

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 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, Kreider, Jones, McTurner and Chatterjee present. Absent: Young and Wallace.

APPOINTMENTS

Lydgia Miller, a notary public in the Department of Community Development, swore in new Board member Bobbie McTurner for a two-year term.

MINUTES

The Board unanimously approved the minutes of November 17, 2008 (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Chatterjee).

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 1600 VINE STREET, 1618 VINE STREET, 10-12 W. LIBERTY STREET & 14 E. LIBERTY STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Interim Urban Conservator Adrienne Cowden summarized an application by St. Francis Seraph Ministries to install four temporary banners publicizing its 150th anniversary celebration. The cloth banners will be installed at 1600 Vine Street, 1618 Vine Street, 10-12 W. Liberty Street and 14 E. Liberty Street in Over-the-Rhine. Ms. Cowden commented that staff would not recommend permanent signs of this size and location. However, the visual impact of the signs was mitigated in that they will be in place for one year only and will not result in physical damage to the buildings.

Ms. Cowden confirmed for Mr. Kreider that the banner installed on the church tower would cover an arched top window. She said that this placement would not result in any damage to the window sash or brickwork and was acceptable for the requested temporary installation of one-year.

Jim Kindt and Brother Tim were present to represent St. Francis Seraph Ministries. In response to Ms. Spraul-Schmidt, Brother Tim indicated that the color was intended to be Franciscan brown rather than the bright red that appeared on the submitted plans.

The Board expressed its hope for the success of the St. Francis Seraph Ministries' anniversary celebration.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Chatterjee) to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of the proposed wall signs at 1600 Vine Street, 1618 Vine Street, 10-12 W. Liberty Street and 14 E. Liberty Street as illustrated in the submitted drawings with the following conditions:

1. The wall signs are approved for one year only, beginning on December 18, 2008 and ending on December 18, 2009. No other banners or signs shall be installed during this period. The wall signs shall be promptly removed by December 18, 2009.
2. The wall signs shall be maintained, repaired and/or replaced as necessary to keep them in good condition.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 1008 RACE STREET, COURT STREET
HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Staff member Larry Harris presented a request to install two projecting signs at 1008 Race Street, a contributing building in the Court Street Historic District. He pointed out that both signs were the same material and dimensions but were for two different businesses. Mr. Harris noted that the position was dictated, in part, by the Zoning Code and the Department of Transportation & Engineering, which required the bottom of a projecting sign be at least 10'-0" above the sidewalk. He said that mounting the signs will result in damage to the brick and stonework, particularly if water were permitted to penetrate behind the brackets and recommended that the drawings be revised to include weather proofing of the mounting brackets.

Mr. Harris confirmed for Mr. Senhauser that he had discussed the placement of the sign with the applicant. The signs, as proposed, were proportional to the window openings and scaled to the façade; if the top post were moved down this would no longer be the case. Mr. Harris stated that the applicant would have no objection to relocating the top bracket below the stonework but preferred the current position, asserting that the stone would provide a more stable anchor for the signs.

Mr. Senhauser commented that drilling into the brick was preferable to the stone lintel course and the sign should be moved down. The Board concurred.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Chatterjee, second by Spraul-Schmidt) to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the projecting signs as shown in the submitted drawings with the following conditions:

1. ABC Signs shall revise the drawings to include details for weather proofing the mounting brackets.
2. The top mounting bracket shall be moved down to a position below the stone lintel course and to avoid drilling into the stonework.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 824 ELM STREET, NINTH STREET
HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Staff member Larry Harris presented a proposal to install a wall sign at 824 Elm Street. He indicated that the guidelines identified internally illuminated signs as inappropriate but believed the intent was to prohibit standard plastic box signs. Mr. Harris said the proposal was not for a standardized box sign. It would be internally illuminated with neon but the tubes would not be exposed; the lumens should also be set at a low level. He said the lettering for "Jackson Hewitt" would be painted in black on the plastic face. The lettering for "tax service" would be in red; a line next to these words would fade from red to white. A starburst design anchored one end of the sign. Mr. Harris recommended that the sign be repositioned to align with the second floor balcony and the stone storefront.

The Board discussed signage in the Ninth Street Historic District, noting that internally illuminated and neon signs were atypical. Mr. Harris confirmed for the Board that the neon tubes would be housed behind the sign face. Mr. Senhauser commented that what constituted a low lumen level was subjective. Without a specific unit of measure for the light output a Board decision involving lumen level would be difficult to enforce.

Mr. Senhauser pointed out on the report photographs what appeared to be abandoned conduits on the building. If this were the case, the conduit(s) should be taken down and abandoned before a new sign was installed.

[Mr. Kreider left the meeting at 3:37p.m.]

Mr. Harris confirmed for the Board that the drawings did not reflect staff's recommendations regarding the sign's position on the building. He clarified for Mr. Jones that the edge of the sunburst design should be aligned with the edge of the stone storefront.

In response to Mr. Senhauser, Mr. Harris said staff did discuss the option of installing the sign inside the storefront with the applicant. Sign Effects was amenable to this possibility; however, the applicant expressed a preference for the exterior location and requested a Board hearing.

The Board agreed that staff should work with the applicant to identify an acceptable lumen level and suggested that installing the sign inside the storefront window would be a more appropriate location.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Chatterjee) to table the proposal in order to give the applicant an opportunity to work with Historic Conservation Office staff regarding the location and lumen level of the proposed sign.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 126 W. ELDER STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Larry Harris presented a proposal to rehabilitate 126 W. Elder Street with a first floor commercial space and two residential units in the upper floors. Mr. Harris noted that new windows would be installed throughout the building; developer Tony Terentowicz, Integrated Development, brought a sample of the selected window to meeting. The majority of the proposed work including a new stairhall, a rooftop addition and a roof deck was limited to the rear (north) elevation of the building. Mr. Harris indicated that the proposal met the Over-the-Rhine Historic District conservation guidelines but suggested that fire-rated windows should be installed in the two windows above the new stairhall addition rather than bricking in the openings.

Property owner Chris Murphy and developer Tony Terentowicz, Integrated Development, were present. Mr. Terentowicz indicated his preference to infill the two openings above the new stairhall addition with brick; the brick will have a recessed reveal. He said that the openings were in a closet space and within 10'-0" of a fire-rated stairwell. After discussion the Board generally agreed it was not critical that windows be installed in these openings.

Mike Morgan expressed his strong support of the application and the rehabilitation of 126 W. Elder Street.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Chatterjee, second by Spraul-Schmidt) to find that the proposed changes to 126 W. Elder Street met the Over-the-Rhine Historic District conservation guidelines and to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness with the condition that final plans and specifications for the work be submitted to the Urban Conservator for review and approval prior to construction.

PRELIMINARY DESIGN REVIEW, 2035 AUBURN AVENUE AND 2047 AUBURN AVENUE (139 MASON STREET), AUBURN AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Interim Urban Conservator Adrienne Cowden summarized a preliminary design review for the demolition of 2035 Auburn Avenue and 2047 Auburn Avenue (139 Mason Street). Ms. Cowden indicated the cleared site would initially be landscaped and regraded but ultimately, the Christ Hospital campus would expand onto the site. Staff outlined general issues regarding the proposal and indicated that the Board should address if the buildings were contributing or non-contributing resources; this decision would impact how staff conducted a final review. Staff stated that the Board should identify any additional information it would require to make a finding on the application.

Richard La Jeunesse, legal counsel for the applicant, and Phil Temple, Gamble Realty Company (Gamble Realty), were present to address the Board. Mr. La Jeunesse outlined the proposal for the Board. He stated that Gamble Realty had thought carefully about its application to the Board and hoped this was reflected in its submittal.

Mr. Senhauser indicated that the application needed to provide enough information for the Board to find that the demolition was an acceptable loss under the guidelines. He commented that Gamble Realty had owned the buildings for more than 20 years and that the physical condition appeared to be due to lack of maintenance. Mr. Senhauser said that Gamble Realty needed to avoid the appearance of demolition by neglect. Ms. Spraul-Schmidt agreed, stating that the current submittal gave the appearance that this was the case. Mr. Senhauser also observed that without putting the buildings up for sale it was difficult to assert that no one was willing to purchase them at or above market rate and that a reasonable return on investment could not be gained.

Mr. La Jeunesse agreed that Gamble Realty had not invested heavily in maintenance but was still putting money into the buildings. He pointed out that Gamble and the property manager, West Shell, did undertake exterior and interior repairs and that even with a significant subsidy from the Elizabeth Gamble Deaconess Home Association (TEGDHA) – over \$400,000 since July 2006 – the buildings operated at a loss. Mr. Temple clarified for the Board that the pro forma lists two groups of expenses, those incurred by Gamble Realty in house and those from the property manager, West Shell. Mr. Senhauser suggested the applicant might want to consider submitting financial data for a longer period of time than two years.

Mr. Jones asked why Gamble Realty chose to hold on to buildings that operated at a loss. Mr. La Jeunesse explained that Gamble Realty was created as a holding company for Christ Hospital. Mr. Temple said that the land surrounding the Christ Hospital campus sloped sharply away from the facility. Land to the south was flatter and would be easier to develop. He said that Gamble Realty had purchased select property south of Christ Hospital as it became available. The purchase of 2035 and 2047 Auburn was seen as a long-term beneficial acquisition. The buildings had provided affordable, safe housing for people since the 1990s but they were no longer viable. After a conducting an assessment of the properties, it was clear the properties could not break even and Gamble Realty determined its immediate responsibility was to move the tenants to more appropriate homes.

Mr. Temple confirmed for Mr. Jones that the units were market rate. He added that all the tenants had been relocated and that the buildings were now vacant.

In response to questions from Mr. Chatterjee and Mr. Jones, Mr. Temple stated that Gamble Realty owned 50 units in Mt. Auburn, 40 units in 2035 and 2047 Auburn, 2 units on Earnshaw and 8 units on Huntington; the units on Earnshaw and Huntington were located outside the district boundary. Mr. Temple stated that Christ Hospital had been located in Mt. Auburn since the 1890s. While it

could relocate, Mr. Temple felt that Christ Hospital preferred Mt. Auburn and that the neighborhood fit well with its organizational goals. He reiterated that Christ Hospital had no immediate plans to develop the property at 2035 and 2047 Auburn.

Mr. Chatterjee and Ms. Spraul-Schmidt emphasized the urban nature of the Auburn Avenue streetscape and noted that 2035 and 2047 Auburn created a strong physical and visual edge. Ms. Spraul-Schmidt commented that the buildings illustrated change over time in the district and were not insignificant resources. The Board agreed that both buildings contributed to the larger historic district. Mr. Chatterjee pointed out that the demolition would create a hole in the urban fabric and suggested that the applicant consider design options for retaining this edge.

[Mr. Kreider returned to the meeting at 4:52p.m.]

Mr. La Jeunesse confirmed for Mr. Jones that the cleared site would be utilized as greenspace in the foreseeable future. The Board agreed that knowing the hospital's ultimate plans for the site would be helpful. Mr. Jones emphasized that Christ Hospital should demonstrate that there was no other possible alternative to demolition.

Heather Adkins, Christ Hospital, stated that the hospital would most likely expand its clinical services to the site, but it did not have specific designs or proposals at this time. She said that the hospital would provide as much information as it could to the Board.

Mr. Senhauser and Ms. Spraul-Schmidt suggested that focusing on multiple criteria for demolition was not constructive. Gamble Realty should focus its application on only those demolition guideline(s) directly applicable to its petition and make a case.

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: _____