

HPC Review
for 203 2nd Avenue

HPC2014-09-16-02

Homeowner Eva Polston and architect Bob Reinhardt attended HPC's regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 19 to discuss plans to construct a new residence.

General Description: Eva's home, which had evolved from one of the original "tent cottages," was destroyed by fire in January 2014. A new residence is proposed to be constructed at 203 2nd Avenue.

HPC noted that this represents its first review of a major construction project following changes in HPC review procedures initiated in June of this year, wherein the review process is not tied to an application for the issuance of a building permit. Sadly, this review is necessitated by the loss of one of the Town's original structures in the heart of Town.

Adequacy of the Documents Submitted: The documents submitted were adequate for the HPC's review. They included a house location sketch and roof plan, floor plans, a small massing model and sketches of all four elevations. It should be noted that the elevations labelled "East" and "West" appear to have been incorrectly applied on the elevation sketches. *(In fact, the East elevation looks toward The Circle, and the West Elevation is oriented towards Grove Avenue.)*

A survey showing the footprint of the existing house was brought to the meeting, but a copy of that document was not among the materials left with HPC.

Materials were not specified but were discussed with the homeowner and architect.

General Scope of the Project: A new residence, on a slightly larger footprint than that of the destroyed house, is proposed to be constructed. It was explained that neither the foundation nor the masonry fireplace and chimney of the original structure are deemed salvageable. The destroyed house consisted of a typical 1-1/2 story, 14'3" wide original tent cottage facing 2nd Avenue, with porch facing 2nd Avenue and a 1-story kitchen addition, built at some later date, at the rear.

Proposed is a comparably proportioned 1-1/2 story structure (14'3" x 26') with a similar steeply pitched roof, to face 2nd Avenue, and a 2-story hip-roofed component (kitchen and master bedroom) at the rear, on a slightly larger footprint than that of the destroyed kitchen addition. The intention is to relocate the new residence 10 feet equidistant from the east and west property lines. As the property lines are not parallel (they appear to "flare" towards the rear of the lot), the new construction would be correspondingly designed, i.e., angled, and wider at the back than at the front.

Both a front and a rear porch are included in the plan, as well as a modest balcony at the second level, off the master suite.

There was some discussion of materials considered, but they have not yet been priced, as the design has only just come together. The following, however, are likely choices:

- asphalt shingle roof
- Duradek waterproof membrane for two flat roofs
- What was described as "good quality vinyl siding" (possibly Wolverine Restoration)
- wood-clad or Fibrex windows

Because the front porch is so close to grade, it is planned to use natural stone over concrete for the porch, to avoid rotting issues so prevalent in Washington Grove's wooded environment. Also, the plan contemplates that the front porch would be slightly narrower than the original porch, and the porch roof would be a shed roof, rather than the modified hip roof of the original porch.

Exposed rafters and rafter tails will likely be included on the shed roof similar to the original. The posts would be tapered to recreate the original posts as well.

The architect called attention that the new roof form is similar to the porch roof of the neighboring house at 315 Grove Avenue, where it adjoins the 203 2nd Avenue common property line. It was also explained that the new porch roof form would avoid the awkward juncture of the front gable eave and the porch roof that existed in the original house.

Visibility from public ways: 203 2nd Avenue enjoys a prominent location in the center of Town. The new structure will stand on one side of the 2nd Avenue entrance to the most historic place in Washington Grove – The Circle. The proposed construction will be visible from 2nd Avenue, 1st Avenue, Grove Avenue, Locust Lane, the Circle, Miller Drive and (seasonally) from Acorn Lane.

Contributing structure: The destroyed house (ca. 1880-90s, per HPC's list of contributing and non-contributing structures) was an early cottage built up from a tent platform, and was a contributing structure.

Nearby Contributing Structures: Nearby contributing structures include the residences at 313, 315 and 319 Grove Avenue; 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15 and 17 the Circle; and the Woman's Club at 316 Grove Avenue. The property is but one residence removed from The Circle, and the proposed relocated footprint will bring it yet closer to The Circle.

Compatibility with the existing structure and/or the historic district: HPC has made some recommendations, which follow, but feels the planned construction is generally compatible with the historic district.

In particular, the form of the front portion of the new residence, in both its scale and in its 1-1/2 story configuration with steeply pitched roof and its low-to-the-ground eave line, are a respectful gesture to the house that has been lost to fire. The predominant eave line remains at the first story keeping the overall scale of the house modest. It was noted that the front entrance contemplates double doors, which were generally original to the cottages (though many have been lost through the years, having been replaced by a single entrance door flanked by a pair of sidelights). The rear of the house brings new design features, which will allow for comfortable modern living, but it is also modest in height and in scale. A variety of roof forms and planes are included, add visual interest and serve to break of the mass of the house.

The inclusion of porches is commended, as they reinforce our homes' connection with the natural world, which is an important legacy in Washington Grove. Front porches, in particular, are integral to the fabric of our streetscape, especially in the vicinity of The Circle.

HPC Recommendations:

In discussion with the homeowner and architect, HPC expressed its concern that the west elevation of the 1-1/2 story (front) component is devoid of windows. As one of its general design guidelines, HPC encourages the ample use of windows on all sides of the house, and for this new construction, we urge that consideration be given to the inclusion of even a modest number of small windows on the west elevation.

HPC continued discussing the design plan after the homeowner and architect left the meeting. Members agreed, and regretted, that they had not taken sufficient note during discussion with the homeowner and architect of the large triangular window that surmounts the front porch roof and faces 2nd Avenue.

HPC observed that this window is both taller and wider than the double entrance doors and tends to overpower the porch and the entrance.

HPC would recommend that a more appropriately scaled and traditionally designed window configuration be selected for the important 2nd Avenue elevation. Particularly since an easement will need to be granted in order to (re)built the front porch (which will encroach to some extent on 2nd Avenue), **HPC suggests that the entire 2nd Avenue elevation represent the utmost compatibility in scale and detailing with the historic district.**

Attached to this review is a partial sample gallery of front entrance gable windows in Town cottages, which surmount the porches facing our avenue walkways. These windows were often double-hung and operable (by pulleys when included in homes that remained in a single-level configuration), thus affording a welcome source of ventilation in hot weather.

HPC realizes that this window may have been sized in order to bring as much light as possible into the home. An alternate solution to achieve this goal would be the inclusion of dormer window(s) on the west elevation in the 1-1/2 story, front portion of the home. Dormer windows would bring a new source of western exposure illumination into the main living area, yet maintain privacy; and on the exterior, they would serve to break up the uninterrupted roof plane on the west elevation.

Finally, HPC states its consistent preference for the use of natural materials, for the significant elements of the house.



Emilia A. Styles
for the Historic Preservation Commission



Date: September 30, 2014

cc: Applicant HPC members
HPC Binder Planning Commission
Web site, Bill Saar Mayor Joli McCathran
Town Clerk, Kathy Lehman

Please note that the Historic Preservation Commission acts only in an advisory capacity to both applicants and the Planning Commission. The reviews undertaken are designed to assist homeowners in their projects, to provide input to deliberations of the Planning Commission and, more generally, to contribute to historic preservation in Washington Grove.

Further information regarding the scope, powers, duties, and structure of the Historic Preservation Commission may be found in Article XV of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Washington Grove. Section 5 (a) of Article XV describes the powers and duties of the Historic Preservation Commission in the building permit process. This section reads as follows:

The Commission shall review all applications for building permits filed with the Town Planning Commission which would involve any change to a structure or site visible from any public way for historical accuracy, integrity, or compatibility with the neighborhood and improvements therein. The Commission may recommend to an applicant alternative historical designs, materials and sources for the same which may be more historically compatible. The Commission shall forward its recommendations regarding the same, if any, in an advisory capacity, to the Planning Commission for consideration by the Planning Commission within thirty (30) days from the Commission's receipt of the application from the Planning Commission.

