

Re: Neighborhood Meeting about new Carriage House at 540 Portland



Gar Hargens <gar@closearchitects.com>

To Gause, George (CI-StPaul)

Cc WENDY SURPRISE; Simon Jette-Nantel; Missy Thompson; Daniel Chouinard; Ann Schroder And Nick Marcucci; Emilia Mettenbrink; Laura Kindseth; Daniel Lupton; Claire Wahmanholm; Mary Wiley; Patty Voje; **+11 others**

Retention Policy Inbox and Inbox sub-folders (6 months)

Expires 3/21/2021

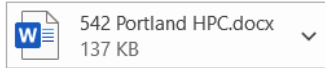
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Tue 9/22/2020 9:56 AM



Think Before You Click: This email originated outside our organization.

Hi Neighbors and City Staff,

Missy and I have been considering how to address this sudden and disturbing proposal in our midst. To help focus my reaction, I considered the HPC staff application of the Guidelines to the project. I've attached my comments below.

During my terms as HPC Commissioner (nine years, three as Chair), we initiated the Design Review meetings as a way to hear informally from neighbors and offer unofficial advice to applicants. We also asked applicants if they had met with neighbors and the neighborhood Assoc. I and the staff also championed the idea that designers should consider the opportunity to express current forms and styles while respecting the historic ones around them. This would seem a perfect opportunity to do that.

We look forward to seeing many of you on the Skype meeting this evening. Please pass this on to any neighbors we've left out.

Gar

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Attached to this email:

542 Portland Ave., 2/10/2020 HPC Staff Report

Comments from neighbors at 548 Portland and others to....:

D. STAFF COMMENTS:

We endorse the need for this project to relate to its Portland Avenue address ...but not necessarily Summit Avenue.

- (a) General Principles: This structure is positioned on its lot as a typical Neighborhood carriage house, behind and subservient to the main house on Portland. It is most near a typical, large carriage house to a property on Summit. However, because of its size and character, it is out of scale with this neighbor, pretending instead to be a Summit house. It in no way meets this guideline.
- (b) Massing and Height: "existing adjacent structures" are garages and a carriage house, barely two stories high. This building has the height and massing of its parent on

Portland. It is not subordinate, although the presenter would like you to believe so. It does not relate to existing adjacent structures; it mimics its house and homes on Summit. It does not meet the Guideline.

- (c) Rhythm and Directional Emphasis: The structure should not try to pretend it has a relationship to Summit. At more than 100' from Summit with required setbacks, it is appropriate for it to mirror garages and carriage houses in the Neighborhood. The design chooses to face Summit, creating an imposing and fake facade. Rather, it should try adapting to the narrow lot by orienting North/South. Currently, the design doesn't make a welcome contribution to either Portland or Summit. It fails this Guideline.
- (d) Material and Details 1-4: The secondary structures in the Neighborhood typically borrow from their main structures but use simpler forms and fewer materials. This design copies extensively from the main house and creates a confusing tension. Siding on the Main House is the cheapest of wood-textured vinyl siding which the Guidelines specifically prohibit.
- (e) Building Elements 1-3: The design of this building is currently a huge missed opportunity. The Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Historic Preservation challenge designers to create buildings that respect the massing, fenestration (windows and doors), and materials of nearby buildings but...to also create buildings "of their time". The Guidelines espouse this so that history can continue to be reflected in the design of our buildings. As a secondary building – rightly a "residential carriage house" - this design could express the simplicity of the past and the present. The repeat of the gambrel roof form would make it the third major structure in the middle of our block to use that Colonial shape and would not be representative of the majority of roofs in the Neighborhood. This is a pale and uninspired interpretation of the Guideline.
- (f) Site 1,3a&b: This building is aggressively/poorly sited without regard to Neighborhood patterns and forms. It should respect views of it from Summit Ave. but that should be not its primary task. Garage doors face Portland, which is not recommended in these Guidelines. As the parking is shown, it will severely impact a dominant spruce tree at the edge of the property.

End