

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
MARCH 24, 2014
APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
C14H-1976-0001
Sheeks-Robertson House
610 West Lynn Street

PROPOSAL

Remove a portion of the stone wall on West Lynn Street to construct a new front entry to the house; remove the existing non-historic rear addition and construct a new addition in its place; reconstruct the turreted porte-cochere at the west end of the porch to its historic appearance; landscape improvements.

PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

The applicant proposes to:

1. Remove a section of the existing stone wall along West Lynn Street to create a new pedestrian and vehicle access point and construct a new drive across the front of the lot to allow visual and physical access to the house from the front, rather than from the rear, which is the only visual and physical access point currently.

The applicant has met several times with the Certificate of Appropriateness Review Committee on this project, and has incorporated their suggestions into the plans for this project. The Committee initially had concerns about the removal of any portion of the existing stone wall along West Lynn Street and the presence of the proposed new driveway, but the applicant has responded with a proposal to remove a smaller section of the wall and to lower the proposed new vehicular access road so that it does not impede on the historical context of the house and yard. The applicant provided the Committee with historical documents that show that the historic entrance to the house was from 6th Street; that section of the original lot has since been sold and an apartment complex has been built between the historic house and 6th Street; historical documents also showed that there was an entry towards the front of the house from West Lynn Street, and while the applicant's proposed West Lynn entry is not in the same location as the historic entry point, it does have historical precedent in its existence.

The proposed new entry will have both vehicular access and pedestrian access via a staircase rising from West Lynn Street. The vehicular drive will have a permeable "grasspave" paver surface leading to a small parking area. The width of the driveway will be 15 feet. The drive and parking area will be lower than the rest of the front yard so as to better hide its visibility from the house. The applicant has further responded to the Committee's request to reduce the size of the pedestrian access stairway and the associated removal of the existing stone wall from the earlier-proposed 55 feet to 48 feet. The south corner of the existing stone wall will remain.

2. Reconstruct the turreted porte-cochere on the porch to its historic appearance.

The applicant proposes to reconstruct the turreted porte-cochere at the west end of the porch to grade level, in accordance with historical evidence. The porte-cochere was raised to the porch level at some point in the history of the house, but was originally intended as a stepping-off place for horse-drawn carriages, with its entry at grade rather than at the level of the porch. The applicant proposes to remove the existing floor of the porte-cochere and to construct new steps as seen in historic photographs.

3. Demolish the existing non-historic addition to the rear of the house and construct a new addition in its place.

The house currently has a frame two-story addition to the rear and west side of the house dating from the 1970s. The applicant proposes to remove the addition and to construct a new two-story frame addition in its place. The proposed addition will be gabled with a roof slope matching existing gables on the house and will have stained wood siding and aluminum-clad doors and windows. The style of the addition is contemporary, and will have a covered porch to the west with painted steel columns and beams and a standing seam metal roof.

4. Landscape improvements

The applicant proposes to remove existing paved parking from the rear of the house as well as a deck, stairs, wood walkways, pool and stone walkway from the west side of the house, and a non-historic carport and shed. The landscape improvements will return more of the yard to grass and natural areas.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW

The Commission's Standards for Review of applications for Certificates of Appropriateness include:

- Do not destroy the distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure, or site and its environment. Avoid the removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features.
- Recognize all buildings, structures, and sites as products of their own time. Do not construct alterations which have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance.
- Repair, rather than replace deteriorated architectural features wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Base the repair or replacement of missing architectural features on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historical, physical, or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures.
- Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties are appropriate when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historic, architectural, or cultural material and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property, neighborhood, or environment.
- Construct new additions or alterations to structures in such a manner that if such addition or alteration were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure will be unimpaired.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommended re-evaluating the size of the opening in the stone wall on the West Lynn Street side of the property and to reconfigure the proposed pedestrian access staircase, which the applicant has done. The Committee requested that the applicant reconsider a proposed paint scheme for the historic house and suggested that the applicant keep the wood trim on the house as close to white as possible for historical accuracy. In the end, the Committee applauded the applicant for a sensitive re-design of the proposed changes to the house and its setting and for returning such a large section of the yard to its natural state by removing the extensive paving.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Approve as proposed, with the condition that the applicant return with a proposed paint scheme when ready to paint the wood trim on the house.