

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 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, Kreider, Jones and Young present. Absent: Wallace and Chatterjee.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Mr. Senhauser announced that Mr. Raser had resigned from the Board and expressed the Board's appreciation for his years of service.

MINUTES

The Board unanimously approved the minutes of November 3, 2008 (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Jones).

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS & HILLSIDE REVIEW, 716 MT. HOPE, MOORE-KNIGHT HOUSE LOCAL LANDMARK

Staff member Caroline Kellam presented a report on a proposal to demolish an existing carriage house on the Moore-Knight Local Landmark property located at 716 Mt. Hope in East Price Hill and to construct a new attached garage onto the house. She reminded the Board that it had reviewed the proposal at its previous meeting on November 3rd. At that time the Board generally agreed that the frame carriage house had lost its integrity and was no longer a contributing resource. The Board also requested additional information on the doors, windows and other materials proposed for the new garage. This information was submitted and included in the staff report.

Ms. Kellam confirmed for Mr. Senhauser that the lot split discussed on November 3rd was not part of the current application.

The property owner, Rakesh Ram, and the project architect, Denis Back, were present to answer questions. Mr. Back distributed various brochures for the proposed garage doors and windows to the Board.

Mr. Senhauser inquired if the garage door would have a matte or glossy finish. Mr. Back responded that the door was metal, but it would be painted to match the trim on the house.

Mary Croft, resident of East Price Hill, read a letter from the East Price Hill Improvement Association into the record. The letter expressed the association's support provided that the Moore-Knight House remained a Local Landmark, that the carriage house was replaced by a three-car garage of a complimentary design and attached to the main house by a breezeway, that the land would be subdivided to create lots for two single-family homes to be built by Mr. Ram and that any new development would adhere to the Hillside Chapter of the Zoning Code.

BOARD ACTION

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

1. Find that the carriage house on the grounds of the Moore-Knight House (716 Mt. Hope) is not a contributing resource on this property.
2. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the carriage house at the Moore-Knight House.

3. Find that the proposed three-car addition with breezeway meets the guidelines for the Moore-Knight House (716 Mt. Hope) and approve a Certificate of Appropriateness with the condition that final plans and specifications be submitted to the Urban Conservator for review and approval prior to construction.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, ZONING VARIANCE & SECTION 106 REVIEW, 209-219 ODEON STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Interim Urban Conservator Adrienne Cowden presented a report on a proposed adaptive reuse of 209-219 Odeon Street in Over-the-Rhine for a congregate housing facility. The facility would include 25 residential units, a 5-car surface parking lot at the southeast corner of the project site and open, communal space along the western side of the site. Ms. Cowden indicated that the proposal involved three distinct and separate reviews for a Certificate of Appropriateness, a Zoning Variance and compliance with Section 106.

Ms. Cowden reminded the Board that its review for a Certificate of Appropriateness applied to the building exteriors and site improvements only. She focused on two aspects of the project – windows and the treatment of doors and doorways – that were addressed in the recommendation. All of the buildings had existing wood windows, the majority of which were beyond repair. Staff did not object to new windows being installed at 213 (rear) Odeon or the main (north) façade of 217 Odeon but had concerns about the proposed one-over-one replacements. These elevations retained six-over-six double-hung wood sash that appeared to be original. Per the guidelines, this sash should be replaced with simulated or true divided light six-over-six windows to match the existing conditions.

In regards to the doorways, Ms. Cowden said staff had no issue with the entrances being treated differently. Historically, these entrances were not identical. Some entrances had stone stoops while others were at grade. Still others had large transom areas with decorative paneling. Ms. Cowden stated that any new door at 215 Odeon should fit the entire opening below the existing lattice and header without a transom. The building at 213 Odeon, which had a similar sized entrance, should also have a door with a single transom. Although six-panel doors have been approved in the past, Ms. Cowden commented that a four-panel door would be a more appropriate choice for the late 19th century Odeon Street buildings.

The applicant requested a Zoning Variance to provide 5 rather than the required 13 on-site parking spaces. Ms. Cowden stated that the Board had granted similar variances in the past. Utilizing nearby surface parking lots/structures and on-street metered spaces for additional parking as needed was preferable and in the interest of the historic district.

The remainder of staff's presentation addressed Section 106 compliance. Ms. Cowden stated that per the City's Programmatic Agreement with the Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO), staff reviewed the proposal for its compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards (Standards) for Rehabilitation and the Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (Guidelines). She emphasized that unlike the local reviews typically undertaken by the Board, this evaluation assessed changes to the interior and exterior of the buildings as well as site improvements.

Ms. Cowden stated that the Standards acknowledge repairs and/or alterations may be needed to adaptively reuse a historic building, but that this work must not damage or destroy important, character defining features. Staff's issues relative to some exterior changes such as the proposed new windows at 213 (front and rear), 215 and 217 Odeon and the proposed exterior doors could likely be addressed and the plans revised to meet the Standards. However, the proposed interior modifications and additions fundamentally changed the distinctive interior spaces of each building.

The applicant has asserted that these changes were necessary for the proposed congregate housing and has not offered an alternative that might bring the project into compliance with the Standards. As proposed, Ms. Cowden stated the plans and specifications failed to meet the Standards and recommended the project be forwarded to the OHPO for its review.

Ms. Cowden confirmed for Mr. Kreider that the Board was not empowered to execute a mitigation agreement with the applicant. She said that if the Board concurred with staff's recommendation the project documentation would be forwarded to the OHPO for its review per the Programmatic Agreement. The OHPO would then assess the effects of the project on 209-219 Odeon and determine if a mitigation or programmatic agreement was appropriate.

In response to Mr. Young and Mr. Kreider, Ms. Cowden said that the split-face concrete block construction of the proposed additions and elevator tower met the Standards for exterior additions/alterations. The Standards indicate that new additions should be designed so that it was clear what was old and what was new. The split-face concrete block clearly differentiated the new construction from the historic brick buildings, and the original form, shape and massing of 209-217 Odeon remained visible.

Ms. Cowden confirmed for Mr. Young that none of the windows were being infilled or narrowed and the brickmolds will be saved. In response to Mr. Jones she said the plans appeared to include drafting errors and were not complete. For example existing window openings on the east wall of 215 Odeon were omitted.

Mr. Jones asked staff to address proposed changes to 213 and 215 Odeon – specifically the enlarged openings in the exterior walls and the construction of an addition. Ms. Cowden said that the proposal radically changed the layout of each individual building and absorbed a discrete exterior space into the floor plan. As a result the buildings did not retain or exhibit a floor plan with a comparable visual appearance.

Project architect Jeff Raser, Glaserworks, addressed the Board. In regards to the Certificate of Appropriateness, he indicated that his client was willing to accept all the conditions outlined in the staff report with a single caveat. Mr. Raser suggested that the six-over-six wood windows at 217 Odeon might not be original to the building; if this were the case, he asked that his client be permitted to install one-over-one sash in the main façade of this building. Mr. Raser also agreed to install a gray or black membrane roof rather than the white membrane roofing specified for 213 (front) Odeon and the one-story addition between 213 and 215 Odeon.

Mr. Raser asserted that a Section 106 review did not require the application of the Standards and that it required only that an agency consider the effect of its actions before proceeding. Nonetheless, he communicated his belief that the proposal met the Standards. He said the proposal would save the buildings at 209-217 Odeon and place them back into productive use without negatively impacting the surrounding historic district. The proposal reflected the zoning code, market conditions and an identified need to serve the chronically homeless.

Mr. Raser pointed out that the current CC-A (Commercial Community-Auto) zoning limited multi-family residential uses but permitted a variety of office and industrial uses. He described the immediate context of the project site, calling attention to the nearby institutional and industrial uses including the Elm Street Clinic, a cell tower, and a glass-related business. He said that CC-A zoning districts permitted congregate housing and this use was consistent with the historic residential use of 209-217 Odeon. Mr. Raser argued that a multi-family use was not viable and reminded the Board that an earlier proposal to rehabilitate 209-217 Odeon for condominiums had not moved forward.

Before describing physical changes to the buildings, Mr. Raser showed the Board an updated floor plan, shaded so additions and interior modifications could be seen more easily. He contended that the plans represented the smallest degree of change necessary to create an ADA accessible facility with clear sight lines throughout common spaces and areas that allowed for social interaction and meetings. He said the facility will have 24-hour staffing with one or two people on site, but it must have common spaces and corridors that can be easily monitored. To this end, new staircases were being installed where staircases historically existed at 217 and 209 Odeon, and the new corridor was placed in the location of former stairwells. Mr. Raser said additions were consciously placed at the rear of the buildings, largely out of sight. The buildings at 213 and 215 Odeon were being connected to create a needed communal space. They were selected since they were at the middle of the site and had similar floor heights. The addition between 213 and 215 Odeon had skylights in response to its location in a former breezeway. Although 213 (rear) Odeon was not needed, Mr. Raser said Over-the-Rhine Community Housing (OTRCH) found a way to incorporate the building into the project; this building will serve as a multi-purpose area on an as needed basis.

Before the Board posed questions to Mr. Raser, Ms. Cowden reminded the Board that its review was dictated by the City's Programmatic Agreement with the OHPO, which required a project be evaluated for its compliance with the Standards.

Mr. Senhauser remarked that 209-219 Odeon all had a narrow floor-plate and that the layout was room-based. By contrast the proposed use necessitated a more open plan. He asked if the applicant had considered other buildings in the area (institutional buildings, light manufacturing buildings and breweries) that might be more compatible with the nature of the proposed use. Mr. Raser said that the OTRCH could address Mr. Senhauser's question about any other buildings it had considered. Generally speaking though, larger institutional buildings presented other difficulties. The floor plates were often too deep, making it difficult to provide natural light into spaces. Mr. Raser asserted that the plan was still very room-based in character and that the proposed use was viable for the area, while multi-family residential was not.

In response to Mr. Young, Mr. Raser indicated that all the first floor windows will be operable except in the office spaces. Mr. Raser also described the interior treatment of the non-operable doors/transoms on the main (Odeon Street) facades for Mr. Young. He said the doors will be fixed in place and a drywall panel (painted black on the outside face) would be installed behind transoms.

Mr. Young asked if Mr. Raser had considered recessing the fixed doors or gates in the breezeways in order to retain some of the visual character of these spaces. Mr. Raser said that he had not but he could look into this possibility.

Mr. Jones stated that he did not believe the proposal met the Standards and that it changed distinct physical characteristics of 209-217 Odeon. He specifically requested an explanation of how the proposal met Standards #1 and #2. Mr. Raser pointed out that the Standards allowed changes and reiterated his position that the plans only minimally changed the buildings. He said the proposal involved taking out existing stairwells/staircases and creating a single corridor and that these changes were reasonable and well within the Standards.

In response to Mr. Jones, Mr. Raser said the preference would be to remove the interior trimwork and remaining mantles but that these features could be kept if necessary.

Mr. Jones asked how HVAC would be installed. Mr. Raser responded that plans for the HVAC system had not yet been finalized, but it would likely be a central system.

In response to Mr. Jones, Mr. Raser said he hoped the faux stone facing on 211 Odeon could be removed with little to no damage to the brick beneath it and that only minor cleaning and tuckpointing would be necessary. He added that the buildings will likely be painted different colors.

Mary B. Rivers, Executive Director of the OTRCH, addressed the Board. Ms. Rivers indicated that OTRCH was spearheading the Odeon Street project and listed other involved partners. OTRCH, a community based development corporation, owned 96 properties and has developed over 600 residential units in Over-the-Rhine. Ms. Rivers remarked that OTRCH was very much in support of historic conservation and the majority of its projects utilized Historic Tax Credits deals. She also indicated that the Odeon Street proposal met several goals articulated in the *Over-the-Rhine Comprehensive Plan*.

Ms. Rivers said the redevelopment of 209-219 Odeon represented the first project of its type in Cincinnati – a “housing first” model that will provide permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless. Ms. Rivers testified that the project will benefit the Over-the-Rhine community and the City’s homeless population. The “housing first” model has been utilized successfully elsewhere in Ohio and country. She said that \$3.2 million had been raised to date and she hoped the Odeon Street project will demonstrate this model can work here as well.

Ms. Rivers commented that the existing layouts of 209-219 Odeon (defined by one or two small rooms on either side of a central staircase) often made buildings in Over-the-Rhine difficult to reuse. However, this layout was ideal for the proposed use, which needed smaller living spaces. The proposed modifications, including accessibility, a common area and an elevator, were critical to the project’s success. Ms. Rivers mentioned that OTRCH considered five other locations but they ultimately did not work. She hoped the Board would act to approve the proposal.

In response to questions from Mr. Jones and Mr. Young, Ms. Rivers described the financing and management of the proposed congregate housing in greater detail. She said that while permanent supportive housing was available in Cincinnati it typically required tenants to go through a program first and to be sober. By contrast, tenants will not need to be sober first before moving into the Odeon Street housing. Tenants must sign a lease, comply with certain standards and engage in support services and case management. Similar to any other rental property, tenants can stay for as long as they choose. The goal was to reduce Cincinnati’s population of chronically homeless and to provide these individuals with the support to become sober or to reduce use.

Ms. Rivers said that OTRCH intends to be the property manager and funding for operations will come from the Continuum of Care, a locally administered HUD program. OTRCH has solicited advice from the Corporation for Supportive Housing and other agencies for advice on how to interact with residents and what was necessary to maintain the property. Ms. Rivers commented that the program has been well documented as a successful one. She said that a concern raised in other areas was that this type of congregate housing would negatively impact property values; it was documented that it does not, in fact, reduce property values.

Ted Jones, Senior Program Manager, Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), read a statement into the record. In summary, CSH, a national non-profit based in New York, was founded in 1991. It has a presence in 12 states and the District of Columbia. Its mission was to help communities create permanent supportive housing to prevent and end homelessness. Mr. Jones asserted that the Odeon Street project will serve some of the City’s most difficult to serve and vulnerable members. These individuals represent the chronically homeless and have mental health and/or substance abuse issues. The current system has either not worked for or successfully engaged this population. He focused in particular on the critical need for common spaces and hallways. These spaces will help

staff to engage tenants informally and for tenants to build relationships with each other and staff in a safe environment. The large common spaces were necessary for activities including group services delivery, treatment groups, and a variety of meetings. These spaces will be easier to monitor and will provide increased security.

Mr. Jones noted that the Odeon Street facility will be the first time many of these individuals have had safe, decent housing. Based on his personal experience, he asserted that they will not want to be evicted for violating the terms of their lease and so will engage in the services. Mr. Jones urged the Board to visit his organization's website at www.csh.org for further information about the program and indicated he was available to answer questions at any time.

Mr. Jones said that he once served as a housing commissioner for the City of Toledo. Toledo also had a Programmatic Agreement with the state and Section 106 reviews were under his purview. Mr. Jones stated his support of the architect's (Mr. Raser's) interpretation of Section 106 review process and its purposes.

In response to Mr. Young, Mr. Jones indicated that he felt that the OHPO would need to understand the full impact of the project (scope, neighborhood, purpose of the project, what will happen to the buildings if the project does not move forward) in order to make an informed decision.

Ms. Cowden confirmed for Mr. Young that all documentation, including the meeting minutes and testimony, would be forwarded to the OPHO for its review and consideration should the Board accept the staff recommendation.

[Ms. Fisher left the meeting at 4:30p.m.]

Andy Hutzel, OTRCH, addressed the Board. He said that various agencies are in the process of redefining how to serve Hamilton County's homeless. He asserted that congregate housing of this type was the right direction and the Odeon Street facility represented a pilot project that could be replicated elsewhere in the county. Mr. Hutzel reiterated early statements that there will be 24-hour staffing on the site and that \$3.2 million (including City funds) had been raised to date for the project. He commented that the Division of Community Development at HUD expected OTRCH to finish the project by the end of 2009. Mr. Hutzel said that OTRCH was very supportive of a mixed-income community. He stated that OTRCH was very much vested in Over-the-Rhine and mentioned the organization's nearby City Home project on Pleasant Street, where units were priced between \$150,000 to \$300,000.

Mr. Senhauser confirmed that Sarah T. Allan, who had signed in to testify, had left the meeting.

Bob Moore testified on behalf of the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless (GCCH), an organization for which he served on the Board of Directors. Mr. Moore expressed GCCH's strong support for the proposal, stating that the City needed a "housing first" model designed for the chronically homeless.

[Mr. Kreider left the meeting at 4:34p.m.]

Although they represent a small percentage of the homeless population, the chronically homeless account for a huge proportion of police time and jail/hospital expenses. Mr. Moore stated that "housing first" represented a viable model according to best practices across the country and that OTRCH would be a good steward of the properties and program.

[Mr. Kreider returned to the meeting at 4:37p.m.]

Kevin Finn, Executive Director of Cincinnati & Hamilton Continuum of Care for the Homeless (Continuum of Care), addressed the Board. Mr. Finn indicated that the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County contracted with his organization to coordinate homeless services. As part of that contract, the Continuum of Care oversees an annual application to HUD that secures funding for homeless programs in the City and County; this funding has totaled \$88 million in the last 12 years. These funds were allocated through a community process that included businesses, service providers, City and County representatives, and local foundations. Each organization was given five minutes to justify why their program or organization should be funded. OTRCH's initial application to acquire the Odeon properties in 2006 and a later application for operating dollars in 2008 were both ranked #1. Mr. Finn stated that the community was badly in need of this program and that it will help stabilize the chronically homeless community by providing a safe housing alternative and the individual neighborhoods where these people currently reside. He asked that the Board take into account community support and desire for this housing alternative.

Mr. Jones asked Mr. Finn to elaborate on the Continuum of Care's policy for the placement of these types of facilities and what programs get funded. Mr. Finn responded that the Continuum of Care does not currently have a policy other than that a facility needs to be located in reasonable proximity to services the homeless need and the population being served. One of the positives of the Odeon Street project was that recovery and mental health services will be offered on site. Mr. Finn said that funding was a competitive process where applications were scored and ranked; not all applications were funded.

Adam Gelter, Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC), addressed the Board. He identified 3CDC as the current owner of 209-219 Odeon. OTRCH approached 3CDC regarding its stock of buildings in Over-the-Rhine and a possible location for a "housing first" facility. After reviewing its holdings, 3CDC and OTRCH determined that the Odeon Street buildings represented the best fit based on their layout and location. Mr. Gelter said that 3CDC had previously investigated redeveloping the properties for condominiums, but a residential use was ultimately deemed unfeasible. Mr. Gelter expressed concern about what would happen if the project continued to be held up and said 3CDC was anxious to move the project forward. He asserted that the proposal did not adversely effect the buildings and it was better than leaving the buildings vacant. He asked that common sense prevail.

Mr. Jones asked Mr. Gelter to elaborate on why a residential use was not viable for 209-219 Odeon. Mr. Gelter described the surrounding area – a nearby cell phone tower, an adjacent manufacturing facility, the Elm Street Clinic, traffic congestion on Odeon Street – as factors that prohibited a for-sale or rental residential use. He said that the proposed congregate housing plan represented a significant cost savings over the earlier condominium proposal and the minimal possible investment to get the buildings back into service.

Mr. Young commented that while the proposed project was a noble one with merit, he felt that it required physical changes to the interior and exterior of 209-219 Odeon that contradicted the Standards and the City's Programmatic Agreement. He expressed concern that speakers suggested that a timely approval was critical considering that the project had been incubating for two or more years.

BOARD ACTION

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

1. Find that the proposed rehabilitation and site improvements to 209-219 Odeon Street meets the Over-the-Rhine Historic District Conservation Guidelines and approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work as shown in the attached drawings with the following conditions:
 - a. Simulated or true divided light six-over-six windows shall be installed on the main (north) façade of 217 Odeon Street and the north and south elevations of the rear building at 213 Odeon Street.
 - b. The entrances at 213 and 215 Odeon Street shall have a single transom and door as specified in the staff report.
 - c. Encourage the applicant to consider installing four-panel doors rather than the six-panel doors shown in the attached drawings.
 - d. Final plans and specifications shall be submitted to the Urban Conservator for review and approval prior to construction.
2. Approve the requested Zoning Variance to permit the proposed development to have 5 instead of the required 13 parking spaces finding that such relief from the literal interpretation of the Zoning Code will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare or injurious to property in the district or vicinity where the property is located and is necessary and appropriate in the interest historic conservation as not to adversely affect the historic architectural or aesthetic integrity of the district.
3. Find that the proposed rehabilitation does not conform to the approaches outlined in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings as specified by the City of Cincinnati's Programmatic Agreement and direct the Urban Conservator to forward the Board's action along with supporting documentation to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office for its review.

**NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION, MT. AIRY FOREST, 5083 COLERAIN AVENUE,
MT. AIRY AND WESTWOOD**

Ms. Cowden summarized the staff report regarding the nomination of Mt. Airy Forest to the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). She said that the Registration Form clearly demonstrated that the park met Criteria A and C for listing in the National Register, and the associated written narrative entitled *The Historic Resources of the Cincinnati Park and Parkway System, 1817-1959* provided the basis for future nominations of the City's parks and parkways. Ms. Cowden indicated that copies were forwarded to Steve Schuckman, Parks Department and Michael Moore, City Architect. Mr. Schuckman had expressed his support of the nomination.

The Board agreed the Registration Form and associated narrative were well-written, comprehensive documents. Ms. Spraul-Schmidt recommended that Zane L. Miller's *Boss Cox's Cincinnati: Urban Politics in the Progressive Era* be added to the bibliography.

BOARD ACTION

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

1. Find that the Mt. Airy Forest, located at 5083 Colerain Avenue in the City of Cincinnati, meets the requirements of Criteria A and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

2. Direct staff to forward the Board's findings regarding this nomination to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office prior to the December 5, 2008 meeting of the Ohio Historic Site Preservation Advisory Board.

OTHER BUSINESS

Administrative Assistant Loretta Howard distributed information to the Board from a course about Ohio Ethics Law and the Ohio Ethics Commission. She indicated that the course instructor stated that board/commission members abstaining due to a conflict of interest may not participate in the discussion, deliberation or lobbying of the case and recommended that board/commission members also leave the room.

The Board accepted the meeting schedule for 2009.

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: _____