

Historic Preservation Commission of Decatur, Alabama

Agenda, November 10, 2022 4:00 pm

Approval of October 13, 2022 Minutes

Expedited COA approvals since the August 2022 Meeting:

- 802 Canal (First Baptist) new roof, new gutters, dormer corner board siding replacement (#29, 47, and 9 for the CoA)
- 802 Canal (First Baptist) replace dormer windows (#11 for the CoA)
- 511 Oak (Wilson & Menke) rear door replacement (#18 for the CoA)
- 219 Cain (Stone) rear deck flooring replacement and awning removal (#16 for the CoA)
- 511 Line (Mullens) front porch flooring replacement and fixing porch support (#9 for the CoA)

CoA #1: (Coleman)

Background: Victorian era house is within the Albany district and is a former duplex, thus the unusual front porch/staircase rhythm. The HPC has reviewed numerous details as the house has moved through a massive rehabilitation. Although the house is Victorian era, the front porch steps (originally concrete, now faced with brick) are likely an early 20th century addition, the original steps would have been wood in construction.

Action Requested: New center metal stair railing with ornate center section.

Decatur's Design Review Standards: 3. Porches 3. Replace Missing or Deteriorated Components in Kind. Where porch columns, railings or other details are deteriorated or missing, new components should duplicate the historic components in design and workmanship. In cases where historic components are completely missing, it is recommended that new components match documented historic conditions based on historical documentation (photographs). If such documentation is not available, components should be chosen that are appropriate to the building and the surrounding neighborhood. The use of wrought iron porch supports ... that do not replicate historic conditions is not appropriate.

Staff Findings: Historically, houses pre 20th century had wood railing, with wood front porch steps. This house later had concrete steps installed (early 20th century) that were later refaced with brick. The use of wood railings would not be appropriate for the masonry. Metal railings (early 20th century) would have been very simple bent pipes. The ornate paneled wrought iron railings are appropriate for Post WWII era modern house porches (Ranch houses, etc.). The most standard response for other design review commissions when faced with this type of

request has been to allow a very simple railing, the minimum amount of metal needed to provide support when using the staircase, that would not draw attention away from the historic house.

CoA #2: 804 Jackson (Rogers)

Background: This Craftsman house is in the Albany district and is on the finishing end of a several year rehabilitation.

Action Requested: Two new metal stair railings.

Decatur's Design Review Standards: 3. Porches 3. Replace Missing or Deteriorated Components in Kind. Where porch columns, railings or other details are deteriorated or missing, new components should duplicate the historic components in design and workmanship. In cases where historic components are completely missing, it is recommended that new components match documented historic conditions based on historical documentation (photographs). If such documentation is not available, components should be chosen that are appropriate to the building and the surrounding neighborhood. The use of wrought iron porch supports ... that do not replicate historic conditions is not appropriate.

Staff Findings: Craftsman era houses with masonry stairs (like this one) historically had either no railing, or simple bent metal pipe railings. The ornate paneled wrought iron railings are appropriate for Post WWII era porches (Ranch houses, etc.). The most standard response for other design review commissions when faced with this type of request has been to allow a very simple railing, the minimum amount of metal needed to provide support when using the staircase, that would not draw attention away from the historic house.

CoA #3: 436 Sherman (Drewery)

Background: Rear patio and fencing work occurred on the property without a CoA earlier in the year. Applicant is working on bringing the fence into compliance after hearing with the HPC earlier this year.

Action Requested: Retroactive CoA for a new rear patio.

Decatur's Design Review Standards: There are no standards for rear porches/patio that are not visible from the front or main side elevations. This project is not visible from the street.

Staff Findings: The commission has historically approved patios when not visible from the street, and the design does not damage historic fabric. This patio cannot be seen from the street, nor was the historic home damaged to create the patio.

Informal Review #1 808 Gordon (Barnett)

Background: 808 Gordon has new owners and they would like an informal review of a proposed driveway, to insure the final packet is in keeping with HPC standards. The owners and their representative met with the commission last month for an introductory discussion.

Action Requested: This visit is to refine concepts discussed last month. This is an informal discussion about what the applicant is requesting and what the HPC would like to see for a successful vote at a future meeting. This is not a formal review, no vote will be taken.

Decatur's Design Review Standards: 11. Landscaping 2. Parking: Parking areas should be located at secondary elevations wherever possible. Parking lots and driveways should be screened by fencing or shrubbery to separate them from the streets and adjacent structures.

Staff Findings:

The commission met with the applicant last month and expressed concern over possible precedent with allowing the driveway, its visibility from the street, and what was viewed as essentially as parking pad in front of the house. Some commissioners indicated the property owner should park in front of the house, on the street.

Staff made a site visit to Gordon, Gordon is considered a major street, with a double yellow line, and as such is different than most of the streets in the district. If a car is parked in front of the house, traffic on the same side **must cross the yellow line** in order to move around the parked car. Parking on the street does not appear to be a viable option for daily parking on Gordon due to the relatively narrow width of the street, the double yellow line, and the danger posed to vehicular traffic with a car constantly parking on the street.

The applicant has presented a more refined design:

- Parking area starts beyond the front corner of the house

- Significant landscape screening in front of the parking area, on every side

- The addition of a large tree

Informal Review #2 217 Cain (Underwood)

Background: There was a one story Craftsman house on this lot until an in-line storm in caused a tree on a neighboring lot to fall and completely destroy the house at this location during the in-lines storms of 2018.

Action Requested: This is an informal discussion about what the applicant is requesting and what the HPC would like to see for a successful vote at a future meeting. This is not a formal review, no vote will be taken.

Decatur's Design Review Standards: A full copy of the new construction policy and recommendations are in the commission packet this month.

Staff Findings:

House on one side of the site is a one story Craftsman, house on other side is a two story Four-Square. Both have a similar setback from the main lot.

General: this data has not been submitted to the commission yet. It would need to be part of a full CoA packet.

Height: The height of the proposed infill appears to meet the standards.

Proportion: The proportions of width to height vary on this street, but the proposed infill has a similar proportion to period homes in the district.

Rhythm: The rhythm is similar with one notable difference, the number of porch supports in ratio to the porch width. 4 porch supports instead of the six shown on the drawing would be more in keeping with the neighborhood. (See photo of prior house on site, with 4 porch supports.)

Setbacks: A site plan needs to be submitted showing set backs for final review.

Design: In general the design appears to be architecturally compatible. The only incongruent elements are the proposed 2 over 2 windows (1 over 1 is more standardized in the district) and the porch railing. The front door as shown in the plans has a design that is "modern farmhouse" in styling. A single glass pane with no dividers and a smaller proportion of glass in the door or a multi-light French door would follow the design of neighboring properties. Plan is unclear if a porch railing will be installed or not (railing is a requirement if the porch is more than 30" off the ground, but that does not appear to be the case with this submittal.)

Materials: Material list has not been provided yet. Smooth Hardie plank or wood siding would be appropriate for this house based on the standards.

Roofs: The roof appears to be consistent with Craftsman houses in the neighboring lots. Staff defers to the commission architect to determine appropriate roof pitches.

Porches: The building has a full width front porch. The detailing on the porch in terms of the number of porch supports and the porch railing may need adjustments based on the standards, but those are minor details that are easily addressed.

Staff recommends the following items for a full review, and recommends discussion at this meeting with the applicant to ensure they understand what would be appropriate and expected with a submittal on these items:

Site plan
Materials list (siding, roofing, windows, doors)
Landscaping plan

Staff Updates:

106 Review

South Crestford (near St. Paul's Lutheran on Runnymede)

CoA/Compliance Updates

Court dates set:

411 Walnut: (Kennedy) Part of wall removed, not in compliance. Court date set November 30th, 8:30 am

436 Sherman (Drewery) Court date set for December 7th, 8:30 am

217 Church: (Dickey) was on hold until June 30, 2022, deadline to comply has passed. New court date December 15, 9:30 am

504 Walnut (Hereford)

Summons requested, still waiting to be served, request sent summons issued June 13th

Current Grants

ETF Grants

Girl Scout House (Princess & Carnegie)

Sykes Cemetery for research and programing

CLG Grant

Updated Design Review Guidelines

Future Grants

NPS (National Park Service)

African American and women's context statement

Follow-up from Commission Training

Pre-Meeting
Alternates