



CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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March 11, 2019

CHAIR AND CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSIONERS

City of Long Beach

California

RE: Continued Hearing for 635 Loma Avenue (continued on January 14, 2019)

RECOMMENDATION:

Deny a Certificate of Appropriateness request for the addition of 1,382-square-foot total (387-square-feet to the first story, and 995-square-feet to create a new second story) to an existing one-story, single-family residence in the Belmont Heights Historic District. The existing home is a contributing property within the Belmont Heights Historic District. (District 3)

APPLICANT: Danielle Zunzunegui / Jeff Jeannette
209 Temple Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90803
(Application No. HP18-512)

THE REQUEST

The applicant requests approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness to allow a 387 square-foot addition to the first floor, and a 995-square-foot addition to create a new second floor (1,382-square-feet total); a redesigned front porch; and new rear and side patios to an existing single-story home within the Belmont Heights Historic District and the Single-family Residential Standard Lot (R-1-N) zoning district (Exhibit A - 635 Loma Ave. Alternative Plans).

SUBCOMMITTEE

The subject application and proposal were first heard by the Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) on January 14, 2019. At the time, City staff recommended denial of the initial proposal citing inconsistency with Belmont Heights Historic Guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation. The inconsistencies were due to excessive massing proposed through a second-story addition on a block where the dominant historic character is single-story homes, with few exceptions having second stories – the majority of these exceptions have second stories located in the rear of the property. On January 14, 2019, the CHC Commissioners accepted staff's recommendation and analysis of the proposed project and continued the application date-certain to March 11, 2019 (Exhibit B – 635 Loma Ave. January 14 Staff Report and Exhibits).

Per the request and guidance of the CHC, the applicant met with a CHC-subcommittee to discuss alternative designs and strategies to satisfy the Belmont Heights Historic Guidelines, the Secretary of the Interior Standards, and all Zoning Code regulations. The Subcommittee included two CHC Commissioners, City staff, the applicants, and the architect.

During the sub-committee meeting, the applicants presented various two-story alternatives and sketches that located the proposed addition farther back on the property. Subcommittee members and staff provided general guidance citing the Belmont Heights Guidelines stating, *"The upper story addition should be planned and constructed in a way that does not involve removing, obstructing, or damaging any existing historic features."* In order to demonstrate compliance with the guidelines, CHC commissioners provided general guidance on massing and design qualities that would help the proposed project compliment the general character and context of the block and larger district. The commissioners also requested the applicants provide 3D visualizations and renderings of the proposed massing from a human-level perspective. Additionally, staff advised the applicants to consider alternatives that retain the clipped gables in the roof plan, which are a unique architectural feature of the existing home.

Following the subcommittee meeting, the applicants provided staff with initial 3D renderings on February 21, 2019, and a full set of plans on February 27, 2019. Staff reviewed the proposed changes but determined that the redesign remains inconsistent with the Belmont Heights Historic Guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. As proposed, the alternative design presents a significant deviation from the original design, the surrounding block, and the larger district. Staff informed the applicants the proposed redesign could not be recommended for approval and advised them to consider changes that locate the second-story addition farther back on the property. However, the applicants indicated they wanted to proceed with their date-certain hearing in order to propose the subject propose alternative (Exhibit B – 635 Loma Ave. Alternative Plans).

ANALYSIS: ALTERNATIVE PLANS

The proposed project and redesign requires approval of the CHC because the size of the proposed addition exceeds 250 square-feet, and the addition would add a new second story to the existing one-story structure, visible from the public right-of-way. To be granted approval, the project must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, the City's Zoning Code, the Belmont Heights Historic District Guidelines, and meet the criteria for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Following the February 19 subcommittee, the proposed alternative retains much of the same massing and sizing as the initial design. The first-floor addition (387 square-feet) would be located on the west elevation and would extend 22-feet-4-inches into the rear yard and would align with the outermost wall of the existing residence and maintain a 4-foot side setback from the property line to edge of the eave overhang. Similar to the initial proposal, a new first-floor, 242-square-foot deck and covered porch would extend 12 feet beyond the enclosed first-floor addition into the rear yard. Similarly, the redesign

also includes, a masonry chimney and stairway landing are proposed to project from the house – these architectural projections are compliant with the R-1-N zoning standards. Along the south elevation, the Applicants are proposing new French doors to open to concrete patio, with an overhead pergola, and steps down to grade adjacent to the driveway.

The new second story (995 square-feet) would be set back approximately 30 feet from the front property line, and approximately 18 feet behind the face of the existing front porch. The most significant change in the proposed redesign is the introduction of staggered massing on second floor. A smaller second-story gable would be built along the south edge above the first floor. This massing is 15 feet wide – on the opposite side of the home, the remainder of the second story would be set back an additional 17-feet 7-inches. This design strategy was based on guidance shared in the subcommittee meeting to help minimize the second-story massing, but staff and CHC Commissioners would determine the efficacy of this strategy after reviewing new renderings.

Lastly, the applicants have offered to retain the clipped gables where possible on the first and second floors. The applicants indicated to staff they prefer to have conventional-squared gables, but the applicants are willing to incorporate this architectural feature if directed to do so.

Similar to the original proposal, the new additions will match the materials and design of the primary dwelling. The applicant is proposing horizontal wood siding and trim in a historically appropriate size and “teardrop” profile to be painted in neutral colors to match the character of the original home. Additionally, the applicant is proposing to replace all non-period appropriate windows with all-wood windows.

In order to approve a proposed project within a given historic district, staff is required to make findings of consistency with all applicable regulatory documents and codes, including: the Belmont Heights Historic District Guidelines, Belmont Heights Historic Landmark District Ordinance (C-7802), and the City’s Zoning Code. Following staff review of the proposed redesign, staff determined the proposed redesign and second story addition would be inconsistent with the established regulations as it would be highly visible from the street and pose a significant deviation from the original single-story character of the home, the surrounding block context and the larger historic district. Today, the overall height of the existing primary residence is 19-feet. The proposed second story would increase the ridge mid-point height to 25-feet in height. While 25 feet is the permitted maximum height in the R-1-N Zoning District, the proposed addition significantly alters the original building massing established for the historic property and remains in conflict with the Belmont Heights Historic Landmark District Ordinance sections:

D.2(a): “Additions shall be compatible in materials and design, and shall be subordinate in scale, to the existing building.”

D.2(b): “Important architectural features which define the character of the historic style shall not be removed or obscured. These include roofs and rafter tails, exterior cladding, historic wood sash windows on the facade or sides of the

house, porch supports, original doors, and other original structural and decorative features.”

D.3(a): “New Construction - Construction of new buildings in the Belmont Heights Historic Landmark District shall conform to the bulk, massing, scale, setbacks, height, materials, color and design of the majority of existing historic structures on both sides of the street on the block on which the new building is to be erected.”

Upon review, staff found the scale and context of the proposed redesign remains out-of-scale with adjacent properties in structure height and massing. The properties to the north and south of the subject site, within the Belmont Heights Historic District feature single-family homes of primarily one-story Craftsman-style homes with occasional California Bungalow and Neo-traditional homes. The 23 homes within the 600-block of Loma Avenue were constructed between 1905 and 1936, with 16 of the 23 homes built between 1918 and 1923. Out of the 23 homes on the 600 block, 20 of the homes have single-stories located at the front of the property. Nearly all properties on the west side of the 600-block of Loma Avenue feature one-story primary structures, with only two residential properties to the north having a second story, and these second story structures are located in the rear of the property. On the opposite side of Loma Avenue, five of eleven total residences have second stories, but only two of these properties have a second story on the primary residence. The new second story would be highly visible from the public right-of-way. Despite the inclusion of staggering the second-floor massing, the new second story will disrupt the visual continuity of the street consisting primarily of single-story structures and will not be compatible with the overall character found in the surrounding neighborhood context.

In historic districts, staff is required to make positive findings for all Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. Following staff review, the following negative findings were made:

Standard No. 2: “The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.” Similar to the first proposal, the proposed second-story addition would remove the original roofline of the structure affecting the historic character of the property. The new second story would be setback approximately 30 feet from the front property line but would be highly visible from the public right-of-way (Loma Avenue). The proposed addition to the primary dwelling would add significant massing and height – raising the existing height of 19 feet to 25 feet – and therefore, not be compatible in scale or massing established for the primary residence or the surrounding neighborhood context.

Standard No. 3: “Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.” The addition of new second floor with high visibility from the front right-of-way presents a significant departure from the size and

scale of the original property, resulting in the original bungalow being unrecognizable as a record of its time. Additionally, the majority of this block of Loma Avenue is comprised primarily of single-story craftsman a period homes, and the proposed second-story addition at the front of the subject property would disrupt the visual character of the area.

Standard No. 9: “New work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features...” Up to this point in time, the primary dwelling’s original design and configuration has been largely maintained. The proposed modifications to the primary dwelling would constitute a substantial departure from its existing historic condition. The proposed addition would replace the historic clipped gable roofline established for the property with a simplified cross-gable roofline in order to accommodate the new second story. While cross-gable roofs are commonly found in the historic Craftsman style, the proposed roofline is a departure from the original roofline of the residence.

Standard No. 10: “New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.” The new second story addition would be structurally integrated into the design of the primary dwelling. Therefore, the second story addition would result in a permanent and inseparable modification to the essential form and integrity of the historic one-story Craftsman structure. The structural integration of the addition would not allow for the removal of the proposed addition without impairing or altogether removing the form and integrity of the underlying historic building.

The proposed second story addition does not fit within the context of the historic property. While the addition to the first story does not present conflicts with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, the massing and the visibility of the new second story represents a substantial change to the historic property.

During the subcommittee and redesign process, staff advised that any second story addition should be located at the rear of the property to reduce the overall size and massing; however, the Applicant noted this option would not meet the intent of the property owner to achieve the desire square footage. As proposed, the location, massing, visibility, and amount of architectural changes of the new second story addition does not meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and is not consistent with the Belmont Heights Historic District Design Guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings above, staff determined that the proposed redesign of 635 Loma Avenue does not meet the requirements set forth in the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, and the Belmont Heights Historic District Ordinance. The Guidelines prioritize minimizing second story additions to emphasize compatibility with the historic character of the residence.

Staff does not support the approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness for the addition of 1,382 square-feet (387 square-feet to the first story and 995 square-feet to create a new second story) to an existing one-story, single-family residence. The required findings cannot be made in the affirmative for the proposed improvements, as these improvements are not compatible in overall scale and massing to the architectural style of the existing structure on the property and in the context of the District. Staff recommends denial of the Certificate of Appropriateness.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

In accordance with Section 15301(e), Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), environmental review is not required for construction of small additions to single-family residences.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Public notices were distributed on December 24, 2018. No new correspondence has been received at the time this report was printed.

Respectfully submitted,

CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ, AICP
PLANNING BUREAU MANAGER

ALEJANDRO PLASCENCIA
PRESERVATION PLANNER

GABRIEL BARRERAS, AICP
SR. CONTRACT PLANNER

CK:AP:gb

Attachments: Exhibit A – 635 Loma Ave. Alternative Plans
Exhibit B – 635 Loma Ave. January 14 Staff Report and Exhibits