

Historic Old Northeast Forever

Support@HistoricOldNortheastForever.org

August 21, 2018

Honorable City Councillors

Charlie Gerdes, Brandi Gabbard, Ed Montanari, Darden Rice
Steve Kornell, Gina Driscoll, Lisa Wheeler-Brown, Amy Foster
St. Petersburg, FL

Re: Appeal of New Construction in 18th Avenue NE Historic District (by council@stpete.org)

Dear Council Members:

Members of the Historic Old Northeast Forever, an association of concerned residents and homeowners, have consistently voiced their concerns about what has been happening to the Old Northeast and to St. Petersburg at large. To date, although the Council and City agencies like the Community Planning and Preservation Commission have initially rejected projects like the Bezu project and the proposed new home in the 18th Avenue NE Historic District, in each such case, the end result is the ultimate approval of those projects with plan or design changes that do not begin to address the concerns and objections of the residents to the development.

With respect to the proposed new home at 736 18th Avenue NE, the CPPC approved a modified design that addressed none of the actual objections that led to the initial, unanimous rejection. It seems that the CPPC thought that more than one denial, regardless of the merits of the revised application, would lead to a lawsuit by the owner/developer of the property. Needless to say, this is hardly a supportable rationale for decision making.

We continue to believe that this is a hugely significant issue, one that will impact all further decisions affecting local historic districts. For that reason, we ask the Council to give this decision particularly serious consideration – and to overturn the CPPC's decision. We believe that, by reversing the CPPC's decision, the Council will actually provide the CPPC with the direction and standards it needs to more objectively address these issues in the future.

As residents and homeowners of St. Petersburg, this is simply the most recent in a series of what we consider to be a disastrous trend – the incremental destruction of what makes St. Petersburg a great American city. This trend has already destroyed great American cities and will do so here without Council action. As residents, homeowners and taxpayers, we need to know that our voices have at least as much weight as those of the few developers who profit greatly from St. Petersburg's decline into a city catering only to the wealthy but devoid of diversity, variety and vitality.

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A copy of our opposition to the application when it was before the CPPC is attached. The Historic Old Northeast Forever continues to oppose the construction of a nonconforming, massive concrete structure where an authentic historic house now stands. We hope that you will agree that the time to stop this destructive trend undermining the charm and character of St. Petersburg starts now, with the Council's rejection of the proposed project.

Sincerely,

Historic Old Northeast Forever

Rachel Agustines
Paula Albinson
Mary Allen
Ivana and Amra Kux
Arnie Arluke
Nancy Bahl
Sue Blanshan
Mary Anne and Ward Boston
Paul and Barri Boudreaux
Tamera Boudreau
Julia Brazier
Kevin Brennan
Carol Sitarsky Brennan
Elizabeth Burbage
Ryan Burri
Angela and Mike Carley
Richard Carlson
Michael Carnevale
Jewell Christie
Catherine and Britt Cobb
Martha Collins
Ralph Contursi
Fumiko Coppard
Kath Cote
Kim Cromwell
Neverne Covington
Thomas and Dixie Crawford
Geoff Creaghan
Kim Cromwell
Jon Day
Mary Dowd
Tom Dwyer
Laura and Brad Erwin
William Evans
Carol Fontaine
Lisa Freeman
Kenneth Gloger
Lori Goin

Charleen McGrath
Gerald Meaders
Charlotte Meaders
Melissa Greene
Jim and Joanne Gribben
Donna and Edward Guillaume
Catherine Hamel
Laura Harrington
Elise and Jeff Hazrad
Sara Heerens
Janice and Gilbert Henry
Howard and Patricia Hermans
Jeff and Jackie Meister
Rick Miller
Elinor Miranda
Gary and Lynne Mormino
Erin Morris
Marcy and Steve Mortimer
Andrew Muss
Mike Myers
Amy Neeb
Cecelia Messina and Douglas J. O'Dowd
Nancy Ogden
Andrew Orr
Robert and Kristin Osterland
Suzanne Palmer
Karen Pasolli
Margaret Phares
Gordon Powers
Shirley Rigo
MJ and Jerry Robinson
Amy and Doug Robison
Lauren Rolfe
Alyson Rome
Brooke and Todd Rosenberg
Phyllis Scheidt
Dee Sheppard
William Sinclair

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Pete and Gina Gorrell
Matt and May Grecsek
Ron Hosler
Catherine Landstra
Kim Levell
Robyn Johnson Lyle
Dawn Lynch
Barry and Mary Neal Jones
Jon and Monica Kile
Carol and Burt Kline
Kathleen Kroupa
Kristin Maselli
Roger and Suzanne McClow

Ben and Stephanie Siwinshi
Elizabeth and David Skidmore
Barbara and Tim Spofford
Maureen Stafford
Molly Stagg
Janet Strong
Kathleen Sunseeker
Kent Ulrich
Bridgette Vanderlaan
David Watson
Cheryl and John Welch
Stuart and Claire Wray
Sara Young
Bob Young
Don and Marylee Zink

ATTACHMENT

Historic Old Northeast Forever

Support@HistoricOldNortheastForever.org

May 3, 2018

Community Planning and Preservation Commission
175 5th Street N
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Re: 736 18th Avenue NE

Dear CPPC Members:

We, as homeowners in the Old Northeast who are committed to preserving the historic character and charm of our great neighborhood, write to you once again to voice our strong opposition to the pending application for the construction of a new, non-contributing house in the 18th Avenue NE Historic District.

On March 13, 2018, the CPPC unanimously rejected the prior application. Rather than appeal to the City Council, the owner of the existing historic house at 736 18th Avenue NE, submitted a new application which is not significantly different than the one unanimously rejected. The CPPC should reject this application as well.

This new application reinforces our concern about the inherent difficulty of attempting to replace an existing, contributing home in a designated Historic District, like the existing 1925 Colonial, with new construction, while attempting to maintain the character of that block of historic properties. The new application is almost identical to the initial one and identifies the style of the new construction as “Monterey” style. But, the facade of the proposed structure, does not remotely resembles an historical “Monterey” style. As shown by the attached examples, an authentic “Monterey” style house has two stories, with continuous surrounding porches on both levels, a hip roof and adobe walls.

While as an individual decision, the demolition of this contributing home and its replacement by an obviously non-contributing structure would be regrettable, the much larger issue is the precedent established for future cases. The 700 block of 18th Avenue NE is the first historic district in the Historic Old Northeast and, as neighbors and property owners, we want the CPPC to be acutely aware of the damage that will be inflicted on our neighborhood if this design becomes the basis of all future attempts at redevelopment in historic districts.

As we said in opposition to the initial application, to minimize the damage to this Historic District, any new construction must be as near to the style, mass and scale of the existing home as possible, as that is the very rationale for establishing such a District. The current pseudo “Monterey” style design, even as revised, is completely inconsistent with these factors.

As to mass and scale, the proposed structure takes up almost the entire lot. The applicant proposes a structure that is 150% larger than the existing house – which is not a small house. And, the new application, at a FAR of 0.596, is 150% larger than permitted under the current ordinance. In order to qualify for FAR larger than 0.4, the applicant must be awarded 0.196 in additional FAR. This additional May 3, 2018

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size must necessarily come from “add ons” awarded because, at least in part, the applicant intends to build the new house in a recognized historic style.

Here, the City *required*, as a condition of demolition of the existing contributing house, that the applicant demonstrate that the replacement will be historically accurate and compatible. Therefore, the applicant is not exercising an “option” to obtain approval for a larger house. The applicant *must* satisfy the “historically accuracy” condition *before* it can demolish the existing house. The applicant is not entitled to any reward for doing what it is already required to do.

That this design includes a couple of features of an authentic historic style does not mean that it has any historic authenticity. The applicant has attached a partial second story porch to an otherwise unremarkable, massive cement block house (without a hip roof) and is trying to pass it off as an example of historic architecture. **Simply asserting an entitlement to additional floor space based on a claim that the submitted “design” qualifies for it, does not mean the CPPC must agree – especially given the precedent that this case will establish.**

As a final comment, the interior passage is not counted in the FAR, even though it too adds to the building’s mass, exactly as if it were enclosed. If this floor area is counted, as it should be, the new design violates the FAR limit, even if *all* possible add ons are awarded. **Such a massive structure on the smallest lot in the Historic District cannot be justified either under the current FAR regulations or when considering the size of the “remaining contributing resources” there.**

As taxpayers and residents of the Old Northeast, recent experience has shown that new construction is built, not by owners who intend to live in houses that they design, but by developers who see profits solely in terms of how much they can gain on a dollar per square foot basis. Additional FAR bonus points should only be awarded because the final product is compatible with existing homes in the Historic District -- not because a builder makes minimal design concessions to maximize profits by building as massive a structure as possible.

The decision to permit the demolition of the existing, contributing 90-year old house in the Historic District is extremely disappointing. Its replacement by the proposed structure would be even more tragic. We join HONNA, the residents of the 18th Avenue NE Historic District and the other property owners and residents who oppose this proposal. We love our neighborhood and are devastated by what has been happening to its charm and character over the past few years. **The CPPC has the opportunity to create a precedent that will enhance, rather than further denigrate, the unique and wonderful Old Northeast.**

We ask that the CPPC again reject this application. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Historic Old Northeast Forever