



123 Madison Street, Oak Park, Illinois 60302

Date: September 24, 2021

To: Iris Sims, Plan Commission Chair

From: Noel Weidner, Historic Preservation Commission Chair

CC: Craig Failor, Village Planner  
Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner  
David Pope, Oak Park Residence Corporation

Re: **Historic Preservation Commission Review—7 Van Buren St**

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The Historic Preservation (HPC) reviewed the proposed new Planned Development at 7 Van Buren St during their meeting on August 19, 2020. The project was previously reviewed by the Architectural Review Committee, a subcommittee of the HPC, on February 26, 2020. As the existing building is not, itself, within a historic district and is not an Oak Park Landmark, the project does not meet the definition of demolition in the Historic Preservation Ordinance. However, as it is located within 250 feet of two Oak Park Landmarks, the Poley Building (408-410 S Austin Blvd) and the Dorothy Manor Apartments (424-426 S Austin Blvd), Advisory Review by the HPC is required.

The Oak Park Historic Preservation Ordinance requires the HPC to review any proposed planned unit developments within historic districts or within 250 feet of an Oak Park Landmark (7-9-10). As part of this review, the HPC considers anticipated effects of the proposal on the nearby landmarks and the long-term compatibility with the character of these affected historic resources and their long-range preservation. The HPC's evaluation uses the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, as amended in the Ordinance, and the HPC's Architectural Review Guidelines (7-9-12). The Ordinance requires the HPC's evaluation to be provided to the Plan Commission for consideration.

The HPC's Architectural Review Guidelines New Building Policy recommends:

1. A new building in a historic district must be compatible with the size, scale, set-back, massing, material, and character of the buildings which surround it on the same and adjacent blocks (the zone of influence for new buildings is six blocks -- the block on which the building is proposed to be built, the two adjacent blocks on the same side of the street, and the three opposing blocks on the other side of the same street).
2. A new building shall not change the historic character of the other buildings which surround it on the same and adjacent blocks.
3. A new building shall have its front entrance facing the same direction as the majority of buildings on the same block, unless it can be shown that compatibility with adjacent buildings can be achieved better through a different orientation.

4. A new building built in a historic district shall be compatible but visually distinct from other buildings which surround it on the same and adjacent blocks.

#### **Architectural Review Committee Review - February 26, 2020**

The applicant attended the Architectural Review Committee meeting on February 26, 2020. The ARC comments, which addressed two design options, included:

- The ARC discussed the height, including that the building is taller than neighboring buildings and the floor-to-floor height is higher. It was recommended that the building be stepped back at the third or fourth floor to minimize visual impact.
- Concern was expressed about the solid wall directly adjacent to the neighboring Landmark. It was suggested that the façade be treated with vertical elements at this location.
- Solar panels were discussed, including whether they have to be solid.
- The decorative features of the neighboring Landmark were discussed and the ARC suggested incorporating elements referencing aspects like the diamond pane windows, materials, or colors of the Landmark building.
- Concern was expressed about the overall massing of the proposed building.

#### **Historic Preservation Commission Review - August 19, 2020**

The applicant took several recommendations provided at the February 2020 ARC meeting, including the ARC's preference for their second of two design options and moving the lobby to Austin Blvd. The HPC reviewed the project on August 19, 2020. Specific recommendations from members of the HPC included:

- Several Commissioners felt that the southeast corner facing Austin Blvd and adjacent to the neighboring Landmark should be lightened or softened. For example, it could feature a portion of opaque glass.
- Several Commissioners agreed that the design is well-proportioned and has horizontal lines and warmth reminiscent of the Prairie style and appropriate to Oak Park.
- One Commissioner expressed concern about the height and massing of the building and suggested that the upper floors be stepped back.
- One Commissioner expressed concern that the detail of the Landmarks would diminish in size in comparison to the new building. However, it was appreciated that efforts were made to play on some of the delicate decorative details found on the older buildings.

The HPC thanks you for your consideration of these comments during the public hearing process. Please contact Susie Trexler, HPC staff liaison, at (708) 358-5443 or [strexler@oak-park.us](mailto:strexler@oak-park.us) if you have any questions.