



Agenda Item Summary

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Submitted By

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Reviewed By

LKS

Agenda Item Title

Concur with the Historic Preservation Commission's Recommendation to Approve an Ordinance Amending Chapter 7 ("Building Regulations"), Article 9 ("Historic Reservation"), Section 7-9-8 ("Designation Of Historic Landmarks and Interior Historic Landmarks") of the Oak Park Village Code to Designate the Exterior of the Building Located at 640-644 Madison Street as an Historic Landmark

Overview

The local landmark designation process is authorized by Section 7-9-8 of the Oak Park Historic Preservation Ordinance and grants authority to the Village Board to designate local historic landmark status. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) can provide recommendations on a building's eligibility for landmark status, but they have no authority over the Village of Oak Park's Local landmark designation process. The subject building is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) individually or as part of a district. Nor is it included in a local historic district.

Recommendation

The Historic Preservation Commission unanimously supports the Local Historic Landmark Designation for 640-644 Madison Street (Hill Motor Sales Company building).

Staff Recommendation

Staff does not support the Local Landmark Designation nomination recommendation because the Village has never landmarked a property without the landowner's consent.

Fiscal Impact

N/A.

Background

Residents Frank Lipo and Frank Heitzman submitted a completed application to designate the building (known as the Hill Motor Sales Company building) located at 640-644 Madison Street as an Oak Park Historic Landmark under the provision of the local ordinance.

At the time of application, this building was owned by Mr. Steve Foley and was formally part of the Foley-Rice car sales operation. Subsequently, Mr. Foley sold the property to Oak Park Madison LLC. Neither current or

former owner has supported local landmark status. The Historic Preservation Commission conducted a preliminary determination of eligibility, held a public hearing and recommended approval of the designation.

The subject building is identified within an area designated for redevelopment through a Redevelopment Agreement (RDA) between Junipiter Realty Company, LLC, Oak Park Madison Street, LLC & 711 Madison Senior Living, LLC and the Village of Oak Park. This RDA which includes multiple properties on either side of Madison Street east of Oak Park Avenue was approved by the Village Board at their December 10, 2018 meeting. The Village RDA authorized use of Madison TIF funds for the acquisition of the 640-644 Madison Street, as well as the right of the Village to acquire the property from the developer under the terms of the RDA if certain timeframe are not met in the redevelopment schedule. If the building at this location is designated a local landmark by the Village Board, the property can be redeveloped, with conditions (the building may not be demolished however if there is a local landmark designation).

The Historic Preservation Ordinance, adopted by the Village Board in 1994, enables the Historic Preservation Commission to recommend, and the Village Board to adopt by Ordinance, local landmarks within the Village. The property (building) must meet one or more of 8 criteria for designation as listed in the ordinance. The ordinance calls for the Commission to hold a public hearing and then forward a recommendation in the form of a Resolution to the Village Board. Upon receipt of the Resolution and nomination report, the Village Board has 30 days in which to designate or reject the nomination by simple majority. Upon approval, the Board shall enact an ordinance designating the landmark.

The building located at 640-644 Madison Street, known historically as the Hill Motor Sales Company, was built in 1924-1927. It is an example of an automobile showroom from the early 20th century. It was designed by prominent local architect Eben E. Roberts and his son Elmer C. Roberts and features details in the Spanish Colonial Revival style including terra cotta ornamentation. The Hill Motor Sales Company is representative of the large auto sales and service industry that occurred along Madison Street from around 1912 through the 1960s, known as Oak Park's "Auto Row." From the early 1920s through the 1950s, Oak Park ranked behind only Chicago's famed Motor Row on S. Michigan Avenue and Rockford as a top destination for buying cars in the greater Chicago area. The Hill Motor Sales Company building remained an automobile showroom until 2007.

The Historic Preservation Commission found that the property meets the following criteria under section 7-9-5 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance "Criteria for Designation of Historic Landmarks and Interior Historic Landmarks":

1. Significance as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic or social development or heritage of the Village of Oak Park, the state, or the United States, in Section 7-9-5.A.1.;
2. Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic or social heritage, or other aspect, of the Village of Oak Park, the State, or the United States, in Section 7-9-5.A.3.;
3. Embodiment of those distinguishing characteristics of significant architectural type, or style, or engineering specimen, in Section 7-9-5.A.5.;
4. Identification as the work of a builder, designer, architect, craftsman, engineer or landscape architect whose individual work is significant in the development of the Village of Oak Park, the State, or the United States, in Section 7-9-5.A.6.;
5. Contains design elements, detail, materials or craftsmanship that make the property or building

structurally or architecturally innovative, rare or unique, in Section 7-9-5.A.7;

6. Representation of an architectural, cultural, economic, historic or social theme, style or period, expressed in distinctive areas, districts, places, buildings or structures that may or may not be contiguous, in Section 7-9-5.A.8; and

7. The structure on the Subject Property is at least fifty (50) years old and has sufficient integrity of location, design, materials and workmanship to make it worthy of preservation or restoration, in Section 7-9-5.B.

Staff is sensitive to the findings of the HPC and notes the lack of property owner support for landmark status. This combined with the lack of a local historic district that identifies the importance of Madison Street in Oak Park as a “motor row” and/or a collection of multiple buildings has resulted in the staff’s recommendation to reject the designation of 644 Madison Street as a local landmark.

HISTORY: The Foley Rice Cadillac property located at 644 Madison Street was first identified as a potential Oak Park Historic Landmark in the Madison Street Architectural Survey conducted in 2006 in conjunction with the Madison Street Corridor Plan. It was also identified as potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) at that time. The building was built in 1924 and is significant for its historic association with the Motor Row on Madison, as an example of an early 20th century automobile showroom in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, and for its design by prolific local architects E. E. Roberts and Elmer Roberts. The building was listed on the Landmarks Illinois 2007 Chicagoland Watch List as a potentially threatened historic resource.

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) began discussions on the building at their August 9, 2007 Historic Preservation Commission meeting, which the property owner and the Fenwick Foundation attorney attended. At the time, the Fenwick Foundation had a contract to purchase the property. Fenwick intended to find a retail-oriented developer and retain the parking. They expressed they did not intend to demolish the building. Village Manager Barwin provided direction to the HPC to begin the Landmark designation process for the building in 2007. A Landmark nomination was submitted to the HPC on November 8, 2007. Also on November 8, 2007, the HPC responded to a request from the property owner to delay the designation process in order to facilitate the sale of the building, with the understanding that the HPC would move forward with historic designation on a future date and the existing owners would not undertake any demolition or modifications of the property that the Village would otherwise seek to preserve. The HPC agreed to table its consideration of the Landmark nomination report for a period of 60 days beginning November 8. This moratorium was continued at various intervals (60 days, 180 days, and 1 year) until it expired on September 30, 2018. As of December 20, 2018, a request has not been made to continue it.

In 2010, the HPC held a meeting between the Village staff, HPC, property owner, the realtors for the property, Oak Park Development Corporation and potentially others, to discuss the marketing strategy and available incentives to assist in the sale and re-use of the building. In 2010, Village staff provided details on preservation tax incentives to several prospective buyers. In 2011, an ALDI grocery store was proposed for the site. The ARC reviewed the plans and provided recommendations. ALDI’s proposal retained the full south elevation facing Madison Street and half of the east elevation facing Wesley Avenue. They proposed demolishing the north half of the east wall due to deterioration and planned to rebuild it in brick to match the original height but without any door or window openings. They proposed to demolish the roof, the interior, and the north and west walls, and planned to construct a new, smaller building behind the two remaining facades. In 2012, the

ALDI grocery store withdrew their proposal. From this ALDI redevelopment proposal, it was learned that the interior ramp and auto service design of the structure made retail re-use prohibitive without substantive reconstruction costs to alteration of all but the exterior façade.

Since 2012, there have been no building permits issues to repair or restore existing building conditions.

The subject building is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) individually or as part of a district. Nor is it included in a local historic district. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) can provide recommendations on a building's eligibility to be listed on the NRHP, but they have no authority over our Local landmark designation process. The local landmark designation process is authorized by the Oak Park Village Board pursuant to Section 7-9-8 of the Oak Park Historic Preservation Ordinance. The SHPO was contacted on November 30, 2018, by Oak Park citizen and former Historic Preservation Commission member Frank Heitzman. Heitzman requested a formal review of eligibility for the NRHP. The SHPO reviewed the property and in a December 5, 2018, letter determined that it is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A for commercial history at a local level of significance. The period of significance was identified as 1924 to 1972, beginning with its construction and ending when the last auto dealership left the building. The SHPO stated that the building may also be eligible under Criterion C for architecture but more information would be needed to make that determination.

NOTE: The Historic Preservation Ordinance allows any person to submit a Local Landmark application without owner consent. It is standard practice for village staff to obtain support of the property owner prior to forwarding a landmark nomination to the Historic Preservation Commission. Staff has processed 69 such applications successfully.

Alternatives

Support the Landmark Designation

Do not support the Landmark Designation

Previous Board Action

N/A.

Citizen Advisory Commission Action

After many years of delayed landmark review, on December 28, 2018 the Historic Preservation Commission received a completed application to designate the property at 640-644 Madison Street as an Oak Park Historic Landmark. The Historic Preservation Commission conducted a preliminary determination of eligibility on the completed nomination report on January 10, 2019 which determined that the property met at least one of the criteria for designation contained in the Historic Preservation Ordinance. The Commission held a public hearing on February 14, 2019. Legal Notice of the Public Hearing was published in the Wednesday Journal on January 30, 2019, and hearing notices were mailed to the Village property owners within 250 feet of the site. The Commission approved the nomination as the Findings of Fact and recommended approval of the property as an Oak Park Historic Landmark by the attached Resolution on February 22, 2019 as is mandated in the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

At the hearing, the property owner, the two nominators (presentation attached), and three members of the public gave statements at the landmark hearing on February 14, 2019. The three members of the public were

for, against, and neutral on landmark status. The first stated that she values Oak Park's preservation standards but they seem to primarily apply to houses. She urged preservation of this historic commercial building and noted that there are not many historic or distinctive buildings on this stretch of Madison. The second said the building has been vacant for too long and is not in good shape; the property needs a new use. The final member of the public said she would be in favor of preserving the building in some way but reuse of the property was her primary concern.

Anticipated Future Actions/Commitments

N/A.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Opportunities

Historic Preservation matters are unique to Village government within the corporate limits of Oak Park and therefore, intergovernmental cooperation opportunities do not exist.

Performance Management (MAP) Alignment

A Governance Priority for the Development Customer Services Department is Land Use Regulations.