

**Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMITTEE
February 23, 2023 Meeting Minutes
Remote Participation Meeting, 7:30 pm**

A. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Andrew Elders and Lou Garapolo
ABSENT: None
STAFF: Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner

B. AGENDA

Motion by Elders to approve the agenda. Second by Garapolo. Motion approved 2-0.

AYE: Elders and Garapolo

NAY: None

C. MINUTES

Motion by Elders to approve the minutes from November 17, 2022. Second by Garapolo. Motion approved 2-0.

AYE: Elders and Garapolo

NAY: None

D. 228 Forest Ave (Mike Barrett): Discussion of potential porch railing design alteration (Oak Park Landmark; Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Acting Chair Garapolo introduced the project. Planner Trexler provided an overview. She said the applicant previously attended meetings in 2021 but waited on the porch portion to proceed with other elements of the project first.

Chris Bremer, the architect, and Mike Barrett, the homeowner, were present. Mr. Bremer said they are revisiting the porch railing design. They don't find it attractive and don't think it's necessarily historical. It was conjectural. It's a very unusual design that you don't see in Oak Park or on Victorian buildings. He said they want to do a simple 2x2 picket that would address the safety concerns related to young children. Mr. Barrett said he is the homeowner and general contractor. He said the landmark report says the porch was redone and the design is not original. They showed a paper copy rendering to the ARC.

Acting Chair Garapolo asked about the porch skirting and Mr. Bremer said it is solid to keep animals out. Acting Chair Garapolo asked if the railing will be articulated and Mr. Bremer said they are open to recommendations. Mr. Barrett said the rendering is modeled on other homes in the area, on Kenilworth.

Committee member Elders said there is no historical precedent for a solid base and it reads like a poured concrete terrace. He said based on the photos, he does think the circular railing design was there, but they don't have solid proof. He noted potential decorative elements also under the porch gable.

Committee member Elders shared some mid-century photos of the house acquired from a former homeowner and said they could duplicate the historic railing shown on the rear porch. He said the front porch in these photos appears 1920s due to the Tuscan columns. Planner Trexler agreed to share the photos with the applicant. Acting Chair Garapolo asked the applicant if they would be interested in this solution and they agreed.

Committee member Elders recommended applying details under the gable to help balance the design and Acting Chair Garapolo agreed. Committee member Elders said these were prolific architects that designed a lot of nice houses in Chicago but primarily masonry. The Hemingway House is a good example of a similar porch. He cautioned against the modern farmhouse look which is more spare than this house would have been historically. He said on a house like this, the detailing is important.

Mr. Barrett asked about the historic photos and the design of the front porch in those photos. Committee member Elders said the family who provided the photos owned the house from the 1930s-1980s and the front porch railing then was not the original railing but, as a 1920s design, would be considered historic today if they wanted to restore to that. Mr. Barrett indicated he preferred the historic rear porch railing design.

- E. 505 N Ridgeland Ave (Ambrosia Homes):** Discussion of proposed new building at the corner of Ridgeland Ave and Chicago Ave (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Acting Chair Garapolo introduced the project. Planner Trexler gave a summary. Acting Chair Garapolo asked if demolition of the existing building will require a Certificate of Appropriateness and Planner Trexler said it will not as the current building is a non-contributing property within the historic district.

Tim Pomaville, President of Ambrosia Homes, was present. He noted some of their previous projects in the Village, including 261 Washington Blvd and 504 Lyman Ave. He described this project and some of the changes they've made so far, including recessing the fifth floor and

creating a more defined entry on Chicago Ave. He said it's hard to take design cues from the other buildings on the corner, so they looked to the single-family homes when picking the siding. The bottom is a brick similar to Chicago common brick and the upper floors will be Hardie board. The balconies are black metal and the trellises on the top will be cedar. He said they added commercial windows on the first floor to preserve the look of the commercial district.

Acting Chair Garapolo said you wouldn't typically find Chicago common brick on the front elevation, just the sides. Committee member Elders said five floors is too tall and four would be more appropriate. To the east on Chicago Ave, there are two four-story apartment buildings between Harvey and Lombard. They are brick and are good examples. Acting Chair Garapolo showed some photos of historic apartment buildings from the book "Ridgeland Revealed" and noted that they are all brick. He said the proposed building is too tall and he doesn't see how it fits the Guidelines. In scale, massing, and form, it doesn't relate.

Mr. Pomaville asked if the historic four-story buildings have parking inside and Committee member Elders said they weren't designed to, but the first floor is storage. Mr. Pomaville said they're required to provide one-to-one parking and this is where they lose a floor. He said they are building a four-story building on top of parking. He said the first floor is brick, but above that it's frame construction and it's important to keep it frame construction. Committee member Elders said they don't have purview over the methods or interior.

Acting Chair Garapolo asked why they picked this site and Mr. Pomaville said they like Oak Park. He said they haven't bought the land yet and won't unless the PUD is approved. He said they have a track record of building nice buildings in Oak Park. Acting Chair Garapolo said the projects mentioned are zoned higher density. This is not one of those areas and this will change the character of the entire area. He said this review is just advisory, but he would prefer to see milled wood over Hardie board. LP Smartside has also been approved by the Commission.

Committee member Elders mentioned the other historic apartment buildings again and said it would have been one color of brick. He said they don't have purview over color, but the color-blocking adds a discordant note. He recommended a few more details: delineate a roof parapet and use bolder detailing at the corners. Committee member Elders said they don't want to recreate something historic but they want to reduce discord.

Acting Chair Garapolo recommended including a rendering in context or a cross-section to show how it relates along Ridgeland and/or Chicago Ave in scale. Mr. Pomaville agreed.

Committee member Elders asked about the market for luxury apartment buildings. Mr. Pomaville said it's walking distance from the train but is not in a transit district so they have to do one-to-one parking. Acting Chair Garapolo asked about the setbacks and Mr. Pomaville explained. Acting Chair Garapolo asked about the first-floor windows and Mr. Pomaville said they can frost the windows. He said this is heated parking so completely enclosed but there's venting and fans for carbon monoxide. Committee member Elders said he lives in a historic 4-story courtyard apartment building and the first floor is storage; the windows on the first floor are Florentine, which is heavily textured glass but lets some light in. So, there is some precedent for the windows.

Committee member Elders said there is a higher window-to-wall ratio on historic apartment buildings. He recommended elongating the paired openings. He recommended receding the entryway. Mr. Pomaville said the entry came from Wight & Co because of a concern not knowing where the front door is. Acting Chair Garapolo agreed with that concern. Committee member Elders said overall the building is more Madison St than Chicago Ave. There's precedent for the scale, but maybe draw on those historic buildings more than Madison St.

F. Other Business

Committee member Elders said going forward, they should require a rendering showing neighboring buildings. The scale is one of the most salient characteristics. Acting Chair Garapolo said this would be a good requirement. Planner Trexler said she can request this of future applicants.

G. Adjourn

Motion by Elders to adjourn. Second by Garapolo. Motion approved 2-0.

AYE: Elders and Garapolo

NAY: None

Meeting adjourned at 8:40PM.

Minutes prepared by Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner.