

## **PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD**

**MONDAY, MAY 5, 2008**

**3:00 P.M., J. MARTIN GRIESEL ROOM, CENTENNIAL PLAZA II**

The Historic Conservation Board met at 3:00 P.M., in the J. Martin Griesel Room, Centennial Plaza II, with members Senhauser, Spraul-Schmidt, Fisher, Chatterjee, Raser and Young present. Wallace and Kreider absent.

### **MINUTES**

The Board unanimously approved the minutes of April 21, 2008 as corrected (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Raser).

### **CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 108 W. CENTRAL PARKWAY, 1122-1126 ELM STREET AND 129 W. 12<sup>TH</sup> STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented a report on a proposal to modify the approved plan for the new School for the Creative & Performing Arts (SCPA) to include an outdoor theater at the corner at W. 12<sup>th</sup> and Elm Streets. Contributing buildings at 1122-1126 Elm and 129-131 W. 12<sup>th</sup> would be demolished to accommodate the new theater. Ms. Cowden reminded the Board that it had originally heard this application on April 7, 2008. At that time the Board failed to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project but indicated the applicant could return at a later date with information on the physical condition of the buildings to be demolished and their potential for reuse. The Board also suggested that the applicant should meet with the Over-the-Rhine Community Council to present its revised proposal. Since that time, Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) and its design team have submitted additional documentation to demonstrate the reuse of 1122-1126 Elm Street and 129-131 W. 12<sup>th</sup> was not economically viable. As suggested by the Board, the design team presented its revised proposal to the Over-the-Rhine Community Council, which voted not to support it.

Dave Crafts, project engineer and representative of Greater Cincinnati Arts and Education Center, addressed the Board, presenting a timeline for the project and its progress from the initial site on Central Parkway next to Music Hall in the late 1990s to its current site and design. Mr. Crafts reminded the Board that SCPA was a joint CPS and state co-venture. The project required multiple concessions from the state, including the size of the property. Mr. Crafts said that CPS always intended to obtain the entire block for the school.

Specifically in regards to 1122-1126 Elm and 129-131 W. 12<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Crafts indicated that all involved parties agreed that transitional housing was not a compatible use with the new school and that the Drop Inn Center was open to selling the buildings. However, before the buildings could be sold to CPS, a suitable relocation site for the existing housing units had to be found and a deed restriction held by HUD had to be addressed. When CPS received approval of its design for SCPA in 2007, these issues had not yet been resolved. CPS chose to move forward with a design that could be modified to include the southeast corner of Elm and W. 12<sup>th</sup> Streets when and if CPS acquired this property. Mike Burson, CPS Facilities Director, concurred with Mr. Crafts, emphasizing that CPS consistently said it needed and wanted the entire block.

John Hauck addressed the Board stating his support of the project. While the loss of the buildings at the corner of W. 12<sup>th</sup> and Elm Street was unfortunate, Mr. Hauck said the construction of a new School for Creative and Performing Arts represented a positive development for Washington Park and Over-the-Rhine. He also commented that the Drop Inn Center could use the money from the sale to improve its operations.

Venus Kent, Cincinnati USA Convention & Visitors Bureau, outlined the convention center's efforts to have Cincinnati named as the host city of the 2012 World Choir Games. The choral event will bring \$30 million to the city and Cincinnati was one of the final six cities. Ms. Kent stated that the city's venues center around Music Hall, Memorial Hall, Washington Park and SCPA, with the proposed outdoor theater representing a major part of the proposal.

Bill Baum, Urban Sites Properties, voiced his support of the project. In his opinion the demolition was offset by the greater good represented by the new school for the community and Cincinnati.

Mike Morgan, Over-the-Rhine Foundation, agreed that the Board must assess a project under the district guidelines but said that his comments were focused on a broader issue, how CPS treated the Board, the City and the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. Mr. Morgan stated that CPS knew it needed the entire site and deliberately sought to circumvent the Board and to avoid an honest discussion with the neighborhood by not requesting approval to demolish the buildings at 1122-1126 Elm and 129-131 W. 12<sup>th</sup> earlier. He stated his belief that CPS permitted the buildings to be vandalized and was responsible for the conditions shown in the photographs it submitted as partial justification for demolition. Mr. Morgan asked when CPS was going to follow the rules and expressed concern about CPS' future actions regarding other real estate in the district including Mercer Commons and Rothenberg School.

Walter Reinhaus, Over-the-Rhine Community Council, indicated that the council had met with CPS and voted to not approve its proposal. The community council discussed a number of options to mitigate the requested demolition including moving 1122-1126 Elm and 129-131 W. 12<sup>th</sup> and creating a fund to rehabilitate threatened buildings in Over-the-Rhine. He also indicated that the community council wanted CPS to present a full scheme for Rothenberg, SCPA and other school holdings in the neighborhood. Mr. Reinhaus presented the Board with correspondence regarding the relocated transitional housing at 45-47 E. McMicken.

In response to Mr. Young, Mr. Reinhaus affirmed that the Over-the-Rhine Community Council's board discussed the demolition plans. Mr. Reinhaus acknowledged that the community was aware that buildings might be demolished but said it was possible the Drop Inn Center would not ultimately sell them to CPS. Mr. Young inquired if the council had discussed productive uses of the stage by the community or if it had focused on a trade off for the proposed demolition. Mr. Reinhaus said that the council saw the value of the stage and was generally comfortable with the design aesthetics.

Mike Burson and Robin Brandon, representing CPS, addressed the Board to respond to earlier comments. Mr. Burson stated that the outdoor theater was an important functional part of the school and it also helped to emphasize the school's Washington Park entryway. Ms. Brandon reiterated that the school site was small and offered little outdoor space, particularly for the older students. She said the outdoor theater would be open to Washington Park and would give students critical space for performances and other activities.

In response to Mr. Senhauser, Ms. Brandon responded that the school building was 270,000 square feet and the site was 4 acres. By state standards, the school should be on a 40-acre site. She noted that sports and other physical fitness activities would take place at Robert A. Taft High School, located several blocks away. She said this trade off was considered worth it for the students to be closer to Music Hall and in an urban setting.

Ms. Spraul-Schmidt stated that at the last meeting (on April 7<sup>th</sup>) the Board requested additional information from the applicant regarding rehabilitation costs, alternative uses and existing conditions of 1122-1126 Elm and 129-131 W. 12<sup>th</sup>. This information was submitted and it

documents that the buildings cannot be reused for CPS's organizational purposes. She reminded Board members that during the course of its review in 2006, the Board indicated it could support a more monumental project that covered the entire block and that demolition might be an acceptable, unavoidable result. Ms. Spraul-Schmidt stated that the loss of contributing buildings was unfortunate, but the applicant had met the requirements under the guidelines.

Mr. Raser questioned why CPS did not present a holistic design for the entire block (including all the necessary demolitions), if the goal was always for the school to occupy the entire site. He suggested that had this been done, various design issues – the relationship of the school with Washington Park and the presence of a parking lot at the northeast corner of the site – could have been addressed. He felt that CPS has handled the process poorly and said he did not like what he was now hearing about Rothenberg School.

Mr. Senhauser said that CPS and the design team could have made different design choices but emphasized that the Board must review the proposal before it and that proposal's conformance with the guidelines. He reminded the Board that a committee had been formed to review the design in 2006 and a good faith effort was made by the design team to address the committee's concerns. The parking lot entrance was moved from W. 12<sup>th</sup> Street to Race Street. A uniform fence and landscaping along W. 12<sup>th</sup> Street helped to establish an edge to the school while also better relating it to Washington Park. The W. 12<sup>th</sup> Street entrance was made more prominent. The design team proposed an outdoor theatre in response to the Board committee's inquiry about what would happen with that corner if CPS ultimately acquired the buildings in this location.

Mr. Senhauser said that the issue before the Board was whether or not the demolition of 1122-1126 Elm and 129-131 W. 12<sup>th</sup> was an allowable loss under the guidelines. Mr. Senhauser said he appreciated the additional information and believed the case had been made.

Mr. Young concurred with Ms. Spraul-Schmidt and Mr. Senhauser that the applicant had met the requirements outlined in the conservation guidelines for demolition. He expressed his disappointment that the community tried to leverage this project to further its goals in other areas of the neighborhood. He said the Board is not a policy maker for other sites and a project must be considered on its own merits, rather than as a trade off for what might be achieved elsewhere in Over-the-Rhine.

Ms. Fisher commented that the project could have been handled better vis-à-vis the community and was glad to hear that CPS met with the community, even if it did not obtain its support. She pointed out that the Board could not act on the proposal in April in good conscience since the applicant had failed to submit information that the Board had required of others. That information has now been submitted and the proposal meets the standards.

### **BOARD ACTION**

The majority of the Board voted (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Chatterjee; Raser nay) to take the following actions:

1. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of 1122-1126 Elm Street and 129 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Street finding that Cincinnati Public Schools, a non-profit organization, has submitted documentation demonstrating it cannot reuse the buildings in a manner compatible with its organizational purposes at a reasonable cost with the condition that an Ohio Historic Inventory form shall be prepared for 1122-1126 Elm Street and 129 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Street and submitted to the Historic Conservation Office prior to demolition.

2. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed modifications to the approved plans finding that the revisions meet the Over-the-Rhine Historic District Conservation Guidelines for new construction with the condition that final construction drawings shall be submitted to the Urban Conservator and the Chairman of the Historic Conservation Board for review and approval prior to construction.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS 121 W. 4<sup>TH</sup> STREET, WEST FOURTH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented a report on a staff report on a Certificate of Appropriateness for a new canopy and signage for Pigall's Twist Lounge and Bar at 121 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Ms. Cowden reminded the Board that the canopy was removed from an application for a new storefront that the Board approved on September 24, 2007. At that time the Board instructed the applicant, architect and building owner that the canopy and any signage was subject to review and approval and that all approvals were to be received prior to fabrication and installation. She indicated that the canopy was installed without a building permit or Certificate of Appropriateness. Harvey Camins, who had previously objected to a canopy across the sidewalk, said he was fine with the canopy as installed.

Ms. Cowden confirmed for Mr. Raser that the signs did not require any Zoning Variances.

Justin Dean was present to answer questions from the Board. Mr. Young inquired why the canopy was installed without a permit. Mr. Dean indicated that there was miscommunication and lack of coordination with Queen City Awning.

Ms. Spraul-Schmidt inquired about the design of the new storefront, pointing out that it was not built according to the Board's approval. Ms. Cowden responded that the building permit set was modified to conform to the Board's approval, but the storefront was built as originally proposed. Mr. Cowden indicated that Buildings & Inspections was made aware of this discrepancy but no action was taken. Mr. Forwood said that the permit was closed out and a Certificate of Occupancy issued. Mr. Senhauser indicated that this issue should be taken up with Buildings & Inspections.

**BOARD ACTION**

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Chatterjee, second by Spraul-Schmidt) to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the canopy and signage for Pigall's Twist Lounge & Bar at 121 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, as installed, finding that the work meets the West Fourth Street Historic District conservation guidelines.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 312 W. 4<sup>TH</sup> STREET, WEST FOURTH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented a report on the installation of a new storefront at 312 W. 4<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Cowden confirmed with Board members that they had received the revised proposal, which would retain the existing Luxfer Prism glass transoms. She indicated that although not original, the c. 1910 Frank Lloyd Wright designed "flower" patterned glass represented an early alteration that had gained significance over time. Ms. Cowden observed that the applicant would need to submit final drawings specifying materials and finishes, but pointed out that the revised proposal met the West Fourth Street Historic District conservation guidelines and recommended its approval.

Brandon Guyer, representing Michael Schuster Associates, was present to answer questions. In response to Mr. Raser, Mr. Guyer indicated that the Nana Wall system would fold into the column between the Nana Wall and the side entryway.

Mr. Senhauser asked about signage for the restaurant. Mr. Guyer responded that the projecting sign shown in the initial proposal was no longer part of the application. He said that the design for the metal box sign above the storefront had not yet been finalized, but would be flush with the Luxfer transoms on either side.

Mr. Guyer confirmed for Ms. Spraul-Schmidt that Boss Cox memorabilia represented a key component of the restaurant's décor. She offered Mr. Guyer historic information that she had available on Boss Cox.

### **BOARD ACTION**

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Chatterjee) to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed storefront, as amended by the applicant, with the following conditions:

1. The new storefront, including the transom, doors and column, shall be painted.
2. The applied molding on the column separating the Nana Wall from the off-center entrance shall be simplified or eliminated.
3. Final plans and specifications shall be submitted to the Urban Conservator for review and approval prior to construction.

*Mr. Young left the meeting*

### **CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 1417-1421 MAIN STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Staff member Caroline Kellam presented a report on an application to rehabilitate 1417-1421 Main for six residential condominiums. Ms. Kellam indicated that the majority of the work would not be visible from the public right-of-way. She said that some of the work was already complete, including the installation of new windows and concrete block infill in the center bay of the rear elevation (facing Clay Street). Ms. Kellam recommended the project with several conditions. The new concrete block infill installed without approval should be removed from the central bays and paired windows be installed in the openings and existing concrete block infill in the southern bays should be painted out.

Julie Fay, Merchants on Main Street, commented that the Gothic style windows in the main façade were installed years ago when a funeral home operated out of the building.

Mark Gunther, project architect, was present to answer questions from the Board. In response to an inquiry from Mr. Senhauser, Mr. Gunther said that a previous owner was responsible for the concrete block infill in the southernmost bays of 1417 Main. The central bays were infilled with concrete block for the current proposal to accommodate a fireproof wall for a new interior staircase. Mr. Gunther acknowledged that brick should have been used to infill the openings rather than concrete block, but asked that it be approved nonetheless.

### **BOARD ACTION**

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Chatterjee, second by Spraul-Schmidt) to take the following actions:

1. Find that the building at 1417-1421 Main Street is a contributing building within the Over-the-Rhine Historic District.
2. Find that some of the work was completed without the proper building permits and Historic Conservation Office approval in violation of the Cincinnati Zoning Code.
3. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the rehabilitation of 1417-1421 Main Street with the following conditions:
  - a. Remove the concrete block infill in the center bay and install paired windows to match the proposed windows in the left bay. The windows on the right hand side in the center bay can be spandrel glass or back painted glass.
  - b. Paint the concrete block infill a dark color in the right bay window opening on all floors.
  - c. Clean the rear elevation with the gentlest means possible.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Senhauser announced that the Society for the Preservation of Music Hall will receive part of a \$30 million bequest from Patricia Corbett's personal trust. Corbett was a long-time supporter of Music Hall and the \$8 million award was the second largest bequest from her estate. The funds will help substantially with capital improvements to and the preservation of this National Historic Landmark facility.

Ms. Fisher invited the Board to a ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 15<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the restoration of the Walnut Hills Presbyterian Church Tower.

**ADJOURN**

As there were no other items to be considered by the Board, the meeting was adjourned.

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William L. Forwood  
Urban Conservator

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John C. Senhauser, Chairman

Date: \_\_\_\_\_