W. Main



808 W. Main



806 W. Main



804 W. Main



802 W. Main



803 W. Main