

**Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission**  
**December 8, 2016 Meeting Minutes**  
**Oak Park Village Hall, Council Chambers – Room 201, 7:30 pm**

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Chair Christopher Payne, Jennifer Bridge, Rebecca Houze, David Sokol, Aleksandra Tadic, Noel Weidner  
**ABSENT:** Greg Battoglia, Laura Jordahl, Don McLean, Dan Moroney  
**STAFF:** Douglas Kaarre, AICP, Urban Planner

- B. HPC 2016-77: 238 S. Kenilworth Avenue (Gill): Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a two-story side addition on a two-story frame house (Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District)**  
Architect Chris Wollmuth was present representing the property owner.

Planner Kaarre presented the staff report. The proposed side two-story addition is to extend the south bay out into the side yard along the back of the wrap-around porch, which was added in 2011 and is not original to the house. The existing south bay has diagonal bay walls on the first floor and squared walls on the second floor. The house is clad in wood clapboard with wood shingles in the gable ends. They are proposing to use three types of siding – wider at the base – to delineate that it is a new addition. The architect met with the Architectural Review Committee on November 26. The ARC recommended that they delineate the side addition in materials and use trim board, and add a base/water table in different materials to make the addition more grounded. They also suggested using the same detailing like wood trim and trim around the windows on the addition to mimic a more covered bay. The applicants have done this by using a wider siding at the base, a narrower siding on the first floor of the addition, and shingles on the second floor. The extension of the bay outwards significantly alters the proportion of the bay, removes the historic angled characteristic on the first floor, and changes the historic character of the house. The project as proposed does not meet the Architectural Review Guidelines. Staff recommends that the Commission take no action on the Certificate of Appropriateness application.

Chris Wollmuth, CW Design, stated that he is the architect for the project. Michelle Gill, one of the property owners, is also present. He will walk you through to see how they got to where they did. Obviously they were hoping to come in with staff approval. They were hoping to go back to the ARC a second time, but that coincided with Thanksgiving. They would like to be fluid with suggestions. They have a certain flexibility with suggestions. The side bay is on a secondary façade. The front porch is existing, and does provide a degree of shielding of the bay. He reviewed the existing interior plan. The kitchen is divorced from the living spaces. The front porch is actively used and the connection is through the front door and they would like to maintain that connection. The second floor is chopped up. They want to rectify some of these conditions. The side walls are load-bearing with a column down the middle. This house is unique as the load-bearing walls are north-south and the joists are east-west, which suggests a more natural expansion of the bays.

He reviewed the site plan. The house is over 19 feet of the side yard lot line. The zoning setback is 6 feet. It can't be used as play space and neighbors are looking down on you so it can't be used to sit. A side yard is rare in Oak Park.

He reviewed the proposed interior plan to expand the family room and kitchen with a more open floor plan connecting to the front living room. Second floor master suite addition. The addition is set back behind the front porch. One of the strategies they added from the ARC meeting is a partial gable that mimics the partial gables on the front of the home. They've created an architectural element that mimics the style of the home. The existing home uses shingles in the gables. They used shingles on the addition to distinguish new from old. The trim board is being retained to suggest where the original home ended. There will be a slight return that will be siding

before it transitions to the shingles. It's a subtle distinction. The bulk of the addition in the back is hidden behind the nice side addition.

Going through the Guidelines, the ARC did not have a lot of questions about 1, 3 and 4, regarding the massing, the secondary façade, and changing the historic character. Staff has raised some questions about changing the character and he'd be happy to return to that to answer questions. The primary piece is 5 on how to define new vs. old, through trim boards and by varying how the siding works. The other point of discussion is the side bay. One was retaining the angles. We decided not to do that, but would be happy to entertain that idea. The other question revolved around the gables. It's a big roof broken down by the gable additions.

There was also discussion about doing an addition off the back. There are challenges to that by pushing a patio right up the garage. The distances between rooms and to the front porch get magnified. You're passing through two or three rooms to get out there, and it compromises how you use those rooms. People end up not using some rooms. He does a lot of these additions and people tell him that after these additions people don't use these front rooms anymore. That is really unfortunate. He's excited about this addition in that the entire house will be used. They have access to the front porch that will get more remote. It will be more tied to the home. If the add off the back they won't be able to see out the front window from the kitchen.

Overall they appreciate the comments they've received. They've tried to make a nice addition that is respectful to the way houses need to be adapted now that retain the character of the neighborhood.

*Motion by Sokol to open the application for discussion. Second by Houze.*

Commissioner Houze asked about the ARC discussion of the retention of the gable.

Chair Payne stated that the entire ARC was not in favor of retaining it. He is of the opinion that it is a character-defining feature, but given the geometry of the ground floor plan and the bay window, and the gable, and the relationship between the gable and the side of the house – that it's such a close proximity – I personally saw that as a character-defining feature of the house. It gives it a particular kind of scale from that side or even three-quarter view that I felt was important and the new addition would completely alter that.

Chris Wollmuth stated that they recognized some of those comments and why they got into those alternatives they explored. Different people will view that differently. It is a little bit of a gray area. It is on the side and it is partially hidden. We didn't go back and revise it because it made the most sense because of the overall plan to take advantage of the space, the side yard, and they feel their design is respectful.

Commissioner Tadic stated that they took most of the ARC's advice from the last meeting. The size of the addition doesn't bother her so much anymore now that the trim and detailing have been added. She recommends only using horizontal siding on the addition and shingles on the dormer. With the addition of the detailing, the gables and the dormers it looks much more appropriate to the house.

Commissioner Sokol stated that it seems that the concern is mainly that two guidelines 2 and 4 are overlapping. He doesn't have an answer on what to do. If everyone feels there must be another way, he would love to hear what another way might be. He doesn't want the applicant not to be able to expand the house to live in. He appreciates everything that's gone into the design and familial access, etc. He's not an architect and is hoping someone can suggest a respectful way to handle the issue.

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Chair Payne suggested compromising part of the back yard and still use part of the side yard as long as it is behind the side bay.

Chris Wollmuth stated that anyone moving to Oak Park, not just them, is looking for a place that a family can gather and be together. The existing family room does not have the square footage to do that.

Chair Payne stated that not every house has to have 2,000-3,000 square feet. There is a careful way to add onto these homes where they're not all blown up to be super huge. At some point there is a compromise with living in these small historic homes. I know everybody wants a huge house. If you don't think the house works for you, why ruin the house? Why not just get a different house?

Chris Wollmuth stated that was where he was going with that. By adding to the existing space they were trying to minimize the overall addition. To create a similar size space – which isn't an exorbitant space – they would have to replicate the addition in the back which is no longer connected to those similar spaces. There are some houses where there are no option but to go out the back.

Chair Payne stated that he doesn't necessarily buy the argument that if you are adding off the back you're not going to use your front room. If you're not going to use it, then you didn't need the square footage. If you're adding all this room that you don't need, I don't know what's going on.

Chris Wollmuth stated that what drives people is the connection between spaces.

Chair Payne stated that he just doesn't agree that that is impossible with an addition off the back.

Commissioner Houze stated that it is a very sensitively designed plan. She likes the interrelationship of those spaces. As a commission if they are considering that bay is a character-defining feature, and she agrees that it is, then they have to encourage a different way to think about an extension.

Chris Wollmuth stated that there is some interpretation about whether that is character-defining, because there is a large piece sitting in front of it. Whether it is new or not, it is obscured. Whether it is seen or not is important. The important features are the front porch, the gables, the siding. A lot of people would not notice it. There is a gray area that hopefully opens the door to other pros of the plan. The design respects the history and prominent features as best it can.

Commissioner Tadic asked if the design extruded the same shape out, would that help?

Chair Payne stated that the architect has done a great job picking up all the other details – scale, detail of the bay, the way the base was, etc. He has a bigger problem recreating the same thing, because it would replicate it and create a false sense of history making people think it was always there.

Chris Wollmuth stated that was why they added the shingles but kept some of the trim board.

Chair Payne stated that it's a question for the Commission on how many consider it a major issue towards the overall approval of this plan.

Commissioner Sokol stated that he's not an architect, but he would like to hear more discussion on other solutions on how not to damage the yard on the interrelationship of various living spaces which he agrees makes for a better used home.

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Commissioner Houze agrees that it is a character-defining feature of that historical period home. It's a lovely design, but the addition removes the feature.

Commissioner Bridge agrees that the bay is a character-defining feature on the home.

Commissioner Weidner agrees that the bay is a defining feature on the home. The porch obscures it now. Originally it would have stuck out as a primary feature.

Commissioner Houze asked when the porch was added.

Chris Wollmuth stated that it was added in 2011 along with the removal of the aluminum siding.

Chair Payne stated that they have consensus on not moving forward with approval. The question is whether there are suggestions on how to modify it. He would recommend adding off the rear. There has to be a way to connect the three rooms along the south side of the house that gives you the graciousness of space that you're looking for without removing the side bay. It seems that you already have several spaces that could easily be connected into a single space. I don't know why that seems so difficult to achieve in the current plan. You're starting to do that. It's the oversized family room that seems to be pushing this more than anything else.

Chris Wollmuth asked if reducing the size of the addition to a smaller scale make a difference.

Chair Payne stated that he would not support any modification to the bay.

Commissioner Sokol recommended that they continue to think about the project and find a solution that respects the Guidelines.

He asked for a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness. There was no second.