

**STAFF REPORT
HISTORIC AND CULTURAL LANDMARKS COMMISSION
CITY OF FORT WORTH, TEXAS**

DATE: November 9, 2020

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 9

GENERAL INFORMATION

REQUEST	Certificate of Appropriateness
APPLICANT/AGENT	John Verdier/Mitchell Young
LOCATION	1612 5 th Avenue
ZONING/ USE (S)	F/HC
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION	Fairmount

The applicant requests a Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a new commercial structure.

APPLICABLE FAIRMOUNT/SOUTHSIDE HISTORIC DISTRICT GUIDELINES

The district guidelines indicate that new construction should be sympathetic to the existing building typologies within the district and more specifically, in the sub-district and block face, if applicable. The following standards and guidelines speak to those aspects that are most relevant to the proposed design.

SECTION 5 STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION, ADDITIONS, DEMOLITIONS AND RELOCATION

- The height and overall scale of new construction and additions shall be consistent with that of adjacent structures. In residential areas, the height and scale of new construction should generally not exceed that of adjacent structures by more than one story.*
- Window and door openings shall use similar proportion of wall to window space as typically found in the district.*

SECTION 6 STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR OUTDOOR SPACES

Porch Standards

- Columns shall be masonry or wood and of a style and material typical of the period and style of the structure.*

Paving Standards

17. A front entry driveway shall be no wider than one car width or ten (10) feet maximum but may be widened just prior to a two car garage.

APPLICABLE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

GUIDELINES FOR REHABILITATING HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Setting (District/Neighborhood)

Recommended

Designing new features (such as parking areas, access ramps, or lighting), when required by a new use, so that they are as unobtrusive as possible, retain the historic relationships between buildings and the landscape in the setting, and are compatible with the historic character of the setting.

Not Recommended

Introducing a new building or landscape feature that is visually or otherwise incompatible with the setting's historic character

FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Height and Scale

The district guidelines confirm that height and overall scale of new construction shall be consistent with that of adjacent structures. As a Design Tip, the guidelines state: "*Make the height of the structure consistent with the existing height of adjacent structures.*" The term "consistent" means "done in the same way" and "unchanging in nature over time". Therefore, if we consider the streetscape elevation provided by the applicant, we can say that the height of the proposed design is not consistent with the adjacent structures. Further, if we consider the size of the footprint depicted in the Plot Plan, we can say that the scale of the proposed design is not consistent with the adjacent structures.

It is acknowledged that the guidelines also indicate the following: "*In residential areas, the height and scale of new construction should not generally exceed that of adjacent structures by more than one story.*" In this regard, the height of the proposed structure does not exceed that of the adjacent structures by more than one story, as a result, we can say that the height of the proposed design is generally compatible with the adjacent structures, however, the grade elevation, main floor level, floor to floor height and overall height should be shown on the front elevation.

The matter of greater relevance is whether the height or the proposed structure in conjunction with its mass produces an overall incompatible scale in this particular context, where scale refers to how we perceive or judge the size of something compared to a reference standard or the size of something else – in this case, the building typology and the predominant scale of historic

residential structures in the immediate vicinity. In relation to the proposed design, the use of an A-frame form with the rectangular massing on the second story creates a form and scale that is uncharacteristic of the typology and of the predominant scale and character of the historic streetscape. It is the actual three dimensional effect of the proposed design on the character and appearance of the district that is at issue.

Building Form and Massing

The district guidelines confirm that the massing of new construction shall be consistent with that of adjacent structures. It further clarifies massing where it states: “*Massing is the combination of the building footprint, height and width.*” In this regard, we can say that the massing as it relates to the proposed footprint, is not consistent with that of adjacent structures.

The size of the footprint is not an aspect that will have a visual impact that is appreciable from the street, rather it is how and where the footprint is filled with bulk and mass.

Orientation and Setbacks

The proposed design of the two-story residence depicts an orientation and setback that appear to be generally compatible with the predominant character of the streetscape. In relation to the front yard setback, the 15'-2" shown on the contextual site plan is measured from the property boundary to the porch. This setback needs to be measured from the property line to the forward plane of habitable space, which excludes porches. The setback dimensions should therefore be adjusted accordingly on the Plot Plan.

Rhythm

The district guidelines indicate that window and door openings shall use similar proportion of wall to window space as typically found in the district. They offer further guidance where they state: “*Doors and windows comprise roughly 30% of the surface area of walls on historic structures*” followed by a Design Tip that reads: “*Incorporate window and door openings with a similar proportion of window space as typically found on the block face.*” Whether the 30% rule-of-thumb is used or the ratios that are typically found on the street is considered, both means of measure would suggest that the proportion of doors and windows used is comparable with proportions found along the block face.

Porch

The district guidelines indicate that columns shall be of a style and material typical of the period and style of the structure. In this regard, the relative proportion and style of the columns is consistent with those found along the blockface.

The side elevations depict a change in grade where the porch meets the front wall of the house. This change does not appear to be accounted for by the existing conditions, however, it is acknowledged that the relationship between finished grade and the proposed architectural elevations could be confirmed by actual spot elevations. As a highly visible and predominant character-defining feature in the district, it is important to resolve the interface between the front porch and its immediate setting.

Paving

The district guidelines indicate that a front entry driveway shall be no wider than one car width or ten (10) feet maximum. The proposed driveway is shown to be 11'-0".

The proposed driveway and new curb cut shown on the north side of the property raises the question as to whether the existing curb cut on the south side of the property could be rehabilitated

to serve the new residence. The existing curb cuts for the properties shown on the Plot Plan need to be accurately shown and annotated if a change is proposed.

On November 21, 2019, an ordinance amending the zoning ordinance addressed “off-street parking requirements” to exempt historically designated properties from off-street parking requirements. This amendment recognizes the impact that parking requirements can have on the character and appearance of the district.

The proposed design shows five (5) parking stalls where the majority of the rear yard would consist of a hard surface to accommodate “parking as required”. While the degree that this parking area will be visible from the public right-of-way is likely to be minor, utilizing 88% of the rear yard of a residence for parking is uncharacteristic of the district.

Drawings

- The Typical Window Detail and Wall Sections should be drawn at a scale that is appropriate for such details.
- The proposed head and sill details are not reflected in the elevation drawings.
- Cross muntin bars are shown in the detail drawing but are appropriately omitted from the elevations.
- The Roof Plan should be legible and drawn at a scale that corresponds to the floor plan.
- If the lot slopes or is to be regraded, this condition should be shown on the streetscape elevation and front elevation.
- The Typical Wall Section and Porch Beam Section show a closed soffit. The elevations show a sloped/open soffit.

Miscellaneous

- Information regarding fencing has not been provided.

Conclusion

New design needs to be informed by and compatible with the character and appearance of the historic district. Issues of size, scale and mass need to be addressed three-dimensionally – as we would experience a proposed development from the public right-of-way once it is built. There are many design solutions available for addressing issues of size, scale and mass. Whichever solution is pursued, it must be sufficiently distinguishable from **and** compatible with its historic context. It would be inappropriate to partially address size, scale and mass in a way that leaves a design incompatible with its historic context.

In some cases, a program may be taxing for a site. The average size historic house in the area is approximately 1,681 square feet.

- a. A substantial Foursquare for example, (depicted in Figure. 7) is approximately 2,362 square feet on lots averaging 9,129 square feet with parking for two cars, yielding a site coverage of approximately 25.8%
- b. The habitable floor area of the proposed design is 2,903 square feet on a 7,000 square foot lot with five (5) parking spaces (88% of the rear lot allocated for parking), yielding a site coverage of approximately 42.5%

The above figures are not to suggest that the proposed design be reduced to 1,681 square feet or that it be designed to look like a Foursquare if a two story house is desired, rather it is intended

to provide context for considering the matter of size, scale, massing and typology of residential structures along 5th Avenue.

There are a number of technical/coordination issues associated with the application and drawings that can be addressed relatively quickly. These have been largely identified below.

Having regard to the foregoing and the District Guidelines, Staff recommends the following:

That the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a new residence at 1612 5th Avenue be continued to afford the applicant an opportunity to address the following items:

- 1. That setbacks be measured from the property line to the forward plane of habitable space of the main structure, which excludes porches and that the proposed setback be the average of the actual setbacks of the flanking properties and that the contextual site plan be so dimensioned;**
- 2. That the grade elevation, main floor level, floor to floor height and overall height be shown on the front elevation;**
- 3. That the proposed design address massing, which includes the building footprint, height and width as well as distinguishability and compatibility;**
- 4. That the interface between the front porch and its immediate setting included existing verified grades and proposed finished grades be resolved and clarified on the elevations;**
- 5. That a front entry driveway be no wider than one car width or ten (10) feet maximum;**
- 6. That consideration be given to reducing the area devoted to parking;**
- 7. That the existing curb cut on the south side of the property be rehabilitated if practical and if not practical, that it be accurately shown on the Plot Plan as “existing curb cut to be removed and landscaping reinstated to City specifications” or similar notation;**
- 8. That the drawings be adjusted to address the following:**
 - a. The Typical Window Detail and Wall Sections need to be provided at a scale that is appropriate for such details;**
 - b. The proposed head and sill details need to be reflected in the elevation drawings’**
 - c. Cross muntin bars are shown in the detail drawing but are appropriately omitted from the elevations’**
 - d. The Roof Plan needs to be legible, preferably at a scale that corresponds to the floor plan;**

- e. If the lot slopes or is to be regraded, this condition should be shown on the streetscape elevation and front elevation; and
 - f. The Typical Wall Section and Porch Beam Section show a closed soffit, whereas the elevations show a sloped/open soffit.
9. That information regarding fencing be shown on the Plot Plan and respective Elevations as applicable; and
10. That any adjustments to the drawings be submitted to the Development Services Department prior to November 16th if a December 14th re-hearing is preferred or December 21st if a January 11th re-hearing is preferred, and so on.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

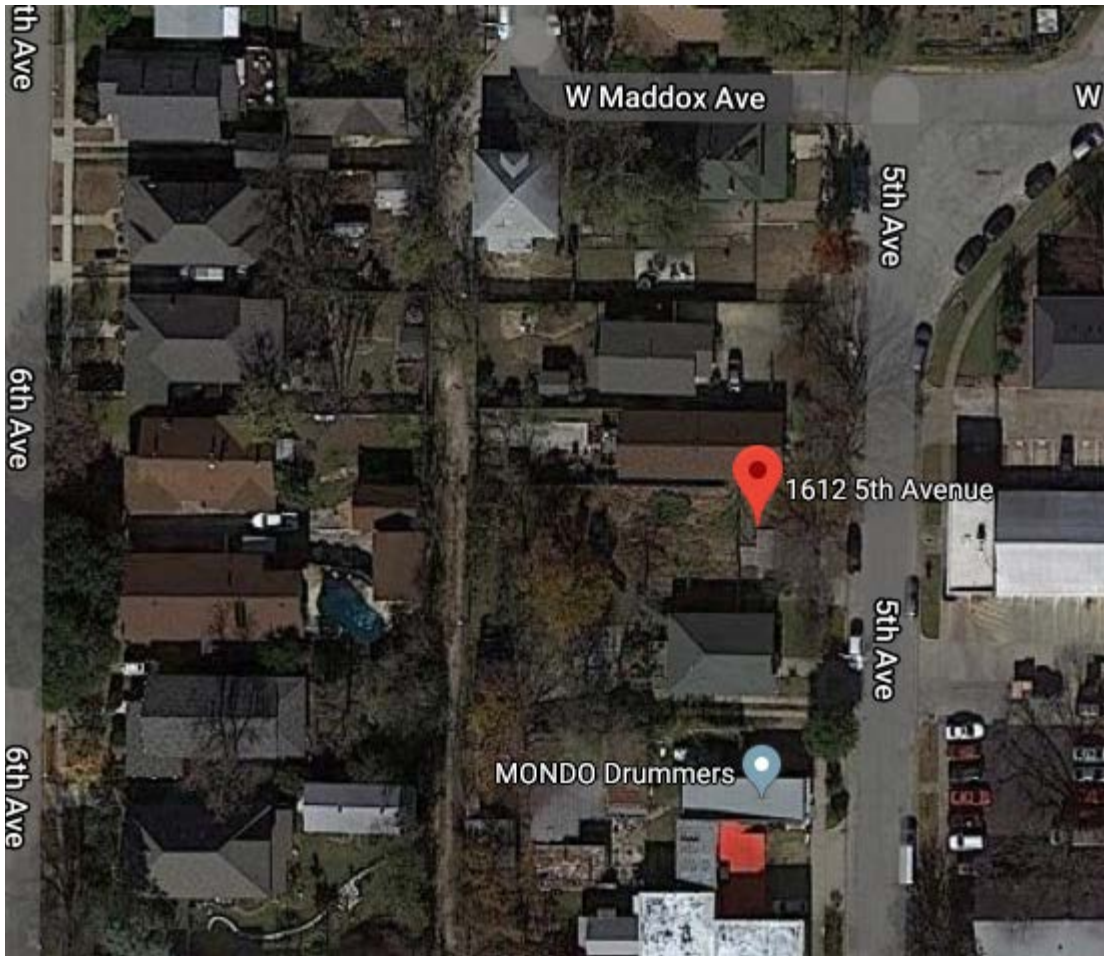


Figure 1. Aerial View

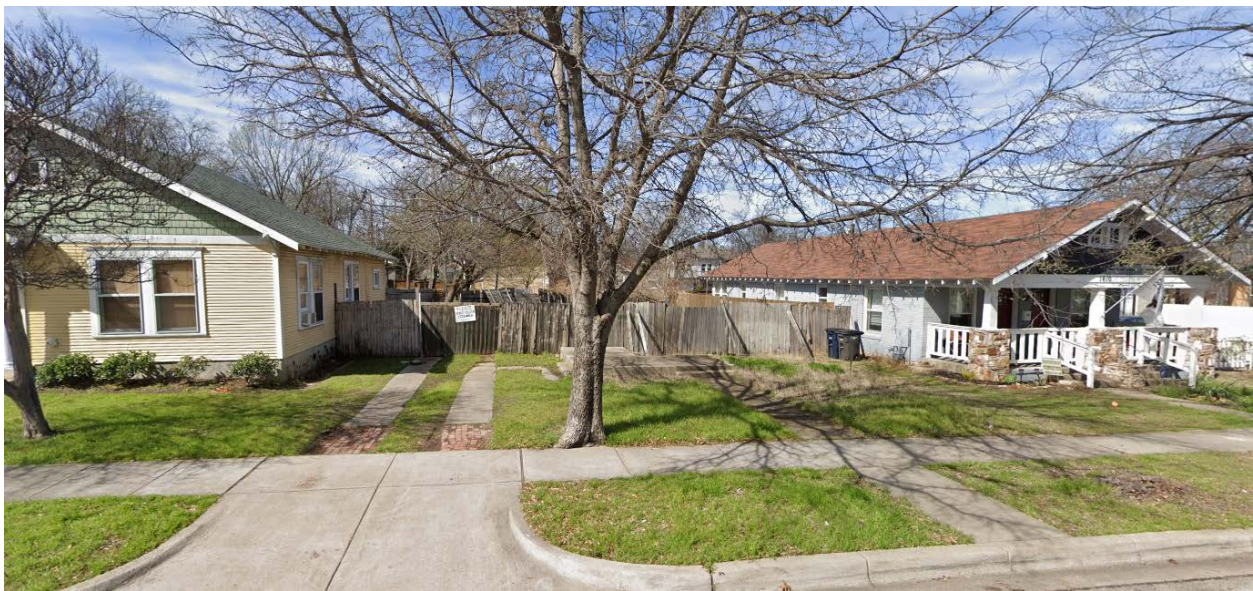


Figure 2. View of the vacant lot as seen from 5th Avenue



Figure 3. View of immediate context as seen from 5th Avenue, looking south west



Figure 4. View of context as seen from 5th Avenue, looking south towards W Allen Ave



Figure 5. View looking south east, along 5th Avenue, just north of W Allen Avenue



Figure 6. View looking north west along 5th Avenue, just south of Park Place Avenue



Figure 7. View as seen from 5th Avenue, looking south west