
From: Bill Pellerin [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, October 20, 2014 10:17 AM
To: PD - Historic Ordinance
Subject: Comments on Historic Preservation Ordinance meeting of 10/13/14

Hello;

I'm writing to comment on the Historic Preservation Ordinance Review meeting of 10/13/14. I am a resident of the Heights South Historic District.

Allow representatives of builders' associations or other groups more time to speak -- I would oppose doing this because doing so would unfairly bias the total speaker time to the benefit of those associations. Individuals who have taken the time, and made the effort to attend the public meeting(s) on the historic district ordinance may actually, but not officially, represent the viewpoint of many of their neighbors, and would not be allowed more time to speak. How many others would a speaker have to represent to get more speaking time?

I'm on the board of the Houston Heights Association, but the HHA has not, and probably will not take a position on the revisions to the historic district ordinance.

Allowing public access to CoA applications that are subject to administrative approval. Support. This access to the CoA applications should allow enough time for public comment to the P&D Department and assure that those comments are taken into consideration when CoAs are reviewed for administrative approval.

Can anything be done about the scale of add-ons? There have been CoAs approved that turn a 1500 square foot cottage into a massive home. Can the ordinance offer any guidance, and support to assuring that add-ons to existing structures are not extraordinarily large?

Items:

1. Administrative Approvals -- Proposed changes

Freestanding garages... is this intended to include garage apartments or garages with other rooms attached (either to the side or to the top)? Allowing these garages to be approved administratively would potentially circumvent the approval processes by allowing the property owner to build what amounts to an addition to the living area without HAHC approval.

Alterations to non-contributing structures -- How extensive could these alterations be? Demolition? At what point is the alteration extensive enough to require approval?

Signs and awnings being 'appropriately scaled'. - I would support the principal of having signs and awnings appropriately scaled, but would require a tighter definition of what constitutes 'appropriate' scale in the **guidelines** for the historic district.

...antennas, satellite dishes... A satellite dish IS an antenna so enumerating this item is redundant. Many times, antennas are limited by CCRs, but since these aren't universally in place, more definition may be needed. Would large transmitting antennas be allowed for administrative approval? Is there a limit on how tall or how large the antenna could be? The ordinance could qualify the antennas as being 'for the purpose of receiving television or radio broadcast transmissions' but that statement may be too broad as well.

2. Exemptions

Burglar Bars -- These can be quite unsightly and could significantly damage the historic character of a contributing structure. I would oppose including these in the exemptions unless it is stated that the 'Burglar Bars' must not be visible from the street -- i.e. must be behind curtains, blinds, or shutters.'

Fences -- I understand from the meeting that fences don't require a permit, and it was said that items not requiring a permit should not require a CoA. One suggestion was to require approval for fences at the street-side property line but not require approval for fences at or behind the face of the building. I support this idea.

6. Change the designation of a structure .. in a historic district.

Changes in Designation - Contributing to non-contributing or vice versa. Allowing owners to petition for reclassification makes sense, but what happens if a CoA is submitted that would so significantly modify the structure that it should be

moved from 'contributing' to 'non-contributing'? Could the approval require (as a condition of approval) that the status of the property be changed?

8. Shall approve criteria

Limit the number of Shall Approves per structure to one for the life of the structure. I don't support or see the value in limiting the number to one. Doing so would disadvantage any subsequent owner of the property for no good benefit. It could have the effect of discouraging subsequent property owners from making improvements to the property because this limit would force the owner to execute a longer approval process.

More generally, I support changes to the ordinance that provide more guidance to the Planning and Development Department, to the HAHC, to the property owner, to the architect, and to the builder. I would not support a change to the ordinance that in any way weakens it.

Thank you for your work on this important effort.

Bill Pellerin
256 East 5th Street

