

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, JULY 7, 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, Fisher, Wallace, Chatterjee, Kreider, Jones, and Raser present. Spraul-Schmidt and Young absent.

MINUTES

The Board unanimously approved the minutes of June 23, 2008 (motion by Chatterjee, second by Fisher).

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 427 PLUM STREET, WEST FOURTH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

Interim Urban Conservator Adrienne Cowden presented a staff report for a Certificate of Appropriateness for 427 Plum Street in the West Fourth Street Historic District. She reminded the Board that it had reviewed a preliminary design for the proposal at its previous meeting on June 23, 2008. She explained that the proposal had been revised to replace the existing windows with an aluminum clad single-hung window with a fixed upper sash and a lower awning. Ms. Cowden pointed out that the project architect, Mr. Lykins, had submitted cost estimates for repairing the existing wood sash as well as the proposed replacements. He had also submitted operating force information and supplementary diagrams on the operation of the awnings versus a single-hung window. Ms. Cowden said that based on the submitted information the windows are not too deteriorated or cost prohibitive to repair. However, the Board might wish to take into account the reuse of the building and Dr. Biederman's specific needs when discussing the windows. The storefront design had not been modified since the preliminary design review.

Ms. Cowden said that only Renee Crow, the owner of the adjacent 423 Plum, had contacted staff about the application. After reviewing the drawings, Ms. Crow expressed her support of the proposed rehabilitation work.

Mr. Lykins and Larry Tokarsky, representing LG Tokarsky & Associates, addressed the Board. Mr. Lykins agreed that the cost and condition of the wood windows did not justify their replacement and focused his comments on the operation of the windows. Mr. Lykins said the windows would provide essential ventilation in parts of the building. His client's ability to open the windows was also an important consideration in the decision to replace them. Dr. Biederman could comfortably lift 20 pounds. If the existing single-hung windows were repaired, Mr. Lykins stated it would take an initial force of 40 pounds of force to open them, more than double what Dr. Biederman could lift. Mr. Lykins referred to the submitted diagrams, which demonstrated that Dr. Biederman could open a single-hung window only half way but could fully operate an awning.

In response to Mr. Jones, Mr. Lykins indicated that the Acanthus Group supplied the \$24,900 estimate to repair the existing windows. The bid included removing, stripping, refinishing, priming and reglazing the windows; the new glazing would be single pane. New hardware and counterweights would be provided but not weatherstripping.

Mr. Lykins confirmed for Mr. Kreider that the interior storm windows would have an operable lower panel. He added that the new windows would have double glazing with low-e, clear glass and an exterior applied grid. New break metal would replace the deteriorating exterior sills.

In response to Mr. Senhauser, Mr. Tokarsky said that the awnings would have a scissor-arm operator. Mr. Lykins indicated that the awnings would open enough for ventilation but not for egress, which was not required.

The Board questioned the estimated cost of \$4,500 to upgrade the HVAC system from a 4-ton to a 5-ton. Mr. Lykins said that the quote came from their mechanical engineer, and Mr. Tokarsky added that the estimate was lower than the actual bid. In response to Mr. Jones, Mr. Tokarsky said that the new windows would have an R-value of 3, which was better than that of the repaired windows with new storms, but will still require that a 5-ton HVAC system be installed.

The Board discussed the existing windows and proposed replacements. They agreed that while the sash was in good condition, the sills and frame were not. Board members concurred that the proposed replacement windows represented a significant improvement over the previous submittal. Based on the proposed adaptive reuse of 427 Plum, a building that had stood unoccupied for years, as a veterinarian office and private residence, the submitted plans and the specific needs of Dr. Biederman, the Board agreed that the proposed replacement windows were acceptable in this specific instance.

In response to Mr. Senhauser, Mr. Tokarsky stated the veterinarian office will stock prescription drugs on site, and the storefront was designed with smaller panes of glass to provide greater protection against theft. Mr. Tokarsky stated that he had no objection to removing one of the horizontal divisions to create larger expanses of glass.

BOARD ACTION

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

1. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed new storefront on the condition that the glazing pattern be revised to include larger expanses of glass.
2. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed new fixed/awning windows finding that the proposed adaptive reuse of the building as illustrated in the attached plans is in the interest of historic conservation.
3. Final plans and specifications shall be submitted to the Urban Conservator for review and approval prior to commencing any work.

[Mr. Raser entered the meeting at 3:36PM]

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 311 ELM STREET, WEST FOURTH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

Interim Urban Conservator Adrienne Cowden presented a staff report on the installation of a building identification sign for FRCH at 311 Elm Street. Ms. Cowden indicated that the Board's prior approval from August 14, 2006 was for two signs, one for Trivantis measuring 32" x 13'-10" and another for FRCH measuring 5' x 20'. The revised application proposed signage for FRCH only. The sign will be installed on the 8th floor of the south elevation and will measure 11'-3" x 28'-6½". Staff recommended that the sign be reduced in size to 8' x 24'.

Jeff Waggoner, representing FRCH, was present to answer questions. He confirmed for the Board that Trivantis was still a tenant of 311 Elm but that the company's lease would expire in 2012. FRCH was the primary tenant and the company was in the process of purchasing the property.

Mr. Waggoner stated that FRCH felt it was important to contribute to Cincinnati's skyline and for its signage to be fitting for a design firm of FRCH's stature. The design and lettering was revised to reflect the company's new logo, and the sign face area was increased so it would be visible from Kentucky.

Julia Carney, Law Department, indicated that the in the Downtown Development District permissible signage was calculated based on a multiple of the building's width plus the height the sign was installed above grade with a maximum size of 1,800 square feet.

The Board agreed that the south elevation was not architecturally significant and that the sign as proposed and shown in drawing GR.01, page 1 (dated June 12, 2008) met the guidelines for the historic district.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Chatterjee, second by Fisher) to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of the FRCH sign at 311 Elm Street as submitted and shown in the submitted plans on the condition that the approval runs with the building's primary tenant, FRCH.

PRESENTATION OF THE STREETScape IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR VINE STREET

Interim Urban Conservator Adrienne Cowden introduced Jack Martin from the City of Cincinnati, Department of Transportation & Engineering, Office of Architecture & Urban Design (AUD). Mr. Martin summarized the proposal for the Vine Street improvement plan. He indicated that AUD was seeking opinions from the Board regarding the light vocabulary and paving materials for the Vine Street streetscape, as this proposal would likely inform improvements to other parts of Over-the-Rhine. Mr. Martin said that AUD had chosen a range of fixtures to reflect the hierarchy of streets in Over-the-Rhine, from commercial streets such as Vine Street to more residential streets. He said that of the various paving options AUD preferred concrete to brick. Concrete was less costly to install, easier to fix and easier to deal with from a right-of-way management perspective. From a historic point of view, sidewalks in Over-the-Rhine were primarily stone slab or concrete with granite or sandstone curbs.

Mr. Jones outlined what he felt were additional benefits to a concrete sidewalk. He said concrete could be installed more quickly and as a result would have less impact on businesses during construction. Concrete could also be cleaned with high-pressure steam better and more easily than brick.

Mr. Raser said that he understood why AUD would not want all brick sidewalks but asked if there were similar objections to a brick collector strip. Mr. Martin responded that a collector strip served a functional purpose as a location for parking meters, trashcans and other items above grade and infrastructure below. Mr. Raser commented that there may be value in differentiating the collector strip from the sidewalk path.

Mr. Martin pointed out that the encroachment of structural slabs into the public right-of-way also had to be taken into account when selecting a paving material. Mr. Senhauser commented that while concrete does not form a waterproof barrier it will keep moisture out of buildings better than brick.

In response to Mr. Kreider, Mr. Martin described the porous concrete gutters shown in one of the details. Mr. Martin said that pervious concrete had a rough texture and appearance that was not unlike rice krispies and was made out of cement, a coarse aggregate and water. Pervious concrete

gutters capture rainwater and allow it to percolate into the underlying soil; this will help with stormwater management and in turn, the conditions of the City's consent degree.

Mr. Jones inquired how the gutters were kept clear of silt. Mr. Martin said that the gutters must be vacuumed out regularly to keep them from clogging.

The Board inquired about street trees as well as the color of street furniture and fixtures. Mr. Martin acknowledged that trees were historically not part of Vine Street, but the shade they provide was a desired amenity. The type of tree will depend on various factors such as whether it will be planted on the east or west side of the street and if it will be located in front of a building or a surface parking lot. Mr. Martin described the color of street furniture as black, a committee decision, while the fixtures were a dark green.

The Board indicated that fixtures, street furniture and other elements should reinforce the character of individual streetscapes and more specifically, the work that was being accomplished along Vine Street. Mr. Jones asked if all utilities would be buried in Over-the-Rhine and how the streetcars might impact Vine Street and the proposed streetscape plan. Mr. Martin responded that utilities will eventually be buried in north-south streets. Span wire signals were specifically chosen for their adaptable design. If Vine Street becomes a corridor for streetcars or returns to one-way traffic, the span wire signals can change the direction of a street without modifying the infrastructure. .

Mr. Chatterjee expressed concern that the Vine Street streetscape improvements be reflective of an overall, comprehensive vision for the neighborhood and historic district. The Board agreed with this assessment and emphasized that a consistent vocabulary should be chosen and adhered to in order to ensure a cohesive appearance throughout Over-the-Rhine. Mr. Martin said that AUD is trying to keep its improvements visually consistent by creating a palette for the district; part of this effort included soliciting the Board's comments on the Vine Street improvements.

The Board thanked Mr. Martin for his presentation and AUD's efforts to work with the Board and staff.

BOARD ACTION

No official Board action was required.

ADJOURN

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

Adrienne Cowden
Interim Urban Conservator

John C. Senhauser, Chairman

Date: _____