

Correspondences

38

FILE
76-058086

Summit Hill Association

District 16 Planning Council
860 Saint Clair Avenue
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55105
Telephone 651-222-1222
www.summithillassociation.org
info@summithillassociation.org

August 1st, 2016

Dear Board of Zoning Appeals
RE: 210 Victoria Avenue S Variance Request

I am writing in regards to the variance request for 210 Victoria Avenue S. The applicant is proposing to construct a new, two-car garage attached to the front of the existing home. There are two variance requests as part of this proposal. 1) The code requires that garages be set back from the front lot line at least as far as the house; the applicant is requesting a variance from this requirement. 2) A front yard setback of 30 feet is required from the front property line; a setback of 16 feet is proposed for a variance of 16 feet.

This item was heard in front of our Zoning and Land Use Committee on 07.26.2016 and a representative of the applicant was in attendance to present the proposal. There was discussion among the applicants and our committee in attendance. There were also two residents there in opposition to the proposal. The ZLU Committee voted a unanimous 4-0 to deny the request for the variances based on the proposal not meeting the required variance findings.

- *The applicant has established that there are practical difficulties in complying with the provision that the property owner proposed to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the provision. Although there are challenges that exist, a garage is not a necessary structure on the property, and the home was constructed in such a manner, has been purchased in such a manner, and has existed as such since 1909.*
- *The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner. As the property was recently purchased by the landowner, and was purchased with the knowledge that there was not a garage, the request for a variance is a circumstance created by the landowner.*
- *The variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area. Allowing the variance will allow a garage in front of a residence, which is not consistent with the historical character of the surrounding homes in the neighborhood, and will alter the character of the surrounding area.*

It is also noted, that the neighboring property located at 208 Victoria Avenue South made a similar request in November of 2012. That request was recommended for denial by City Staff, as noted in the attached staff recommendation, our Zoning and Land Use Committee, as well as the Board of Zoning Appeals. It would be in direct conflict with those previous three recommendations that we feel these requested variances should not be granted.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

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Sincerely,
Philip Wahlberg
Chair, SHA Zoning and Land Use Committee
Cc. Yaya Diatta
BZA-LIEP staff, city of St. Paul, DSI

FILE

Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)

16-058086

From: Mary Thalhuber <marythalhuber@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, July 29, 2016 2:25 PM
To: Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)
Subject: File No. 16-058086; 210 Victoria Street Garage Variance

Dear Yaya Diatta,

My husband and I are unable to attend the hearing on August 1, 2016. Although we understand not having access to off street parking is a challenge, we oppose granting the variance in this case for several reasons. (1) A front yard garage is not in character with the neighborhood. Making an exception will set a precedent for other requests which will further erode the character of the neighborhood. (2) It is our understanding that the proposed driveway would allow two cars to be parked on the apron which would further add to a cluttered look. (3) We are concerned about light-blocking sight lines in general and for our long-time neighbors.

Sincerely,
Mary and Dennis Thalhuber

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FILE

16-058086

Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)

From: kevin fenelon <kfenelon99@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, July 29, 2016 4:12 PM
To: Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)
Subject: File #: 16-058086 / 210 Victoria Street Garage Variance Request

Dear Mr. Diatta,

Our family has lived at 859 Linwood Avenue for the past 54 years. My wife and I have lived there for the last 21 years. We love the neighborhood.

The proposed front yard garage is directly adjacent to our property and I am opposed to granting the variance for the following reasons:

1. Like most people, we spend a great deal of time in our kitchen. Our window view of the neighborhood allows us to see walkers and cars coming down Victoria and also the trees, front lawns, flowers, etc. in the neighborhood. The side wall of the proposed front yard garage would cut off our view, block the light and create a tunnel like appearance.
2. From our second and third floor windows looking north, our view has always been a front yard with grass, trees and flowers. The proposed garage would have us looking down on a flat garage roof with cars possibly parked in front of the garage.
3. A front yard garage is definitely not in character with the neighborhood. Also, making an exception will set a precedent which could lead to other requests that further degrade the character of the neighborhood.
4. For the past 105 years, the view to the front yard of 210 Victoria has always been of a normal front yard landscape. Historical precedent and preservation of the neighborhood should take priority.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kevin Fenelon

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FILE

16-058086

Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)

From: Lawrence soderholm <lasoderholm@comcast.net>
Sent: Sunday, August 14, 2016 6:33 PM
To: Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)
Cc: Lane, Wendy (CI-StPaul); Benner, Jerome (CI-StPaul); Christopher.b.Carlson@gmail.com; KFelon99@gmail.com; DonHusband@gmail.com
Subject: 210 Victoria St. S. variance (File #16-058086)

8/14/16

Dear Yaya:

I'm writing to let you know that we had an informal meeting this afternoon between the applicant for the front-yard garage variance at 210 Victoria St. S. and the neighbors who spoke against the variance at the BZA hearing on 8/1/16. We just met as a group on the sidewalk in front of the house to discuss the proposed garage layout and the potential problems. The people at the meeting were:

- Applicant Chris Carlson, who has been rehabbing the house and will move in soon
- His recent bride Jessica
- His father, Bruce Carlson, who has experience in the business of home-building and remodeling
- Kevin Fenelon, long-time homeowner on the adjoining corner lot at 859 Linwood
- Larry Soderholm, long-time homeowner at 849 Linwood, which is around the corner—my backyard adjoins the applicant's backyard
- Don Husband, a member of the Summit Hill Association's Zoning and Land Use Committee, whom I invited as a liaison to Summit Hill; he had no authority to speak for the SHA board.

For my part, I am opposed in principle to front yard garages in Summit Hill and other traditional neighborhoods where they are intrusions in the pattern of the neighborhood. Any exceptions should be made with great care. The zoning staff found 310 S. Victoria to have sufficiently unique characteristics to recommend granting the requested variances. I agree that there are very real practical difficulties in providing any off-street parking for this house and that the traffic on Victoria, which is a collector street, makes on-street parking less safe than on the east-west avenues in our neighborhood. I'll go so far as to say that if the BZA grants the requested variances, I would neither be surprised nor think it unreasonable. Although it would be an interruption of the neighborhood pattern, it would make this particular house significantly easier to live in (and would raise it's property value.)

According to the notes I made at the last BZA meeting, the motion to approve--which got 3 votes but not 4--included several conditions regarding:

- Built substantially as shown to complement the house's architecture
- HPC review, if required
- Garage to include side windows (and access door?)
- No deck on top of garage
- Provide landscaping plan
- Indicate drainage plan
- Indicate how trash container will be handled

A3

In my testimony I believe I also commented that:

- Boulevard tree replacement must be arranged with City Forester;
- Curb cut and reconstruction of public sidewalk must be done under permit from Public Works;
- Landscape plan should keep Fenelon's retaining wall intact;
- Fenelon should be consulted about landscaping along the sidewall of the proposed garage facing his house.

At our meeting this afternoon we discussed all of these bulleted items and I think we agreed on these construction details for the proposed project *in the event that the variances are granted by the BZA*. I also told the applicant that I wouldn't expect them to carry out a fancy landscape plan right away. Obviously, a young couple is going to want to put most of their effort into the house itself and the interior work it needs before they spend a lot on the landscape.

This is a summary of what I took away from our meeting this afternoon. I will not be at the BZA meeting on 8/15/16. I am not speaking for Kevin Fenelon, the applicant, or the Summit Hill Association. I am copying them on this email so that they can react to these comments if they wish to do so.

Thank you and the BZA members for your attention to these details of the applicant's proposed garage.

Sincerely,

Larry Soderholm
849 Linwood Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55105
651-293-0793

AA

FILE
16-058086

Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)

From: Kevin Fenelon <kfenelon99@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 15, 2016 7:29 AM
To: Lawrence soderholm
Cc: Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul); Lane, Wendy (CI-StPaul); Benner, Jerome (CI-StPaul); Christopher.b.Carlson@gmail.com; DonHusband@gmail.com
Subject: Re: 210 Victoria St. S. variance (File #16-058086)

Dear Mr. Diatta,

After meeting with the neighbors, I am still opposed to the proposed garage in the front yard of 210 Victoria.

If 210 Victoria is approved, then 208 Victoria would likely follow - significantly altering the look of the neighborhood.

If the variance is approved, However, I do believe that Chris Carlson and his his wife Jessica would build a good quality garage along with proper drainage, walls, etc.

Thank you,

Kevin Fenelon
859 Linwood Avenue

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 14, 2016, at 6:33 PM, Lawrence soderholm <lasoderholm@comcast.net> wrote:

8/14/16

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AS

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Larry Soderholm

849 Linwood Ave.
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651-293-0793

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