STAFF BRIEF

This document is the staff’s comparison of the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation, Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures and Districts, the Landmark Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 30, Revised Municipal Code) and other applicable adopted area guidelines as applied to the proposed application. It is intended to provide guidance during the commission’s deliberation of the proposed application. Guidelines are available at www.denvergov.org/preservation

Project: 2020-COA-60
Address: 651 Humboldt St.
Historic Dist/DLM: E. Seventh Ave.
Year structure built: 1919 (Period of Significance: up to and including 1943)
Council District: #10 Chris Hinds
Applicant: Robert and Jeanne Maxwell

LPC Meeting: August 3, 2021
Staff: Abigail Christman

Past LPC Action:
Landmark Preservation Commission Meeting March 3, 2020
Description: Addition
Motion by B Gassman: I move to conditionally approve application #2020-COA-060 for the dormers and rear addition at 651 Humboldt St, as per design guidelines 2.26, 3.2-3.8, and 4.6, character-defining features for the E. Seventh Ave. historic district, presented testimony, submitted documentation and information provided in the staff report with the following conditions: 1. use shingle siding with no more than a 5” reveal and 2. use fiber cement trim with a smooth finish.
Second: J. Johnson

Project Scope Under Review:
Alterations to addition approved by LPC on 3/3/2020. Alterations to plans have been completed without Landmark review or approval, though applicant was told that some proposed alterations would require LPC review. The applicant is requesting approval for the work as completed as well as approval to fully brick in a window opening on the south elevation that has been partially bricked in without approval.

Staff Summary:
651 Humboldt is a single-story, side-gabled cottage constructed in 1919. Robert and Jeanne Maxwell purchased the property in 2019 as an investment to fix up and sell. They met with Landmark staff in May 2019 to discuss their plans for the property and the Landmark process. In June 2019, the Landmark inspector issued a violation after work was begun without Landmark approvals or permits including the demolition of various site features. The applicant then worked with Landmark staff to get approval for site changes, porch alterations, and a new rear garage. Approval for site changes and a new garage (2019-COA-299) was issued on 7/31/2019. Approval for porch work (2019-COA-368) was issued on 9/5/2019.

In September 2019, the applicant submitted plans for a pop top addition. Staff did not find the design as proposed compatible with the building and worked with the applicant to develop a more subordinate addition. The LPC reviewed and approved a revised addition design in March 2020. The initial COA was issued on 3/12/2020. Some errors in the drawings were caught during subsequent permitting reviews. Corrected drawings along with some minor design alterations were submitted to Landmark for review and a revised COA was issued on 7/3/2020.

During fall 2020, the applicant emailed staff about proposed changes to windows and materials and was told that a revised application would need to be submitted and approved before any alterations to the approved plans were
made. In November 2020, the applicant submitted a revised application seeking approval to fill in basement windows and a double window on the south elevation. Staff reviewed the request at a staff meeting. Staff determined that basement window infill could be approved administratively but that changes to first floor window on would have to go to the Commission for review. Staff was concerned with the cumulative impact of changes on what is a fairly simple and modest house. The window proposed to be bricked in was an original historic window and staff felt bricking it in would negatively impact the historic integrity of the building, especially since another first floor window on the opposite side had been approved for infill. Staff informed the applicant that basement windows could be approved administratively but the applicant would need to submit application to LPC. Staff also asked for clarification on changes to the roof shown in the revised plan set. The applicant initially asked to go to the LPC in April 2021 but then withdrew that request. No revised plans addressing staff comments were submitted and no additional COA revisions were issued. Despite numerous reminders from staff that any changes to work required Landmark review, the applicant went ahead filled basement and first floor window without Landmark approval. After Landmark became aware that work had proceeded without approval, a stop work order was issued in June 2021.

Staff has not had an opportunity for an in-person site visit. The staff report is based on photographs and marked up elevations provided by the Landmark inspector. The applicant was asked if they wanted to submit any additional photographs to address staff concerns, but none were submitted. Photos included in the application are the same as submitted with the initial application, taken before work began. The list of changes to the approved plans and the recommended conditions laid out below are based on what was observed in the inspector photos as well as the revised application submitted by the applicant in July 2021. Design review staff will accompany inspector on final inspection to identify any additional issues and to review compliance with any conditions the Commission may set.

Changes from the approved plans:
- Bricked in one side of a double window located on the south elevation
- Bricked in basement windows on the north elevation
- Numerous wall penetrations added
- HVAC moved
- Exterior lighting added
- Doors at rear not constructed according to plan with a gap added between the single door and the sliding door
- Brick infill at windows does not match adjacent brick as specified in approved plans. Additionally, mortar used at basement window infill does not match adjacent mortar
- Roof eaves constructed of OSB (oriented strand board). Oriented strand board (OSB) is a type of engineered wood similar to particle board, formed by adding adhesives and then compressing layers of wood strands. This is not a product generally approved by Landmark for exterior finishes.
- Two steps added at the rear doors. Steps appear to be awkwardly narrow and unclear if meet code.
- Unclear in photos if new windows on additions are recessed in the wall.
- Fiber cement wall shingles are not installed correctly in many locations. Issues include: missing top row which exposes the connection between the panel shingles, broken shingles, gaps between shingles, shingles that are not correctly installed around windows including some shingles with a larger exposure (all shingles to have a 5” exposure), and some sections of shingles vertically aligned rather than staggered.
- Location of trim band on rear wall lower than approved plans
- Added a trim board between the addition and original structure
- Rafter tails on addition not evenly spaced
- Altered dimensions of second story addition
- Pitch of addition roof and clipped gable changed from 8:12 to 6.75:12. Pitch of dormers also drawn differently on revised plans (shown as more shallow) but pitch labeled as the same.
- Change in trim dimensions
- Changes to garage design include a large amount of concrete exposed at the base, a larger fascia, and different garage doors
- Rear yard fencing boxed out with an uneven alignment
- Changed rear side wall from stucco to brick
Additional notes:
- Approved replacement railing at front porch not yet installed
- Roof pitch and ridge height is shown differently on current plans. According to architect, these were drawn incorrectly on original submission.
- Current application shows a 4-light window on north elevation where a 12-light window was previously shown but this reflects an error in the previous application rather than a change. This is an existing window.
- Appears to be error in the roof design on longitudinal section on page A3

Many of the changes to the plans are minor and do not impact the overall design or compatibility with the original structure or district. But staff is concerned with some of the design changes and the quality of the materials and work. Staff recommends approval with conditions to address deviations to approved plans that do not meet Landmark guidelines.

Recommended Conditions:
- Window infilled on south elevation to be returned to original condition.
- Shingles to be installed correctly. Landmark requires quality, durable materials installed according to manufacturer specifications.
- All windows to be recessed in the wall.
- Eaves to be a durable exterior material such as wood or fiber cement.
- Rear steps to meet code.
- All brick infill, including mortar joints, to match adjacent brick.
- All rafter tails on additions to be evenly spaced and similar in spacing to historic rafter tails.

Materials included with applicant materials for reference:
- COAs and stamped plans issued to applicant
- Inspector photos and marked up drawings showing changes and missing information
- Email correspondence with applicant

Excerpted from Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures and Districts, January 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guideline</th>
<th>Meets Guideline?</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Re-point deteriorated masonry mortar joints.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>New mortar at basement level does not match historic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Duplicate original mortar in strength, composition, color and texture.</td>
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<td>b. Duplicate the mortar joints in width and profile.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Avoid using caulk, silicone sealant, or mortar with a high Portland cement content, which will be substantially harder than the original.</td>
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### 2.14 Maintain the pattern and proportion of historic window and door openings.
- a. Preserve the position, number and arrangement of historic windows and doors in a building wall. Modifying a window or door on the rear of a contributing structure may be considered on a façade that is not visible.
- b. Maintain the original size and shape of window and door openings on primary façades.
- e. Avoid enclosing a historic window or door opening or adding a new opening.

| Yes/No | Basement windows have been infilled with brick. These are small openings at ground level, located awkwardly close to the property line. As such, staff finds that bricking them in is an appropriate treatment even though the windows are visible from the street. A double width historic window opening towards the rear on south elevation has been partially enclosed. Staff does not find this to be appropriate since this is an original opening which contained a historic double window. The single-story house is fairly simple in size and scale and staff finds the enclosure of this large window opening to negatively impact the historic integrity of the property, especially since another first floor window has already been bricked in on the opposite side. |

### 2.60 Place mechanical, utility and communications equipment to minimize visual impacts on a historic building.
- a. Install roof-mounted, and other mechanical/HVAC equipment, such as air conditioners and center towers to be inconspicuous when viewed from public streets and public vantage points.
- b. Locate ground-mounted units in an inconspicuous location and sensitively screen if visible from public vantage points.
- d. Incorporate mechanical equipment with matte or non-reflective finishes that blend with building colors if the equipment will be visible from the street or sidewalk.
- e. Group utility lines into one conduit, when feasible.
- f. Install vertical runs of ducts, pipes and cables in closets, service rooms and wall cavities where they will not be visible on the exterior elevations.

| Yes/No | New exterior penetrations have been placed towards the rear of the property to reduce street visibility. However, there are numerous exterior penetrations and there does not appear to have been any effort to group penetrations to reduce their visual impact. |

### 3.2 Design an addition to a historic structure to respect the character-defining features of the historic district, the surrounding historic context, and the original primary structure.
- d. Use materials that are of a similar color, texture, and scale to those in the historic structure and surrounding historic context.
- e. Design windows and doors to be compatible with the primary structure and surrounding historic context, particularly when visible from public vantage points.

| Yes/No | Though the shingles approved for wall cladding are appropriate, in many areas the shingles have not been properly installed, making them incompatible with the historic property and the district. OSB, which is not a durable exterior material, has been used at the eaves. It is unclear if the windows are recessed in the wall to match historic window placements. |
3.7 Design the roof of a new addition to be compatible with the original structure and surrounding historic context.
   a. Use a roof form that is consistent with the original structure’s roof form and those of structures in the surrounding historic context in terms of pitch, orientation, and complexity. An addition with a pitched roof is usually inappropriate for a structure with a flat roof.

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<td>No</td>
<td>Rafter tails appear to be irregularly spaced which is not compatible with the historic structure. The spacing of rafter tails should be regular and similar in width to the historic roof.</td>
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**Recommendation:** Approval with conditions

**Conditions:**

1) Window infilled on south elevation to be returned to original condition.
2) Shingles to be installed correctly. All shingles to have a 5” exposure.
3) All windows to be recessed in the wall.
4) Eaves to be a durable exterior material such as wood or fiber cement.
5) Rear steps to meet code.
6) All brick infill, including mortar joints, to match adjacent brick.
7) All rafter tails on addition to be evenly spaced and similar in spacing to historic rafter tails.

**Basis:** An original window opening which contributes to the character of the building has been infilled (2.14). All materials should be durable and correctly installed in order to respect the original structure and the historic district (3.2).

**Suggested Motion:** I move to CONDITIONALLY APPROVE application #2020-COA-60 for alterations to the previously issued COA for work at 651 Humboldt, as per design guidelines 2.7, 2.14, 2.60, 3.2, and 3.7, character-defining features for the E. Seventh Ave. historic district, presented testimony, submitted documentation and information provided in the staff report with the following conditions:

1) Window infilled on south elevation to be returned to original condition.
2) Shingles to be installed correctly. All shingles to have a 5” exposure.
3) All windows to be recessed in the wall.
4) Eaves to be a durable exterior material such as wood or fiber cement.
5) Rear steps to meet code.
6) All brick infill, including mortar joints, to match adjacent brick.
7) All rafter tails on addition to be evenly spaced and similar in spacing to historic rafter tails.
East Seventh Ave. historic district with 651 Humboldt outlined in red.
1929 Sanborn Map with 651 Humboldt outlined in black