Roll Call Number

Agenda Item Number
33A

Date January 12, 2026

RESOLUTION **AFFIRMING** THE DECISION OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION TO GRANT AN APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 1917 CENTER STREET

WHEREAS, on November 5, 2025, the Historic Preservation Commission granted an Application from Colbert Properties for a Certificate of Appropriateness subject to conditions for the property located at 1917 Center Street in the Sherman Hill Historic Neighborhood District (Case Number CAHP-2025-000046). The Commission's decision allows for the construction of a new single-family home and garage, subject to the following conditions:

1. Windows or another architectural treatment that provides visual interest shall be added to the rear wall of the garage.
2. The west patio wall shall be lowered to a height that is typical of a standard privacy fence.
3. The visual characteristics of the west patio wall shall be adjusted so there is contract from the house and garage walls to provide clear visual separation between them. This might by accomplished by changes in color, texture, or other techniques.
4. Review and approval of the final design by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator. The design shall be emailed to the Historic Preservation Commission members for comment prior to approval.
5. Review and approval of the finalized window products by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
6. All construction shall be in accordance with all Building and Fire Codes, with issuance of any necessary permit by the City's Permit and Development Center.

WHEREAS, Noah Brinkmeyer, the owner of an adjacent property located at 1921 Cener Street, has appealed the Commission's decision to the City Council pursuant to Section 15.459(3) of the Iowa Code and Section 58-31(f) of the Des Moines Municipal Code. He seeks to have the decision reversed or remanded for reconsideration; and

WHEREAS, on December 22, 2025, by Roll Call No. 25-1680, it was duly resolved by the City Council that the appeal be set down for hearing on January 12, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. in Council Chambers; and

WHEREAS, due notice of the hearing was published in the Des Moines Register on December 31, 2025 and due notice was provided to the appellant and applicant; and

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WHEREAS, in accordance with the notice, those interested in the issuance of the Certificate of Appropriateness, both for and against, have been given an opportunity to be heard with respect thereto and have presented their views to the City Council; and

WHEREAS, Section 15.459(3) of the Iowa Code and Section 58-31(f) of the Des Moines Municipal Code provide that on an appeal from action of the Historic Preservation Commission, "the city council shall consider whether the commission has exercised its powers and followed the guidelines established by law and ordinance and whether the commission's action was patently arbitrary or capricious."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Iowa, as follows:

1. The public hearing on the appeal is hereby closed.

2. The Commission has exercised its powers and followed the guidelines established by law and ordinance, following the Architectural Guidelines for New Construction in Des Moines' Historic Districts.

3. The decision of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding the Application for Certificate of Appropriateness for the property located at 1917 Center St. is reasonable, is not patently arbitrary or capricious and should be upheld.

4. The City Council AFFIRMS the Certificate of Appropriateness granted by the Historic Preservation Commission subject to conditions in Case Number CAHP-2025-000046

Roll Call Number

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33A

Date January 12, 2026

Moved by _____ to adopt.

Second by_____.

(Council Communication No. 26-001)

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
/s/ Emily A. Duffy
Emily A. Duffy
Assistant City Attorney

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
BOESEN				
SIMONSON				
VOSS				
BARRON				
WESTERGAARD				
MANDELBAUM				
GATTO				
TOTAL				

MOTION CARRIED APPROVED

_____ Mayor

CERTIFICATE

I, LAURA BAUMGARTNER, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

_____ City Clerk

★ **Roll Call Number**

.....

Agenda Item Number
33B

Date January 12, 2026

RESOLUTION **REVERSING** THE DECISION OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION AND **DENYING** THE APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 1917 CENTER STREET

WHEREAS, on November 5, 2025, the Historic Preservation Commission granted an Application from Colbert Properties for a Certificate of Appropriateness subject to conditions for the property located at 1917 Center Street in the Sherman Hill Historic Neighborhood District (Case Number CAHP-2025-000046). The Commission's decision allows for the construction of a new single-family home and garage, subject to the following conditions:

1. Windows or another architectural treatment that provides visual interest shall be added to the rear wall of the garage.
2. The west patio wall shall be lowered to a height that is typical of a standard privacy fence.
3. The visual characteristics of the west patio wall shall be adjusted so there is contract from the house and garage walls to provide clear visual separation between them. This might by accomplished by changes in color, texture, or other techniques.
4. Review and approval of the final design by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator. The design shall be emailed to the Historic Preservation Commission members for comment prior to approval.
5. Review and approval of the finalized window products by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
6. All construction shall be in accordance with all Building and Fire Codes, with issuance of any necessary permit by the City's Permit and Development Center.

WHEREAS, Noah Brinkmeyer, the owner of an adjacent property located at 1921 Cener Street, has appealed the Commission's decision to the City Council pursuant to Section 15.459(3) of the Iowa Code and Section 58-31(f) of the Des Moines Municipal Code. He seeks to have the decision reversed or remanded for reconsideration; and

WHEREAS, on December 22, 2025, by Roll Call No. 25-1680, it was duly resolved by the City Council that the appeal be set down for hearing on January 12, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. in Council Chambers; and

WHEREAS, due notice of the hearing was published in the Des Moines Register on December 31, 2025 and due notice was provided to the appellant and applicant; and

WHEREAS, Section 15.459(3) of the Iowa Code and Section 58-31(f) of the Des Moines Municipal Code provide that on an appeal from action of the Historic Preservation Commission, "the city council shall consider whether the commission has exercised its powers and followed the

Roll Call Number

.....

Agenda Item Number
33B

Date January 12, 2026

guidelines established by law and ordinance and whether the commission's action was patently arbitrary or capricious."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Iowa, as follows:

1. The public hearing on the appeal is hereby closed.

2. The Commission did not fully exercise its powers or follow the guidelines established by law and ordinance, and the Commission's decision on the Application was patently arbitrary and capricious because _____ _____ _____

3. The City Council hereby REVERSES the decision of the Historic Preservation Commission and hereby DENIES the Application.

Moved by _____ to adopt. Second by _____

(Council Communication No. 26-001)

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
/s/ Emily A. Duffy
Emily A. Duffy
Assistant City Attorney

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
BOESEN				
SIMONSON				
VOSS				
BARRON				
WESTERGAARD				
MANDELBAUM				
GATTO				
TOTAL				

MOTION CARRIED APPROVED

_____ Mayor

CERTIFICATE

I, LAURA BAUMGARTNER, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

_____ City Clerk

December 1 2025

Jason Van Essen

City of Des Moines

Development Services Department

JMVanEssen@dmgov.org

Councilmembers Josh Mandelbaum, Mike Simonson & Carl Voss

Des Moines City Council

JoshMandelbaum@dmgov.org

CarlVoss@dmgov.org

MikeSimonson@dmgov.org

Re: Appeal of Historic Preservation Commission Decision – 1917 Center Street

Dear Mr. Van Essen and Councilmembers Mandelbaum, Simonson & Voss,

I write to inform you that I have filed an appeal of the Historic Preservation Commission's approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed new construction at 1917 Center Street. I am the immediate adjacent property owner at 1921 Center Street and therefore directly impacted by this decision. This letter accompanies my formal Notice of Appeal, submitted pursuant to Iowa Code § 15.459 and Des Moines Municipal Code § 58-31(f).

My appeal is based on the fact that the HPC's decision was arbitrary, capricious, and inconsistent with the governing standards. During the hearing, multiple residents—including myself—presented detailed, guideline-based evidence demonstrating that the proposed design does not meet the City's published Historic District design guidelines or established precedent. This included conflicts regarding roof form, massing, porch pattern, window rhythm, materials, and sustainability considerations such as quantifiable solar interference affecting my property.

Despite this substantial evidence, the Commission did not address or apply the required criteria of Des Moines Municipal Code § 58-31(c). Instead, the deliberations relied heavily on subjective personal impressions, with little reference to the mandatory guidelines or fact-based objections raised by affected neighbors. As a result, the Commission reached an approval without engaging the evidence in the record, and without the analysis required by ordinance—rendering the decision arbitrary and incomplete.

In addition, I respectfully request access to the transcript of the November 5, 2025 HPC meeting, as the official record of the Commission's deliberations is material to my appeal. The

transcript will help demonstrate the absence of guideline-based analysis and the reliance instead on subjective commentary, further supporting my claim that the decision failed to meet the standards set forth in City Code.

My request of the Council is that it either:

1. Review the project on the merits, or

2. Remand the matter back to the HPC for a procedurally sound rehearing in which the standards, guidelines, and evidence presented by adjacent neighbors—including myself—are meaningfully considered.

Thank you for your time, attention, and service to our community. I appreciate your consideration of this appeal and welcome any opportunity to provide further information.

Sincerely,

Noah Brinkmeyer

Owner, 1921 Center Street

Immediate Adjacent Neighbor to the Proposed Project

NOTICE OF APPEAL

Filed with the Office of the City Clerk

City of Des Moines, Iowa

Date: 12/1/2025

To: City Clerk, City of Des Moines

Re: Appeal of Historic Preservation Commission Decision – 1917 Center Street Project

I. Decision Appealed

I, Noah Brinkmeyer, the immediate adjacent property owner at 1921 Center Street, hereby appeal the Historic Preservation Commission's (HPC) decision granting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed new construction at 1917 Center Street.

This decision was made at the HPC meeting on November 5, 2025, and is the action being appealed.

II. Basis for Appeal

This appeal is submitted pursuant to Iowa Code § 15.459 and Des Moines Municipal Code § 58-31(f). The HPC's approval was arbitrary, capricious, and inconsistent with the governing standards, for the following reasons:

1. The HPC failed to consider substantial, guideline-based evidence presented by adjacent neighbors, including myself.

Multiple neighbors—including myself and other directly affected residents—presented clear, factual objections grounded in the City's published Historic District design guidelines, established precedent, and actual historic building data from Sherman Hill.

These objections demonstrated that the proposal failed several mandatory compatibility criteria, including roof form, massing, porch pattern, material palette, elevation rhythm, and sustainability considerations (including documented solar interference).

Despite these guideline-based presentations, HPC deliberations did not address or apply the specific criteria required by City Code § 58-31(c).

Instead, the Commission substituted subjective aesthetic impressions and personal viewpoints that were unrelated to the standards they are bound to apply.

An administrative body acts arbitrarily when it ignores relevant evidence, fails to apply governing standards, or relies solely on personal opinion—all of which occurred here.

2. The HPC's deliberations did not reflect the required consideration of the City's design guidelines, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, or the relationship to exterior features in the neighborhood.

Under Des Moines Municipal Code § 58-31(c), the Commission must evaluate new construction based on:

1. City-approved design guidelines
2. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation
3. The relationship of the proposed new construction to the exterior features of structures in the surrounding area

These required criteria were not substantively discussed.

Instead, after hearing evidence, Commissioners provided comments grounded entirely in subjective taste, without connecting their approval to any of the mandatory standards.

Because these factors were not analyzed on the record, the decision-making process was legally incomplete, rendering the approval arbitrary and capricious.

3. The neighborhood's objections—including mine as the immediately adjacent owner—were not incorporated into the Commission's reasoning.

While substantial evidence was presented regarding:

- guideline noncompliance,
- massing and roof form inconsistencies,
- precedent from past projects, and
- solar access impacts on my property,

the Commission did not respond to, address, or weigh any of the points raised.

The Commission produced no findings explaining why or how the proposed design meets the standards.

A decision without findings is a textbook example of an arbitrary administrative action.

III. Relief Requested

For the reasons listed above, I respectfully request that the Des Moines City Council:

Option A – Review on the Merits

Reverse the HPC's decision and deny the Certificate of Appropriateness.

Option B – Remand

Remand the 1917 Center Street project back to the Historic Preservation Commission for a procedurally sound, standards-based rehearing in which the evidence presented by adjacent neighbors—including myself—is meaningfully considered and addressed.

Respectfully submitted,

Noah Brinkmeyer

Owner, 1921 Center Street

Immediate Adjacent Neighbor to the Proposed Project

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
CITY OF DES MOINES

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

In the Following Matter

This Certificate of Appropriateness is valid for one year from the meeting date

REQUEST FROM:	CASE NUMBER: **CAHP-2025-000046**
COLBERT PROPERTIES	
PROPERTY LOCATION:	MEETING DATE: **NOVEMBER 5, 2025**
1917 CENTER STREET	

This Decision of the Historic Preservation Commission does not constitute approval of any construction. All necessary permits must be obtained before any construction is commenced upon the Property. A Certificate of Occupancy must be obtained before any structure is occupied or re-occupied after a change of use.

SUBJECT OF THE REQUEST:

City Council initiated reconsideration of Certificate of Appropriateness CAHP-2025-000046 regarding the construction of a new house and garage.

FINDING OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION:

Granting the application subject to conditions would be in harmony with the historic character of the neighborhood and would meet the requirements set out in the Historic District Ordinance, the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, and the City of Des Moines' Standard Specifications.

CONDITIONS:

1. Windows or another architectural treatment that provides visual interest shall be added to the rear wall of the garage.
2. The west patio wall shall be lowered to a height that is typical of a standard privacy fence.
3. The visual characteristics of the west patio wall shall be adjusted so there is contrast from the house and garage walls to provide clear visual separation between them. This might be accomplished by changes in color, texture, or other techniques.
4. Review and approval of the final design by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator. The design shall be emailed to the Historic Preservation Commission members for comment prior to approval.
5. Review and approval of the finalized window products by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
6. All construction shall be in accordance with all Building and Fire Codes, with issuance of any necessary permit by the City's Permit and Development Center.

VOTE: A vote of 10-0 was registered as follows:

	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Allison	X			
Barry	X			
Beard	X			
Bergman	X			
Ellsworth	X			
Green	X			
Hellstern	X			
Nelson				X
Schmid	X			
Shaw	X			
Taenzer				X
Waddell	X			

Approved as to form:

Stacey Hanley, AIA, PLA, LEED AP
Urban Designer

Jason Van Essen, AICP
Planning & Urban Design Administrator

A2
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CITY OF DES MOINES HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Wednesday, November 5, 2025

AGENDA ITEM #2	**CAHP-2025-000046**

Applicant: Colbert Properties (owner) represented by Jon Bassett (architect).

Location: 1917 Center Street (Sherman Hill Historic District).

Requested Action: City Council initiated reconsideration of COA CAHP-2025-000046 regarding the construction of a new house and garage.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Case History:** On August 20, 2025, the Commission approved Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) CAHP-2025-000046 subject to the following conditions.

    1. Review and approval of the final design by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
    2. Further study regarding building code compliance of the light well adjacent to the neighboring property.
    3. Metal-clad windows are appropriate for use on this new construction project. Review and approval of the finalized window product by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
    4. All construction shall be in accordance with all Building and Fire Codes, with issuance of any necessary permit by the City's Permit and Development Center.

    The Sherman Hill Association (SHA) appealed the Commission's decision to approve the request to the City Council. They cited concerns regarding limited notification to neighborhood residents prior to the hearing, the project's compatibility with the surrounding historic context, and the participation of a commission member who had prior involvement in the property's sale. On October 20, 2025, the City Council voted to remand the case back to the Commission to allow consideration of additional public comment.

2. **Site Description:** The subject property is vacant and measures 59.72 feet by 100 feet (5,972 square feet). It is located on the north side of Center Street to the east of the 20th Street intersection. The Polk County Assessor webpage indicates that the property contained a house that was demolished in 1995.

3. **Sanborn Map:** The 1901 map shows a 1½-story house on the subject property. The 1920 and 1957 maps show a 2-story house. The primary footprint shown on the latter two maps matches the footprint from 1901. It appears that the house was added onto and not replaced during this timeframe.

4. **COA History:** On September 16, 2020, the Commission conditionally approved COA 20-2021-5.17 allowing relocation of a house from 2915 Brattleboro Avenue to 1917 Center Street. On March 17, 2021, the Commission conditionally approved COA 20-2021-5.23 allowing the construction of a new house, detached garage and site improvements. On August 18, 2021, the Commission conditionally approved COA 20-2021-5.32 allowing the use of Fypon in high-moisture areas, addition of exterior detailing and use of alternate material for wood windows as reviewed and approved by staff. On October 26, 2022, the Commission conditionally approved COA CAHP-2022-000079 allowing the relocation of a house from 2718 University Avenue with construction of a new foundation, plus construction of a new front porch, addition, driveway, patio, and wood and metal fences. None of these proposals came to fruition.

5. **Project Overview:** The applicant is proposing construction of a new house and garage on the vacant lot. This portion of Center Street contains a mix of residential building types and a flat-roof commercial building on the corner. The proposed design is a modern interpretation of the International Style, with elements influenced by Art Deco. The house would be a two-story stucco structure with metal-clad windows. Several outdoor patios and courtyards would be located along the rear and alley sides of the property, serving to break down the scale of the building. Located to the rear of the property would be a 4-car tandem garage, with two single-car garage doors facing the alley.

II. APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. **Architectural Guidelines for Residential New Construction (massing - height, roof form, vertical emphasis):**

   a. The height of new construction should be similar in height to other original buildings of its basic architectural type: pitched roof or brick apartment structure or commercial building with flat roof. Height is the vertical distance from grade to the average height of the highest surface.
   b. New construction should be an appropriate height when it is viewed in relation to other original buildings on the block in which it is built in the neighborhood.
   c. Single-story structures are not permitted in either of Des Moines' historic districts. 1½ story structures with a steeply pitched roof (8:12 or greater) may be permitted in Sherman Hill if the height is similar to that of the other cottages in Sherman Hill and the location in the neighborhood is appropriate.
   d. Roof pitch and roof shape should be the same as that of existing original structures, repeating basic roof forms found in the original neighborhood.
   e. The roof volumes of new construction should be similar to that of buildings of the same basic type within the same historic district.
   f. Low pitched roofs (less than 8:12) are not permitted for new construction in either Owl's Head or Sherman Hill.

g. Wood shingles should be used on new construction with pitched roofs if this is the predominant original roofing material in the neighborhood. Asphalt or fiberglass shingles in a medium to dark color may be an acceptable substitute.
h. Vertical emphasis is a characteristic of the architecture of both historic districts. It should be reinforced by overall building height, vertical windows, doors with transoms, window bays, repeating column bays, and floor-to-floor heights.
i. The floor-to-floor heights of new construction should match the floor-to-floor heights of adjacent historic buildings or other original buildings of its basic style and construction type.
j. Strong horizontal emphasis is **not** appropriate in either the Owl's Head or Sherman Hill historic districts.

Height

The design guidelines recommend that the height of new construction be similar to other original buildings of its basic architectural type. The height of the proposed house would be 23 feet, 8 inches, which is consistent with the surrounding houses on Center Street. Immediately to the west of the subject property is the smallest residence on the street, a one-story cottage that measures approximately 17 feet in height. Three additional houses to the west are two-story residences, each of approximately 23 feet in height. The commercial building on the corner is also two stories and stands 24 feet tall. Across the street is a large residence with a considerable footprint and overall height of approximately 32 feet. In this context, the proposed height falls in the mid-range of the street and appears appropriate.

The finished floor of the proposed house would be set higher on the property to address drainage on the sloped site, creating a front entrance lawn that sits on a plinth defined by site walls. In elevation drawings of the full block, this condition makes the proposed house appear substantially taller than the neighboring cottage. However, the actual building height would be comparable to nearby structures, and the perceived height difference results from the combination of the property's existing grade and the downward slope of Center Street toward the west. In response to this perceived effect, the applicant has attempted to break down the mass on the west side of the house with increased transparency of the site walls and ample landscaping.

Roof Form

The design guidelines recommend that the roof pitch and roof shape repeat basic roof forms of the neighborhood, which the proposed project does. The proposed flat roof form is common in Sherman Hill. Additionally, the roof volume should be similar to other buildings of the same basic type, which the proposed design does appear to match the surrounding context in volume.

Vertical Emphasis

Vertical emphasis is characteristic of the Sherman Hill historic district, and the design guidelines recommend that any new construction exhibit this characteristic and reinforce it with overall building height, vertical windows, doors with transoms, window bays, repeating column bays and floor-to-floor height. They also recommend that a strong horizontal emphasis be avoided. The proposed house meets these recommendations with its two-story height and predominantly vertical window orientation. While the house incorporates some horizonal windows and a landscape wall extending into the alley-side landscape, elements that introduce a degree of horizontal expression, these features help break up the building's mass and reflect the International Style influences of the design. Overall, they enhance the project's visual interest and balance without diminishing its primarily vertical emphasis.

2. **Architectural Guidelines for Residential New Construction (materials – foundations, siding):**

   a. The amount of exposed foundation should be typically 12-18" or greater depending on the other similar original buildings in the neighborhood, compatibility with building style, adjacent buildings and site characteristics.
   b. The exposed portions of new foundations should be faced with brick similar to the original brick typically used in both historic neighborhoods.
   c. Light wells should be constructed of brick or concrete.
   d. Openings in foundation should be similar in size and placement to those on similar type buildings in the neighborhood.
   e. New construction should continue the material palette of the historic buildings in type, size and color.
   f. Masonite and other synthetic sidings may be an acceptable substitute for wooden clapboard siding; however, they should be of high quality, well-detailed and appropriate in size, texture and color.
   g. Other very contemporary and contrasting new materials may also be appropriate when a complementary relationship is established with the surrounding context.
   h. Color selection should be based on architectural design, historic appropriateness and compatibility with other adjacent buildings.

Foundations

Due to the unique design of the proposed structure, the design guidelines around foundations are less directly applicable. The amount of exposed foundation would not read in the same way as on a traditional house in Sherman Hill, as all exposed areas would be clad in stucco, creating a continuous monolithic appearance to grade. Multiple stucco-clad site walls would mitigate the grade changes around the building as well, further reducing visibility of the foundation. A light well is planned on the west side of the building. It would be constructed of stucco-clad concrete, meeting the design guidelines.

Siding

The design guidelines recommend that new construction continue the material palette of the historic buildings in type, size and color. The proposed project does not replicate this approach due to its modern, stylistic nature. However, the guidelines also recommend that other very contemporary or contrasting new materials may also be appropriate when a complementary relationship is established with the surrounding context. The subject property is adjacent to a masonry, flat-roof commercial building located at the corner of Center Street and 19th Street, which contains a contemporary addition located at the back of the building closest to the proposed house. The proposed project's simple, minimalist material palette of stucco and metal-clad windows would allow it to function as a neutral, contemporary addition within a context that contains a variety of building types and styles.

3. Architectural Guidelines for Residential New Construction (site relationships – street rhythm, the front):

a. The spacing between buildings on a block and the size of building fronts should relate to the existing rhythm that is already established on a block face.
b. Larger residential buildings should be visually subdivided and broken down in scale and given a vertical directional emphasis to maintain this rhythm.
c. Horizontal and monotonous facades which break the street rhythm should **not** be used in historic districts.
d. New entry levels should match the height of the entry level of adjacent buildings of its basic construction type unless the site makes this inappropriate.
e. The general historical pattern for the way the fronts of original buildings were designed should be carried to new construction of similar building types.
f. Sherman Hill buildings constructed on corners should typically face the streets running north/south.
g. Front porches and steps, articulation of surface areas, special emphasis at window and door areas, and other decorative features should be used in a simple contemporary version of the neighborhood pattern in order to lend emphasis to the entry and make it visible from down the street.

Street Rhythm

The proposed house meets the design guidelines for street rhythm by maintaining building spacing consistent with the block and aligning with the existing rhythm of street fronts. Additionally, the design guidelines recommend larger residential buildings be visually broken down in scale, which the proposed project achieves effectively on the east side of the building facing the alley through a series of exterior patios, balconies and site walls.

The proposed west façade, which faces the adjacent one-story cottage, is less broken down in scale, with the majority of the two-story mass positioned to that

side of the property. Prior to the August 20th HPC meeting, staff recommended that additional design refinements were needed to further break down the scale of this elevation. Suggested modifications included increasing space for landscaping and introducing greater transparency in the site walls. In response, the applicant shifted the building five (5) feet to the east, resulting in an eight (8)-foot setback from the west property line. This change allows for a landscape buffer that would soften the transition between the new home and the smaller adjacent residence. The applicant also added transparency to the site walls and added a window to the west façade to break up the scale.

The Front

The design guidelines recommend that new entry levels should match the height of the entry level of the adjacent buildings, unless the site makes this inappropriate. Due to the slope of the site and Center Street, the proposed entry level is above that of the closest neighbors and sets above the sidewalk behind several site walls. This raised front entrance condition, with retaining walls adjacent to the sidewalk, is consistent with the character of the block. The adjacent houses to the west have also dealt with the slope of the existing site with raised entries and retaining walls. As such, the proposed design aligns with the block's existing character while accommodating the site's unique grading challenges.

The design guidelines also recommend incorporating simplified contemporary interpretations of decorative features from the neighborhood to articulate the front entrance. The proposed design adequately identifies the front entrance through the design language of the chosen architectural style and does not need additional decorative features.

4. **Architectural Guidelines for Residential New Construction (compositional elements – porches and decks, garages, details):**

   a. New buildings should have front porches if this is the historic pattern in the neighborhood.
   b. New porches should have proportions and materials similar to original porches in the neighborhood.
   c. Decks and other semi-private outdoor areas should be located at the back and screened from public view.
   d. Insubstantial vertical supports such as undetailed 4"x4" posts or decorative wrought iron are **not** permitted.
   e. Porch posts and columns should have the support visually expressed below the porch with lattice or skirting infill between supports.
   f. Porches should have a connection to the interior by the use of windows and doors.
   g. Double garages should have two single doors rather than one double-wide door.

h. Garages which are part of new construction should be located in a position relative to the main building which is the same as other original garages and outbuildings in the historic district.
i. Garages built into new residential structures should **not** visually dominate the front of the building and should **not** be set further toward the street than the primary elevation.
j. The windows of new construction should repeat the rhythm and the size and shape of window openings found in the walls of similar historic buildings.
k. Horizontal sliding windows and awning windows are **not** permitted in Des Moines' historic districts because of their horizontal proportion.
l. Large areas of solid blank wall should **not** be created on any highly visible elevations in historic districts.
m. Window trim elements should be used in a manner similar to the original buildings in the neighborhood or in a simplified contemporary version of this.

Porches and Decks

The design guidelines recommend that decks and other semi-private outdoor areas be located at the back and screened from public view. The proposed project meets this recommendation by placing all exterior patios and courtyards at the rear or alley side of the property and proposes to screen these spaces with stucco-clad site walls and landscaping.

Garages

While the proposed garage is large for the site at a four-car capacity, it would be primarily concealed from view and designed to minimize its apparent scale. The garage would be configured in a tandem layout so that the façade facing the alley presents as a two-car garage. Consistent with the design guidelines, the double garage utilizes two (2) single garage doors. Additionally, the garage's scale would be similar to that of the adjacent alley-facing garage to the north, though that structure predates the property's inclusion in the local historic district in 2012. The garage does not visually dominate the front of the building and would not set further toward the street than the primary elevation. The majority of its mass would be hidden behind the proposed house and site walls, making it appear like a typical two-car garage instead of a tandem four-car garage.

Details

The design guidelines recommend that new construction repeat the rhythm and size and shape of windows and walls found in the historic district, and that horizontal windows are not permitted due to their horizontal proportion. Given the unique architectural style of the proposed house, strictly repeating these design patterns would not be appropriate. Several of the proposed windows have more horizontal proportions, which are consistent with the architectural style of the proposed project. Metal-clad windows are proposed, which is appropriate for a new construction International Style house.

5. Architectural Guidelines for Residential New Construction (general statements):

The Architectural Guidelines for New Construction in Des Moines's Historic Districts include the following statements:

- The guidelines are developed to encourage new construction in historic districts – new construction which participates in the overall historic neighborhood pattern and at the same time develops a genuine character of its own.

- It is recognized that infill construction can be compatible with a historic context by establishing either a relationship based on contrast or one based on similarity. Either approach requires very careful study of the historic district and those visual characteristics that give it integrity and National Register status and following that, the establishment of a complementary relationship based on those characteristics.

- Sherman Hill, however, developed with greater diversity of land use and building type, and has suffered some demolition and intrusive new construction. Here, because of the diversity of original buildings, new compatible in-fill based on relationship of either contrast or similarity could be successful.

- The successful project based on a relationship of contrast is a contemporary solution requiring a very skilled architect. These guidelines are not meant to restrict this type of design solution and for this reason the Historic District Commission will continue to review all proposals on a case-by-case basis.

The proposed design demonstrates compatibility with the Sherman Hill Historic District with its height and overall scale staying consistent with the context of the area it is located in, and by aligning with the established street rhythm. The project reinforces the district's characteristic vertical emphasis through its window proportions and building height, while its flat roof form reflects patterns also present in nearby commercial and residential structures. The use of smooth stucco and metal-clad windows provides a simple, contemporary material palette that complements the surrounding context and relates to the nearby modern era structures.

While the International Style is not a predominate residential style in Sherman Hill, there is an International Style stucco-clad apartment building on 19th Street in Sherman Hill and other examples throughout Des Moines' residential neighborhoods. Sherman Hill contains a diverse range of architectural styles as noted in the Architectural Guidelines for New Construction. This provides a fitting context for design solutions such as the one proposed.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness subject to the following conditions:

1. Review and approval of the final design by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.

2. Review and approval of the finalized window product by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.

3. All construction shall be in accordance with all Building and Fire Codes, with issuance of any necessary permit by the City's Permit and Development Center.

HPC PARTICIPANTS: Tiffany Allison, Patricia Barry, John Beard, Ryan Bergman, Ryan Ellsworth, Martha Green, Kathy Hellstern, Ann Schmid, Evan Shaw, and Timothy Waddell.

HPC ABSENT: Chad Nelson, York A. Taenzer

STAFF PARTICIPANTS: Jacob Couppee, Jason Van Essen, and Stacey Hanley.

ITEM 2 DISCUSSION SUMMARY

City Council initiated reconsideration of COA CAHP-2025-000046 to allow additional public comment regarding the request from Colbert Properties (owner) represented by Jon Bassett (architect) to construct a new house and garage at 1917 Center Street in the Sherman Hill Local Historic District.

STAFF REPORT TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Case History:** On August 20, 2025, the Commission approved Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) CAHP-2025-000046 subject to the following conditions.

    1. Review and approval of the final design by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
    2. Further study regarding building code compliance of the light well adjacent to the neighboring property.
    3. Metal-clad windows are appropriate for use on this new construction project. Review and approval of the finalized window product by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
    4. All construction shall be in accordance with all Building and Fire Codes, with issuance of any necessary permit by the City's Permit and Development Center.

    The Sherman Hill Association (SHA) appealed the Commission's decision to approve the request to the City Council. They cited concerns regarding limited notification to neighborhood residents prior to the hearing, the project's compatibility with the surrounding historic context, and the participation of a commission member who had prior involvement in the property's sale. On October 20, 2025, the City Council voted to remand the case back to the Commission to allow consideration of additional public comment.

2. **Site Description:** The subject property is vacant and measures 59.72 feet by 100 feet (5,972 square feet). It is located on the north side of Center Street to the east of the 20th Street intersection. The Polk County Assessor webpage indicates that the property contained a house that was demolished in 1995.

3. **Sanborn Map:** The 1901 map shows a 1½-story house on the subject property. The 1920 and 1957 maps show a 2-story house. The primary footprint shown on the latter two maps matches the footprint from 1901. It appears that the house was added onto and not replaced during this timeframe.

4. **COA History:** On September 16, 2020, the Commission conditionally approved COA 20-2021-5.17 allowing relocation of a house from 2915 Brattleboro Avenue to 1917 Center Street. On March 17, 2021, the Commission conditionally approved COA 20-2021-5.23 allowing the construction of a new house, detached garage and site improvements. On August 18, 2021, the Commission conditionally approved COA 20-2021-5.32 allowing the use of Fypon in high-moisture areas, addition of exterior detailing and use of alternate material for wood windows as reviewed and approved by staff. On October 26, 2022, the Commission conditionally approved COA CAHP-2022-000079 allowing the relocation of a house from 2718 University Avenue with construction of a new foundation, plus construction of a new front porch, addition, driveway, patio, and wood and metal fences. None of these proposals came to fruition.

5. **Project Overview:** The applicant is proposing construction of a new house and garage on the vacant lot. This portion of Center Street contains a mix of residential building types and a flat-roof commercial building on the corner. The proposed design is a modern interpretation of the International Style, with elements influenced by Art Deco. The house would be a two-story stucco structure with metal-clad windows. Several outdoor patios and courtyards would be located along the rear and alley sides of the property, serving to break down the scale of the building. Located to the rear of the property would be a 4-car tandem garage, with two single-car garage doors facing the alley.

II. APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. **Architectural Guidelines for Residential New Construction (massing - height, roof form, vertical emphasis):**

   a. The height of new construction should be similar in height to other original buildings of its basic architectural type: pitched roof or brick apartment structure or commercial building with flat roof. Height is the vertical distance from grade to the average height of the highest surface.
   b. New construction should be an appropriate height when it is viewed in relation to other original buildings on the block in which it is built in the neighborhood.
   c. Single-story structures are not permitted in either of Des Moines' historic districts. 1½ story structures with a steeply pitched roof (8:12 or greater) may be permitted
   in Sherman Hill if the height is similar to that of the other cottages in Sherman Hill and the location in the neighborhood is appropriate.
   d. Roof pitch and roof shape should be the same as that of existing original structures, repeating basic roof forms found in the original neighborhood.
   e. The roof volumes of new construction should be similar to that of buildings of the same basic type within the same historic district.

f. Low pitched roofs (less than 8:12) are not permitted for new construction in either Owl's Head or Sherman Hill.
g. Wood shingles should be used on new construction with pitched roofs if this is the predominant original roofing material in the neighborhood. Asphalt or fiberglass shingles in a medium to dark color may be an acceptable substitute.
h. Vertical emphasis is a characteristic of the architecture of both historic districts. It should be reinforced by overall building height, vertical windows, doors with transoms, window bays, repeating column bays, and floor-to-floor heights.
i. The floor-to-floor heights of new construction should match the floor-to-floor heights of adjacent historic buildings or other original buildings of its basic style and construction type.
j. Strong horizontal emphasis is **not** appropriate in either the Owl's Head or Sherman Hill historic districts.

Height

The design guidelines recommend that the height of new construction be similar to other original buildings of its basic architectural type. The height of the proposed house would be 23 feet, 8 inches, which is consistent with the surrounding houses on Center Street. Immediately to the west of the subject property is the smallest residence on the street, a one-story cottage that measures approximately 17 feet in height. Three additional houses to the west are two-story residences, each of approximately 23 feet in height. The commercial building on the corner is also two stories and stands 24 feet tall. Across the street is a large residence with a considerable footprint and overall height of approximately 32 feet. In this context, the proposed height falls in the mid-range of the street and appears appropriate.

The finished floor of the proposed house would be set higher on the property to address drainage on the sloped site, creating a front entrance lawn that sits on a plinth defined by site walls. In elevation drawings of the full block, this condition makes the proposed house appear substantially taller than the neighboring cottage. However, the actual building height would be comparable to nearby structures, and the perceived height difference results from the combination of the property's existing grade and the downward slope of Center Street toward the west. In response to this perceived effect, the applicant has attempted to break down the mass on the west side of the house with increased transparency of the site walls and ample landscaping.

Roof Form

The design guidelines recommend that the roof pitch and roof shape repeat basic roof forms of the neighborhood, which the proposed project does. The proposed flat roof form is common in Sherman Hill. Additionally, the roof volume should be similar to other buildings of the same basic type, which the proposed design does appear to match the surrounding context in volume.

Vertical Emphasis

Vertical emphasis is characteristic of the Sherman Hill historic district, and the design guidelines recommend that any new construction exhibit this characteristic and reinforce it with overall building height, vertical windows, doors with transoms, window bays, repeating column bays and floor-to-floor height. They also recommend that a strong horizontal emphasis be avoided. The proposed house meets these recommendations with its two-story height and predominantly vertical window orientation. While the house incorporates some horizonal windows and a landscape wall extending into the alley-side landscape, elements that introduce a degree of horizontal expression, these features help break up the building's mass and reflect the International Style influences of the design. Overall, they enhance the project's visual interest and balance without diminishing its primarily vertical emphasis.

2. Architectural Guidelines for Residential New Construction (materials – foundations, siding):

a. The amount of exposed foundation should be typically 12-18" or greater depending on the other similar original buildings in the neighborhood, compatibility with building style, adjacent buildings and site characteristics.
b. The exposed portions of new foundations should be faced with brick similar to the original brick typically used in both historic neighborhoods.
c. Light wells should be constructed of brick or concrete.
d. Openings in foundation should be similar in size and placement to those on similar type buildings in the neighborhood.
e. New construction should continue the material palette of the historic buildings in type, size and color.
f. Masonite and other synthetic sidings may be an acceptable substitute for wooden clapboard siding; however, they should be of high quality, well-detailed and appropriate in size, texture and color.
g. Other very contemporary and contrasting new materials may also be appropriate when a complementary relationship is established with the surrounding context.
h. Color selection should be based on architectural design, historic appropriateness and compatibility with other adjacent buildings.

Foundations

Due to the unique design of the proposed structure, the design guidelines around foundations are less directly applicable. The amount of exposed foundation would not read in the same way as on a traditional house in Sherman Hill, as all exposed areas would be clad in stucco, creating a continuous monolithic appearance to grade. Multiple stucco-clad site walls would mitigate the grade changes around the building as well, further reducing visibility of the foundation. A light well is planned on the west side of the building. It would be constructed of stucco-clad concrete, meeting the design guidelines.

Siding

The design guidelines recommend that new construction continue the material palette of the historic buildings in type, size and color. The proposed project does not replicate this approach due to its modern, stylistic nature. However, the

guidelines also recommend that other very contemporary or contrasting new materials may also be appropriate when a complementary relationship is established with the surrounding context. The subject property is adjacent to a masonry, flat-roof commercial building located at the corner of Center Street and 19th Street, which contains a contemporary addition located at the back of the building closest to the proposed house. The proposed project's simple, minimalist material palette of stucco and metal-clad windows would allow it to function as a neutral, contemporary addition within a context that contains a variety of building types and styles.

3. **Architectural Guidelines for Residential New Construction (site relationships – street rhythm, the front):**

   a. The spacing between buildings on a block and the size of building fronts should relate to the existing rhythm that is already established on a block face.
   b. Larger residential buildings should be visually subdivided and broken down in scale and given a vertical directional emphasis to maintain this rhythm.
   c. Horizontal and monotonous facades which break the street rhythm should **not** be used in historic districts.
   d. New entry levels should match the height of the entry level of adjacent buildings of its basic construction type unless the site makes this inappropriate.
   e. The general historical pattern for the way the fronts of original buildings were designed should be carried to new construction of similar building types.
   f. Sherman Hill buildings constructed on corners should typically face the streets running north/south.
   g. Front porches and steps, articulation of surface areas, special emphasis at window and door areas, and other decorative features should be used in a simple contemporary version of the neighborhood pattern in order to lend emphasis to the entry and make it visible from down the street.

   Street Rhythm
   The proposed house meets the design guidelines for street rhythm by maintaining building spacing consistent with the block and aligning with the existing rhythm of street fronts. Additionally, the design guidelines recommend larger residential buildings be visually broken down in scale, which the proposed project achieves effectively on the east side of the building facing the alley through a series of exterior patios, balconies and site walls.

   The proposed west façade, which faces the adjacent one-story cottage, is less broken down in scale, with the majority of the two-story mass positioned to that side of the property. Prior to the August 20th HPC meeting, staff recommended that additional design refinements were needed to further break down the scale of this elevation. Suggested modifications included increasing space for landscaping and introducing greater transparency in the site walls. In response, the applicant shifted the building five (5) feet to the east, resulting in an eight (8)-foot setback from the west property line. This change allows for a landscape buffer that would soften the transition between the new home and the smaller

adjacent residence. The applicant also added transparency to the site walls and added a window to the west façade to break up the scale.

The Front

The design guidelines recommend that new entry levels should match the height of the entry level of the adjacent buildings, unless the site makes this inappropriate. Due to the slope of the site and Center Street, the proposed entry level is above that of the closest neighbors and sits above the sidewalk behind several site walls. This raised front entrance condition, with retaining walls adjacent to the sidewalk, is consistent with the character of the block. The adjacent houses to the west have also dealt with the slope of the existing site with raised entries and retaining walls. As such, the proposed design aligns with the block's existing character while accommodating the site's unique grading challenges.

The design guidelines also recommend incorporating simplified contemporary interpretations of decorative features from the neighborhood to articulate the front entrance. The proposed design adequately identifies the front entrance through the design language of the chosen architectural style and does not need additional decorative features.

4. **Architectural Guidelines for Residential New Construction (compositional elements – porches and decks, garages, details):**

   a. New buildings should have front porches if this is the historic pattern in the neighborhood.
   b. New porches should have proportions and materials similar to original porches in the neighborhood.
   c. Decks and other semi-private outdoor areas should be located at the back and screened from public view.
   d. Insubstantial vertical supports such as undetailed 4"x4" posts or decorative wrought iron are **not** permitted.
   e. Porch posts and columns should have the support visually expressed below the porch with lattice or skirting infill between supports.
   f. Porches should have a connection to the interior by the use of windows and doors.
   g. Double garages should have two single doors rather than one double-wide door.
   h. Garages which are part of new construction should be located in a position relative to the main building which is the same as other original garages and outbuildings in the historic district.
   i. Garages built into new residential structures should **not** visually dominate the front of the building and should **not** be set further toward the street than the primary elevation.
   j. The windows of new construction should repeat the rhythm and the size and shape of window openings found in the walls of similar historic buildings.
   k. Horizontal sliding windows and awning windows are **not** permitted in Des Moines' historic districts because of their horizontal proportion.

l. Large areas of solid blank wall should **not** be created on any highly visible elevations in historic districts.
m. Window trim elements should be used in a manner similar to the original buildings in the neighborhood or in a simplified contemporary version of this.

Porches and Decks
The design guidelines recommend that decks and other semi-private outdoor areas be located at the back and screened from public view. The proposed project meets this recommendation by placing all exterior patios and courtyards at the rear or alley side of the property and proposes to screen these spaces with stucco-clad site walls and landscaping.

Garages
While the proposed garage is large for the site at a four-car capacity, it would be primarily concealed from view and designed to minimize its apparent scale. The garage would be configured in a tandem layout so that the façade facing the alley presents as a two-car garage. Consistent with the design guidelines, the double garage utilizes two (2) single garage doors. Additionally, the garage's scale would be similar to that of the adjacent alley-facing garage to the north, though that structure predates the property's inclusion in the local historic district in 2012. The garage does not visually dominate the front of the building and would not set further toward the street than the primary elevation. The majority of its mass would be hidden behind the proposed house and site walls, making it appear like a typical two-car garage instead of a tandem four-car garage.

Details
The design guidelines recommend that new construction repeat the rhythm and size and shape of windows and walls found in the historic district, and that horizontal windows are not permitted due to their horizontal proportion. Given the unique architectural style of the proposed house, strictly repeating these design patterns would not be appropriate. Several of the proposed windows have more horizontal proportions, which are consistent with the architectural style of the proposed project. Metal-clad windows are proposed, which is appropriate for a new construction International Style house.

5. Architectural Guidelines for Residential New Construction (general statements):

The Architectural Guidelines for New Construction in Des Moines's Historic Districts include the following statements:

- The guidelines are developed to encourage new construction in historic districts – new construction which participates in the overall historic neighborhood pattern and at the same time develops a genuine character of its own.

- It is recognized that infill construction can be compatible with a historic context by establishing either a relationship based on contrast or one

based on similarity. Either approach requires very careful study of the historic district and those visual characteristics that give it integrity and National Register status and following that, the establishment of a complementary relationship based on those characteristics.

- Sherman Hill, however, developed with greater diversity of land use and building type, and has suffered some demolition and intrusive new construction. Here, because of the diversity of original buildings, new compatible in-fill based on relationship of either contrast or similarity could be successful.

- The successful project based on a relationship of contrast is a contemporary solution requiring a very skilled architect. These guidelines are not meant to restrict this type of design solution and for this reason the Historic District Commission will continue to review all proposals on a case-by-case basis.

The proposed design demonstrates compatibility with the Sherman Hill Historic District with its height and overall scale staying consistent with the context of the area it is located in, and by aligning with the established street rhythm. The project reinforces the district's characteristic vertical emphasis through its window proportions and building height, while its flat roof form reflects patterns also present in nearby commercial and residential structures. The use of smooth stucco and metal-clad windows provides a simple, contemporary material palette that complements the surrounding context and relates to the nearby modern era structures.

While the International Style is not a predominate residential style in Sherman Hill, there is an International Style stucco-clad apartment building on 19th Street in Sherman Hill and other examples throughout Des Moines' residential neighborhoods. Sherman Hill contains a diverse range of architectural styles as noted in the Architectural Guidelines for New Construction. This provides a fitting context for design solutions such as the one proposed.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness subject to the following conditions:

1. Review and approval of the final design by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
2. Review and approval of the finalized window product by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
3. All construction shall be in accordance with all Building and Fire Codes, with issuance of any necessary permit by the City's Permit and Development Center.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Jason Van Essen, Planning and Urban Design Administrator, opened the presentation with a summary of the events leading up to this additional hearing. He noted that several emails had been sent throughout the day from neighbors to the Planning Department and those emails had been shared with the Commission. During this process, it was determined that members of the Commission had been contacted by residents, and he asked that those members disclose the communications and content of the conversation.

Commissioner Green disclosed that she had attended a meeting with Brad Argo and Noah Brinkmeyer, the adjacent neighbor to the west. She reported that they had raised three primary concerns regarding the 1917 Center Street design proposal: the current timing and review process no longer requires the developer to notify neighborhood residents prior to submitting to the City; the International Style design may not be appropriate for the surrounding area; and the overall scale of the proposed home may be too large for the site.

Commissioner Ellsworth stated that he had also been contacted by Brad Argo via phone as well as email and text, sharing the same points that Commissioner Green mentioned.

Commissioner Bergman was contacted indirectly about an email sent from Jason Peters via Councilman Coleman. The content was similar with concerns about the style of the home and then the process of submitting the project without being required to notify the neighborhood.

Jason Van Essen explained that the presentation was being given in full again so that members absent at the previous meeting could view the complete information for a broader discussion. He clarified that staff reviews are conducted using the City's architectural guidelines for Des Moines' Historic Districts, which are available online and divided into "Architectural Guidelines for Building Rehabilitation", "Architectural Guidelines for New Construction", and "Fence Guidelines". For this project, staff pulled relevant criteria from the guidelines to form their recommendations, conduct an analysis, and prepare a written report. He noted that the guidelines state new construction on infill lots may be evaluated based on similarity or contrast with surrounding properties, with contrast being the more challenging approach, and emphasized that the Commission must consider each proposal on a case-by-case basis.

Stacey Hanley presented the staff report and recommendation for the construction of a new single-family home with a detached four-car tandem garage at 1917 Center Street. The property is currently a vacant lot with a history of prior proposals that were never completed, including house relocations. She presented and explained the submitted design materials including the site plan, floor plans, material palette, 3D renderings, and massing studies. Key elements of the design presented are as follows:

Site Plan

- The front entrance is centered on the site.

- A series of stucco-clad site walls are proposed to mitigate grade changes, creating a raised lawn or "plinth" before reaching the front entrance – similar to neighboring properties.
- Proposed outdoor spaces include:
  - A covered exterior balcony/patio
  - An at-grade patio to the side of the house
  - Another patio to the rear of the house with access to the detached garage.
- The house faces Center Street, which slopes down to the west.
- To the east there is a larger lot with a commercial flat roof structure, and residential structures of various sizes surrounding the lot on the other sides.
- The garage is designed as a four-car tandem garage, and cars enter and exit from the alley. The garage has two individual single-car garage doors, which meets the design guidelines. The width of the garage appears to match the garage of the neighbor to the north.
- The site plan has been updated from what the Commission saw in August – at the time of the first presentation, there was approximately five feet between the house and the property line, and at this time there is a total of eight feet between the house and property line (this is in response to Commission and staff feedback).

Floor Plans

- A finished basement with an egress well.
- First-floor plan shows exterior areas and detached garage.
- Second-floor plan includes the covered balcony/patio area.

Elevations

- The front elevation of the house faces Center Street.
- The alley-facing façade includes the detached garage with two single-car garage doors.
- The west façade faces 1921 Center Street.
- The rear façade looks out to the detached garage.
- There is a window that was added to the west façade in response to staff feedback.

Materials

- Primary exterior finish is a hard coat stucco in a white finish with metal-clad windows.

Design Renderings and Massing Studies

- The applicant provided axonometric (bird's eye) views showing how the proposed project fits into the neighborhood context.
- Massing diagrams illustrate the relationship of the proposed project with its surrounding context, that includes a mix of residential and commercial structures.
- The applicant provided an updated rendering to show materiality of the façade facing the 1921 Center Street neighbor, and to provide a better understanding of

the feel of the proposed project next to its smaller neighbor. Modifications to the design in response to staff and Commission feedback include: additional space for landscaping to serve as a buffer between 1917 Center Street and 1921 Center Street; a window added to the west elevation to add interest to the façade; additional transparency added to the privacy site wall at the patio to add interest to the façade.

- This rendering view of the west facade also shows the sloping nature of Center Street and how it affects the visual relationship between 1917 and 1921 Center Street. The finished floor of 1917 Center Street was set by the relationship to the alley to the northwest of the house and the need to properly mitigate storm water on site, which resulted in first floor elevation set above Center Street and the neighbors downhill to the west. The design elements used to mitigate this change in grade are an elevated front entrance and site walls that create a plinth front yard.

Stacey Hanley continued with the review of how the proposed design meets the Design Guidelines for Residential New Construction and staff's analysis of the design. Regarding the design guidelines for Massing, Height, Roof Form and Vertical Emphasis: The proposed house measures 23 feet, 8 inches, consistent with most two-story houses on this block, which range around 23–24 feet in height. The one-story cottage immediately to the west stands about 17 feet tall, so there's a perceptible difference — that difference is emphasized by the sloping grade and the raised foundation. The applicant addressed staff's earlier concern about the perceived height by shifting the structure 5 feet east, adding landscaping and transparency in the site walls to soften the transition toward the smaller neighbor.

Stacey Hanley continued with a review of the proposed roof form. The flat roof form is consistent with several commercial and residential buildings within Sherman Hill, including one residential house on the same block to the northwest. In terms of roof volume, it aligns well with other structures of a similar type in the district and is compatible with the surrounding context. Vertical emphasis is characteristic of the Sherman Hill Historic District, and it should be reinforced by the overall building height, vertical windows, doors with transoms, window bays, repeating column bays, and floor to floor heights. The vertically oriented two-story mass of the house forms the dominant portion of the building, and is located closest to the street, with the one-story portion of the building set back from the front façade. The majority of the windows are vertically oriented, with a strong vertical band at the center of the front elevation with the front door and narrow window above the door. While there are some horizontal window bands and site walls—elements typical of the International Style—they serve to balance the composition and enhance visual interest without undermining the vertical rhythm of the building.

Stacey Hanley continued with a review of materials including the foundation and siding. The unique design of this structure means the foundation reads differently than on a traditional house. Stucco cladding extends to grade, giving the appearance of a monolithic form. Site walls also step with the grade, minimizing the visible foundation and maintaining a consistent finish. The proposed light well on the west side would be stucco-clad concrete, consistent with the design guidelines. While the project does not

replicate the typical palette found in the neighborhood, the guidelines specifically allow for contemporary and contrasting materials when used in a complementary way. The smooth stucco and metal-clad windows provide a clean, minimalist expression that ties to the nearby flat-roof commercial building and other diverse styles within the district. Overall, the materials are appropriate for this modern design and establish a neutral, timeless appearance within the district.

Stacey Hanley continued with addressing the street rhythm and site relationships. The project maintains consistent spacing and alignment along Center Street, reinforcing the existing street rhythm. On the alley side, patios, balconies, and site walls effectively break down the larger mass of the building. On the west side, which faces the smaller cottage, the applicant responded to feedback by increasing the setback to 8 feet, adding transparency and landscaping to soften that relationship. The design guidelines recommend that new entry levels should match the height of the entries of adjacent buildings, unless the site makes this inappropriate, which is the case here. The raised front entry responds to the natural slope of Center Street, and similar retaining wall conditions appear elsewhere on the block. While elevated above the sidewalk, the entry maintains a consistent relationship with other front lawns and stairs nearby. The design also clearly defines the front entrance using the architectural vocabulary of the International Style, without the need for additional decorative elements.

Stacey Hanley continued with a review of the design guidelines for porches and decks, garages and details. All outdoor living spaces are located at the rear and alley sides, screened with stucco-clad site walls and landscaping. This placement meets the guideline to minimize visibility of semi-private spaces from the public street. The four-car tandem garage is arranged so that only two single-car doors face the alley, maintaining the appearance of a typical two-car structure, which meets our design guidelines. Its tandem configuration reduces the apparent mass, and the garage is fully subordinate to the main house, not projecting toward the street. The project incorporates metal-clad windows, which are appropriate for a new International Style building. The elevations avoid large blank walls and demonstrate a balanced rhythm of openings, in keeping with district character.

Stacey Hanley continued with reviewing several general design guidelines about the nature of infill in the historic districts. The guidelines do allow for compatibility achieved through either similarity or contrast. In this case, the project achieves compatibility through contrast, providing a contemporary design that still responds to the scale, rhythm, and proportions of its surroundings. Sherman Hill's eclectic architectural mix supports this approach. There is an existing International Style apartment building on 19th Street, as well as other modern examples throughout the neighborhood. Staff's assessment is that this project represents a thoughtful design that meets the design guidelines and represents the architectural diversity of Sherman Hill. Staff supports the proposal subject to the conditions listed in the report.

Commissioner Schmid stated a review from the 2021 Certificate of Appropriateness on this same lot had included many of the same conditions. She wondered why that project had not moved forward and if it was due to the conditions. She questioned if this was the same ownership.

Stacey Hanley stated this was not the same owner.

Commissioner Green stated that there have been three previously approved applications for this property. Two of those relied on State Tax Credits, which were ultimately denied, preventing the projects from moving forward. The most recent approval did not proceed due to issues experienced by the previous ownership.

Commissioner Ellsworth inquired about some of the changes made by the applicant and wondered if this had come from the August meeting feedback or due to the neighborhood.

Stacey Hanley deferred the question to be answered by the applicant.

Commissioner Schmid asked whether, during staff's review of the proposed design modifications, the applicant was ever asked to mirror the floor plan so that the two-story portion of the structure would be positioned on the higher corner of the parcel.

Stacey Hanley stated this was not discussed during the review.

Commissioner Waddell reiterated concerns about the stark appearance of the west façade, noting that the elevation appears too plain. He suggested that incorporating additional windows on that side of the building might create a more appropriate and balanced design.

Jason Van Essen pointed out that it was not included in the motion, nor was it included for feedback in the past meeting.

Commissioner Waddell stated he understood this and was only bringing it up again as a point of concern.

CHAIRPERSON OPENED PUBLIC HEARING

Darian Garirson-Nickerson, 520 S. 19th Street, of Peddicord Lillis, attorney for the applicants Rob and Nicole Beaman, recapped the previous Historic Preservation Commission approval, the subsequent neighborhood appeal, and the City Council's decision to remand the case back to the Commission. She acknowledged concerns raised regarding neighborhood notification but stated that the applicant had followed the procedures in place prior to the original meeting. She also addressed design-related objections, emphasizing that the proposed home was developed in accordance with the Des Moines' Architectural Guidelines for New Construction within historic districts.

John Bassett, Hartman Spiller, architect for the project, stated that the design team had met with city staff numerous times during the design process prior to the original August meeting. Since the last hearing, they incorporated several changes based on feedback, including shifting the home five feet to the east to increase space along the property line and moving the garage three feet off the property line to improve

emergency egress and provide additional separation from the neighboring property. He noted that a neighborhood meeting with the Sherman Hill Association was held on October 13, 2025, during which project details were reviewed for over an hour. He concluded by stating that the applicants are prepared to submit for their project building permit.

Nicole Beaman, owner of property, recapped the previous meetings that led to the current hearing. She stated that she and her husband, Rob, intend to construct a single-family home in Sherman Hill and have followed all required processes while incorporating thoughtful design elements to complement the neighborhood's eclectic character. She noted that delays in the process have set the project back several weeks and created significant emotional stress. She expressed hope that the Certificate of Appropriateness would be approved so construction could begin before winter weather halts progress. She added that they look forward to becoming good neighbors and relocating to the Des Moines area.

Commissioner Green requested the architect to answer the height of the courtyard wall to the west.

John Bassett stated it is ten feet tall with the top three feet being the perforated material that was altered due to comments from the first meeting.

Commissioner Green asked for code clarification about the set back from the fence to the window area wondering how far it is and if it meets code.

John Bassett stated that it does meet code and they have been working with a contractor.

James Spiller, Hartman Spiller, architect for the project, stated that the International Building Code states it must be a minimum of five feet before it triggers fire code response.

Commissioner Schmid reiterated an earlier question regarding whether the floor plan had ever been considered for mirroring, so that the tallest portion of the building would sit on the eastern portion of the site.

John Bassett explained that mirroring the floor plan had not been considered because the living space on the east side of the parcel was designed to provide more privacy. Additionally, the current orientation allows the east patio to receive some shade, rather than being fully exposed to the sun from the west.

Commissioner Schmid noted the limited privacy of the lot this size and was also concerned with the height of the building as it relates to the west side.

John Bassett acknowledged the constraints of the site and stated that the design maximizes the limited space available while providing as much privacy as possible for the residents.

Randa Lejeune, 755 20th Street, spoke in opposition to the project as the neighboring property directly across the street. She highlighted the historical significance of the Sherman Hill Neighborhood, emphasizing its status as the oldest planned neighborhood in Des Moines and the standards that have been maintained over time. She argued that the proposed International Style home is not appropriate for the area. Ms. Lejeune referenced 16 cases from other historic commissions across the United States where rulings were changed after additional neighborhood input and information was provided, and she requested that the commission reconsider and deny approval for this style of home.

Matt Warner-Blankenship, President of the Sherman Hill Association, spoke on behalf of the neighborhood, emphasizing the importance of residents' voices being heard in development matters. He requested improvements to the city notification process for new construction projects in the neighborhood and called for disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest within the commission prior to cases being heard.

Commissioner Green responded to the concerns about neighborhood involvement, noting that the issue of allowing neighborhoods to review projects prior to submittal is a broader process matter. She stated that any changes to that process need to be addressed by City Council, not the Commission.

Commissioner Ellsworth stated that he had received a text from Brad Argo that said that the builder had chosen not to engage further with the neighborhood or adjacent neighbors, even after other options were presented. He asked for confirmation that the developer had met with the neighborhood association.

Matt Warner-Blankenship confirmed that James Spiller had attended a meeting with the neighborhood association after the original appeal in October. He spent time answering questions from residents. He cannot speak to further communication between James Spiller and Brad Argo.

Commissioner Hellstern inquired what kind of questions were asked at the neighborhood association meeting and what further was discussed.

Matt Warner-Blankenship stated that questions were answered on the style of the home and what was meant by with the term "International Style" in the regards to the architectural style of the home. They also spoke about changes to the design that occurred from feedback from the original meeting.

Commissioner Schmid questioned if it was just the style of the home that was problematic to the neighborhood association. She noted that three other new construction homes had been approved in this area prior to this submittal.

Matt Warner-Blankenship stated that in his capacity as a board member, he was not taking issue with the style, rather the process leading up to the submittal where they had asked for time to review the submittal and had made comments that were not further shared during the original Commission meeting.

Noah Brinkmeyer, 1921 Center Street, property owner directly west of the site, spoke in opposition and referenced several standards from the Des Moines' Architectural Guidelines for New Construction. He stated that the proposed home's mass and height are not compatible with nearby historic homes, especially when combined with the grade change. He noted the roof form is inconsistent with the typical steeper roof pitches of Sherman Hill and Owl's Head, and that the overall vertical emphasis exceeds that of adjacent small homes. He argued the siding materials and design do not reflect the immediate historic context and that the street rhythm is disrupted, as the rear elevation reads as a much larger structure. Brinkmeyer also expressed concerns about solar access, stating the building's height would significantly shade his property. He noted the lack of a front porch, which is a defining feature of surrounding homes, and stated the garage massing is too large to be subordinate to the primary structure. Brinkmeyer emphasized that all adjacent residential owners are opposed to the project without substantial design changes. He requested modifications including a higher roof pitch to reduce shading, addition of a true front porch, adjustments to materials and window placement to reflect block rhythm, and reduction of the garage size. He urged the Commission to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness.

Jackie Bergman, 640 20th Street, spoke in opposition and presented photos documenting the 18 homes constructed within Des Moines' three historic districts over the past 25 years. She noted that new homes in the Sherman Hill District have been consistently designed with traditional siding materials and compatible rooflines and reported that the average size of single-family homes is approximately 2,100 square feet, with garages typically under 600 square feet. Bergman stated that among the 159 existing homes in the area, nearly all use traditional siding, with only a few exceptions, and pointed out that the single International Style building at 672 19th Street was designed in a way that still reflected the neighborhood context. She expressed concern that there are 20 vacant lots within Sherman Hill where similar projects could be proposed and warned that approving this design could set a precedent that may alter more than 10% of the district, changing the established architectural character and fabric of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Green asked for clarification regarding the vacant lots referenced in the previous testimony, specifically questioning how many of those lots were actually for sale. She noted that, to her knowledge, only a small number of them were currently available on the market.

Jackie Bergaman stated for now they are not for sale, inferring that it could change.

John Bassett, Hartman Spiller, provided some clarifying information about the project. He stated that City of Des Moines Zoning Code requires this lot to be a two-story building. Building code also requires the floor-to-floor height to be 9-12 feet and they are at 10 feet on the floor-to-floor height and a 3-foot parapet, making total height at 23 feet, which by code is about the shortest it could be. Adding a pitched roof would only grow the height and mass of the home. He notes that the front facing portion of the property has the same context as the rest of the street along with the scale of the windows. On the flat roof feature, they have identified 10 properties in the 3-block surrounding area that have flat roofs that are single family homes or duplexes.

Commissioner Schmid Asked about the code requirement for being a two-story home.

Jason Van Essen stated that Chapters 134 and 135 of the City Code require the house to be between 1.5-2.5 stories tall. Noted that there is some administrative flexibility within this code section and a deference to decisions made by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Commissioner Hellstern asked for clarification that a one-story home could not be built on this lot.

Jason Van Essen stated that a one-story home could not be built without a design alternative. He explained the 'House Type D' was meant to be in areas of Des Moines that are predominately Craftsman or Victorian Style to maintain the height of the structures. There are provisions in the code to grant relief through the Historic Preservation Commission.

Commissioner Green asked for the architect to provide the square footage and footprint of the home and garage.

John Bassett stated that he believed the total to be around 2,400 square feet including the basement that is 1,200 square feet. They have reduced the size of the garage. It is now around 800 square feet.

Commissioner Green commented on how that was similar to the sizes in the surrounding area.

Commissioner Green stated that she did not take issue with the International Style design; however, she expressed concerns about the scale of the home, particularly the 10-foot-tall west courtyard wall. She noted that if this element were considered a fence, it would not be permitted to exceed six feet in height.

Commissioner Schmid stated that she did not take issue with the International Style and felt it appeared to be a high-quality, well-thought-out design that, while different from the surrounding area, is not necessarily negative. She acknowledged the comment regarding solar shading and its potential impact on a historic neighborhood but noted that a two-story gable-roofed home would not eliminate that concern and could potentially worsen it due to the pitched roof. She did, however, agree with the concerns that the proposed wall height may be too tall for this area.

Bill Pilsbury, 824 18th Street, spoke regarding the process of getting a Certificate of Appropriateness and the reasons that rules matter. He posed the question if he wanted to remodel the home located at 826 18th Street, if it would be allowed to look exactly like the home being proposed.

Commissioner Schmid stated there wasn't enough information to get an answer but also noted that the context is different as that would be a remodel as opposed to new

construction. It is always a priority to preserve the fabric of our districts (building rehabilitation) and consider the effects of infill (new construction).

CHAIRPERSON CLOSED PUBLIC HEARING

COMMISSION ACTION

Commissioner Shaw asked whether the applicant would consider adding windows to the rear portion of the garage to help lighten the appearance of the backyard area and reduce the effect of a large blank wall.

James Spiller, Hartman Spiller, stated that they could consider adding more windows, but would also need to review code setbacks and the fire rating on the wall.

Commissioner Shaw also inquired if they would be willing to lower the height of the courtyard wall.

James Spiller believed that lowering the wall height could be an acceptable adjustment.

Commissioner Barry asks about the elevation of the courtyards in relation to the first floor elevation.

James Spiller explained the locations and elevations of the courtyards. The garage is two steps higher than the courtyard, but at an equal level due to grading to the adjacent garage.

Commissioner Beard commented that he took issue with the courtyard wall and the orientation of the garage facing the rear, noting that together they create the appearance of one continuous building rather than a detached garage. He stated that this configuration seems out of place for the area.

Commissioner Schmid agreed that the appearance of the garage and courtyard wall makes it seem like it is an attached garage. Often with infill lots we have asked applicants to break them up for appearance. In this case, on three sides of the property, one would assume that the garage is attached.

Jason Van Essen noted that we have allowed breezeway type connections between garages and houses as an option to allow an attached garage.

Commissioner Barry stated it is a big garage with big walls and a lot of white. Even with the windows breaking up the back wall, it is still a lot.

Commissioner Ellsworth noted that lowering the height of the wall would help with breaking up the look.

Commissioner Barry suggested going down to a two-car garage.

Jason Van Essen stated he didn't believe changing the garage size would make that much of a difference in situation.

James Spiller pointed out that the property to the rear of 1917 Center Street currently has a retaining wall with a privacy fence already standing at 9 feet tall (retaining wall and fence combined height). He showed how the garage is at the same grade level as neighboring garage to the rear.

Commissioner Bergman stated that he agreed that he would like to see the privacy wall be a little lower. He likes the perforated area on the fence and encourages them to keep that portion, but also to find a way to make the area look less blank.

James Spiller stated they would be open to making those adjustments.

Commissioner Bergman made a motion for approval of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness subject to the following conditions:

1. Review and approval of the final design by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.

2. Further study regarding building code compliance of the light well adjacent to the neighboring property.

3. Metal-clad windows are appropriate for use on this new construction project. Review and approval of the finalized window product by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.

4. All construction shall be in accordance with all Building and Fire Codes, with issuance of any necessary permit by the City's Permit and Development Center.

5. Add windows to the rear wall of the garage and lower the west patio wall to match the height restrictions of privacy fence requirements. The wall should be differentiated from the garage by texture, color, or other variation. Subject to the satisfaction of the Planning Administrator.

Commissioner Green asked if a faux window would be acceptable if a window is not allowed per fire code.

Commissioner Bergman agreed that as long as it breaks up look of the area, it is not important to see through the window.

Commissioner Beard noted finding options to break up the look between the wall and the garage.

James Spiller acknowledged the importance of making the distinction between the wall and garage and stated the perforations in the wall will help give that effect.

Commissioner Schmid wondered with the changes to the rear patio wall if it would be necessary to add windows to the garage. She also noted an International Style home on Grand Avenue that has cedar lap as the siding material on the garage. Would changing the material of the garage be more appropriate for the area?

Commissioner Green suggested that the Commission not be overly prescriptive, rather leave it to the designer and the Planning Administrator to find a good option for materials to break up the design.

Jason Van Essen asked for clarity when addressing the wall and the garage to determine where the issues lie.

Commissioner Shaw stated that regardless of the garage design, they would like to see the wall lowered.

Commissioner Beard also noted the need for separation between the garage and the wall to refine the look.

Jason Van Essen asked for the motion to be restated.

Commissioner Bergman clarified his motion as follows: approval of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness subject to the following conditions:

1. Windows or another architectural treatment that provides visual interest shall be added to the rear wall of the garage.

2. The west patio wall shall be lowered to a height that is typical of a standard privacy fence.

3. The visual characteristics of the west patio wall shall be adjusted so there is contrast from the house and garage walls to provide clear visual separation between them. This might be accomplished by changes in color, texture, or other techniques.

4. Review and approval of the final design by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator. The design shall be emailed to the Historic Preservation Commission members for comment prior to approval.

5. Review and approval of the finalized window products by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.

6. All construction shall be in accordance with all Building and Fire Codes, with issuance of any necessary permit by the City's Permit and Development Center.

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Green

THE VOTE: 10-0

Des Moines Webmap

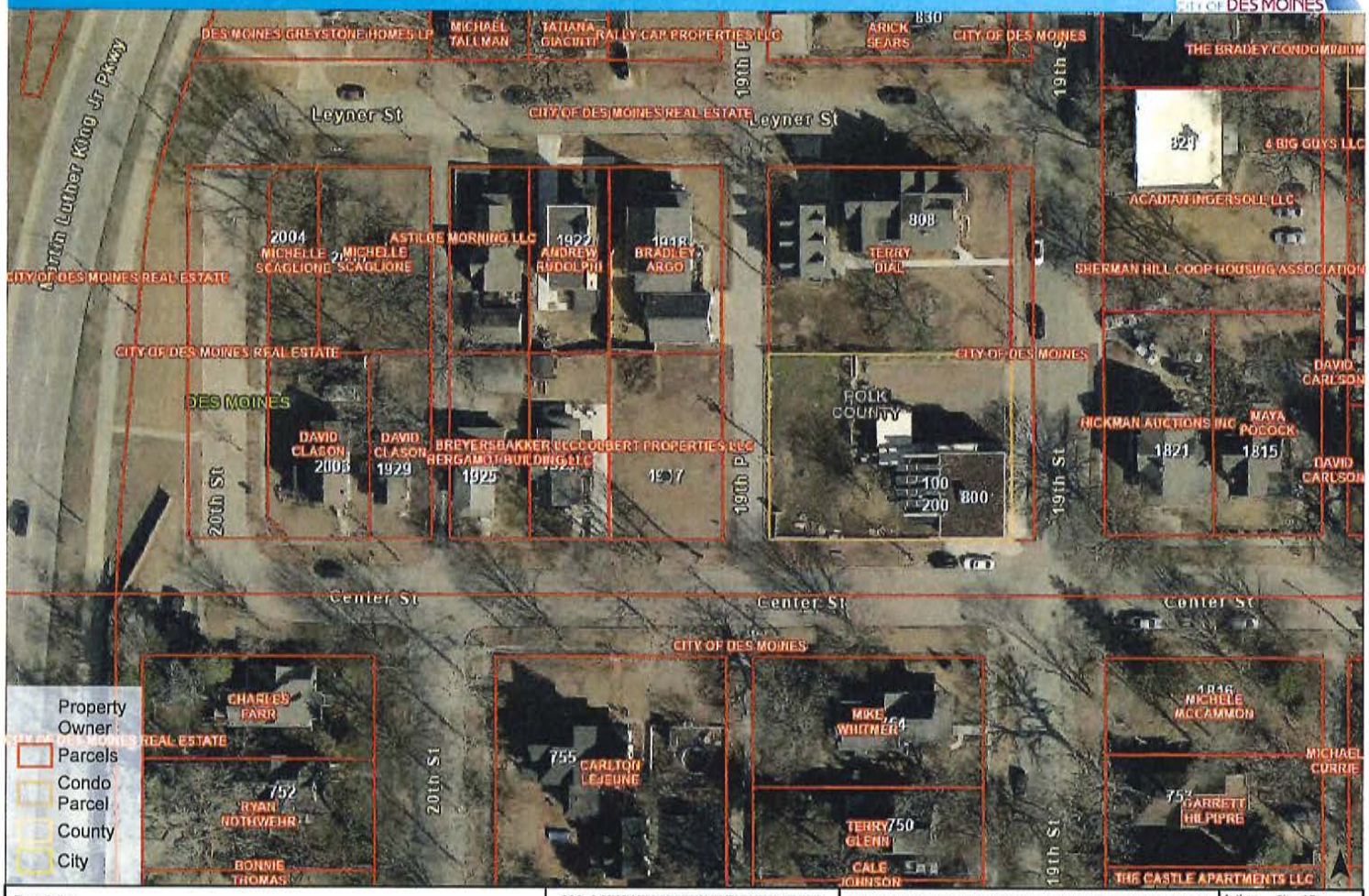


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Disclaimer: This map is approximate and may not be complete.
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Des Moines Webmap



Description

1:1,128 Webmap Scale

Coordinate System: WGS 1984 Web Mercator Auxiliary SphereProjection: Mercator Auxiliary SphereDatum: WGS 1984False Easting: 0.0000False Northing: 0.0000Central Meridian: 0.0000Standard Parallel 1: 0.0000Auxiliary Sphere Type: 0.0000Units: Meter

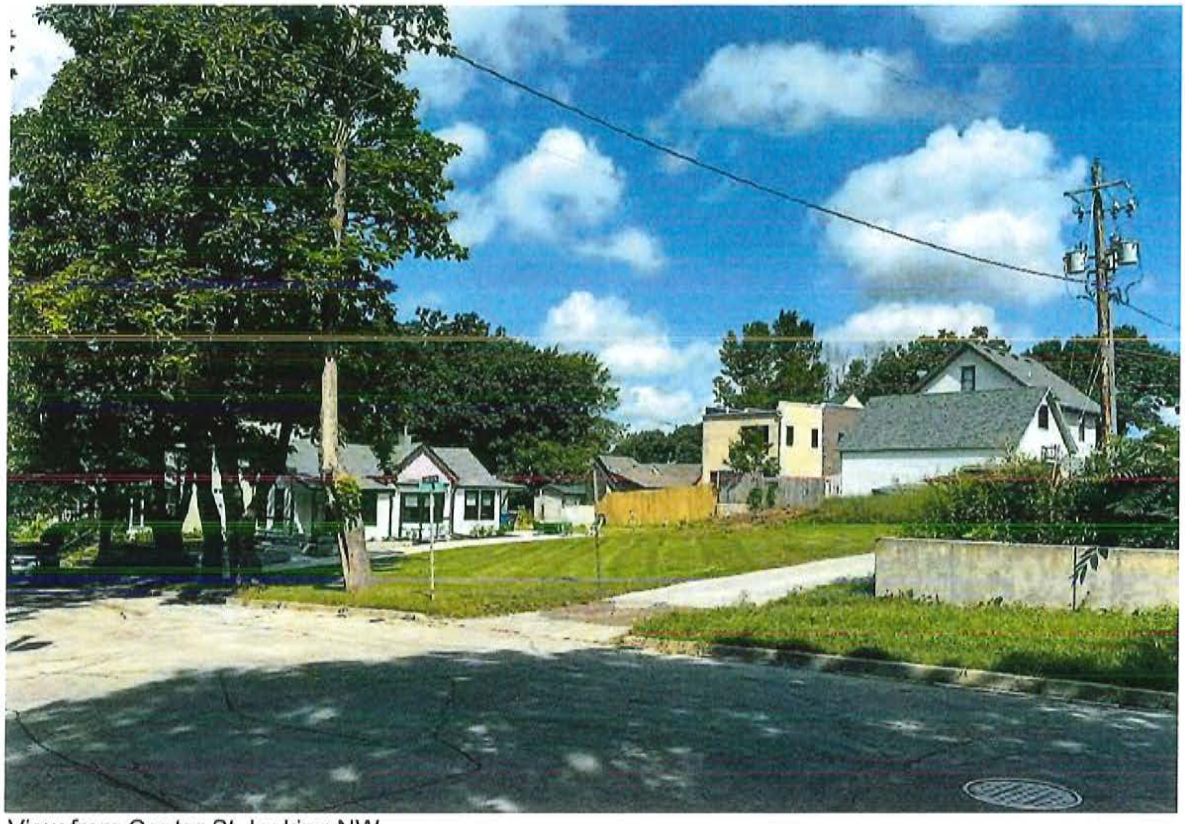
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Date: 8/19/2025
Time: 1:15 PM

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1917 Center Street
Existing Site Photographs



View from Center St. looking NW



View from Center St. looking North

1917 Center Street
Existing Site Photographs

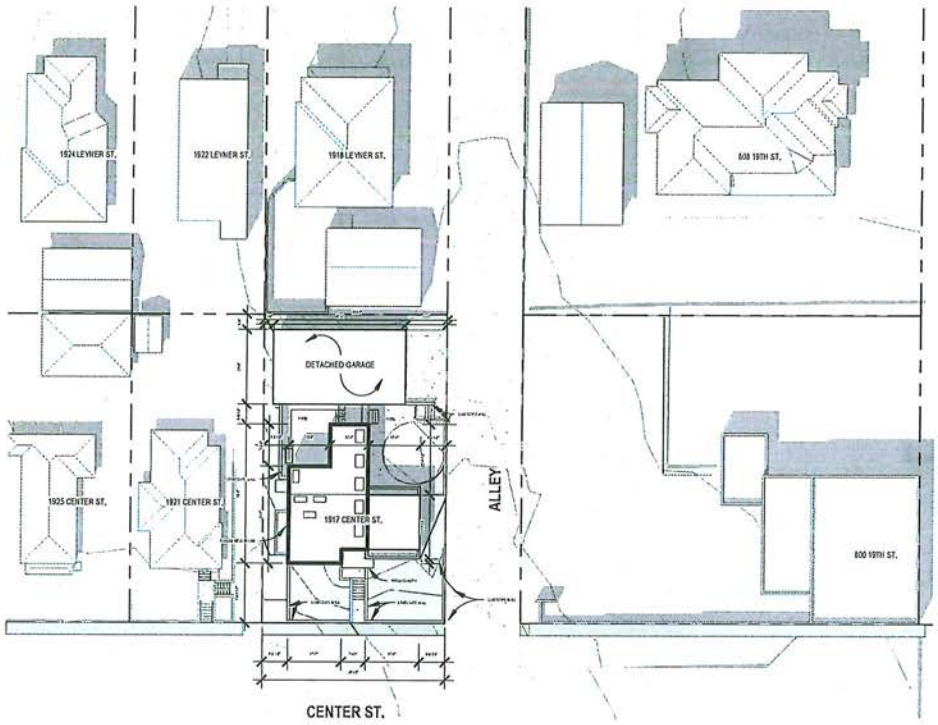


View from Center St. looking NE



View from the alley looking SW

1917 CENTER ST - CONTEXT SITE PLAN



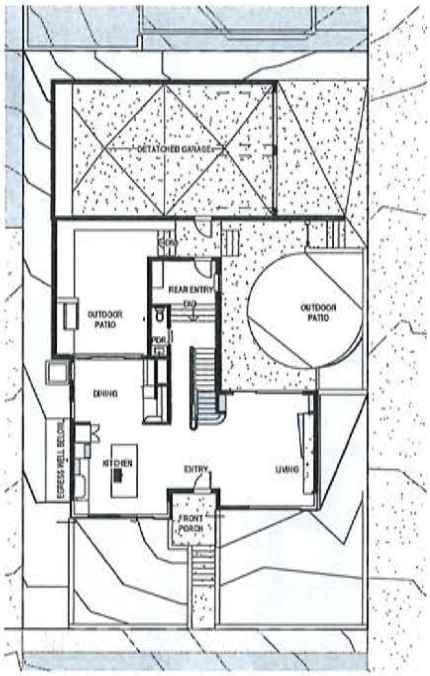
1 SITE PLAN - PRESENTATION
1" = 30'-0"

COLBERT PROPERTIES
10/23/25

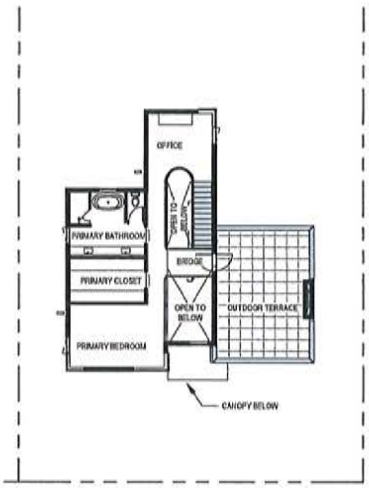
1917 CENTER ST - FLOORPLANS



1 BASEMENT PRESENTATION PLAN
1/16" = 1'-0"

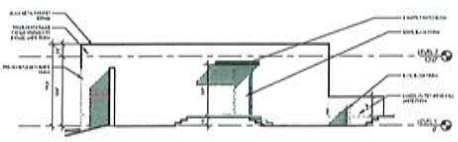


2 LEVEL 1 PRESENTATION PLAN
1/16" = 1'-0"

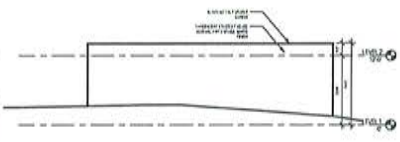


3 LEVEL 2 PRESENTATION PLAN
1/16" = 1'-0"

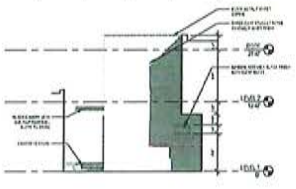
COLBERT PROPERTIES
10/23/25



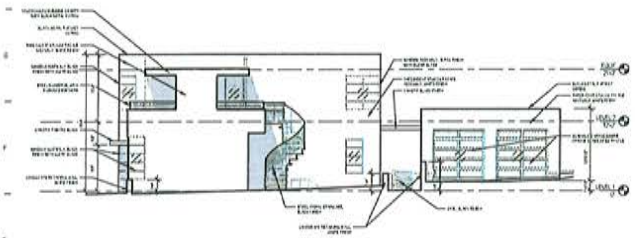
C1 GARAGE ELEVATION - SOUTH FACADE
1/8" = 1'-0"



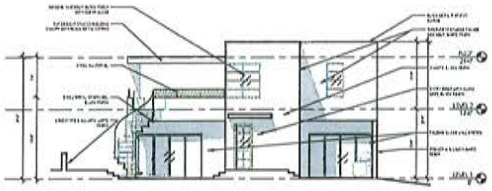
C2 GARAGE ELEVATION - NORTH FACADE
1/8" = 1'-0"



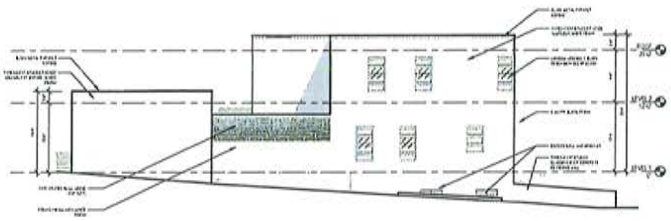
C3 BUILDING ELEVATION - WEST FACADE AT BUMPOUT
1/8" = 1'-0"



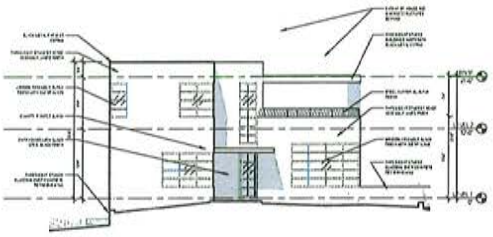
B1 BUILDING ELEVATION - EAST FACADE
1/8" = 1'-0"



B2 BUILDING ELEVATION - NORTH FACADE
1/8" = 1'-0"



A1 BUILDING ELEVATION - WEST FACADE
1/8" = 1'-0"



A2 BUILDING DELEVATION - SOUTH FACADE
1/8" = 1'-0"

HARTMAN SPILLER
ARCHITECTURE & INTERIOR DESIGN
1111 Lincoln Road, Suite 307
Fort Myers, Florida 33901
Ph 239.321.0191
www.hsarch.com

Company Name
Company Name
Company Name
Company Name
Company Name

1

1917 CENTER STREET
COLBERT PROPERTIES

Preliminary - Not for Construction
SCHEMATIC DESIGN

Project No: 15-01
Date: 10/05/2015
Revisions

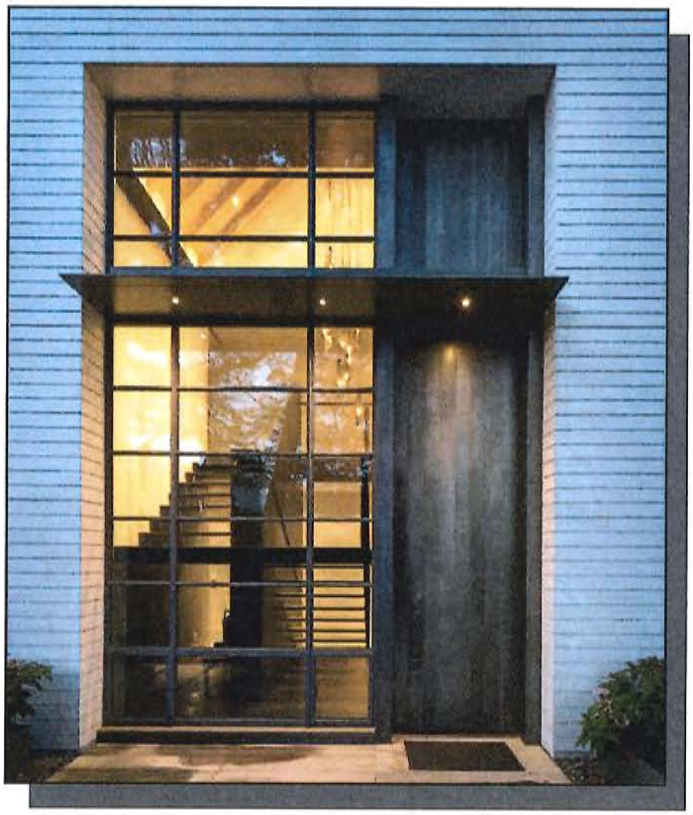
BUILDING ELEVATIONS

A2.00

1917 Center Street
Primary Building Materials



Building Cladding :
Hardcoat Stucco - White Finish



Building Fenestration :
Metal-Clad Windows with
Clear Glazing




Google Earth

Google Earth







From: Couppee, Jacob T.
To: Hanley, Stacey R.
Subject: FW: Historic Guidelines
Date: Wednesday, November 5, 2025 11:59:29 AM
Attachments: image001.png

From: Brad Argo <bradargo@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 5, 2025 11:33 AM
To: Van Essen, Jason M. <JMVanessen@dmgov.org>
Cc: Couppee, Jacob T. <JTCouppee@dmgov.org>
Subject: Re: Historic Guidelines

EXTERNAL EMAIL - This email was sent by a person from outside your organization. Exercise caution when clicking links, opening attachments or taking further action, before validating its authenticity.

Jason, thanks for your response. Unfortunately, I had to travel out of state for a business trip yesterday and will not be back until tomorrow.

Below is the letter I am writing for tonight's meeting. Can you please confirm you have received this and it will be read in tonight's meeting?

My sincere apologies to all parties involved for my absence. I was unable to attend the first meeting due to my wife's illness, and unfortunately, this meeting coincides with an unscheduled business trip. Despite not being present, I hope you understand that, as an adjacent neighbor, this decision directly affects me, my property, and our neighborhood as a whole.

Not long ago, neighborhood meetings allowed residents to have direct conversations with homeowners and developers. That process worked well. Now, because such meetings are no longer required, builders often have little incentive to engage with the community—especially when their projects already meet city requirements. As a result, historic neighborhoods like ours must now rely almost entirely on the HPC to represent community concerns.

I respectfully ask that you keep an open mind when hearing neighborhood feedback and not simply reaffirm a prior vote. I appreciate that each of you serves as a volunteer, and I recognize the time and effort this role requires. If the process itself encouraged more collaboration earlier on, I believe much of this could have been resolved from the start.

As I mentioned in my previous letter, this proposed design introduces a new architectural style to Sherman Hill. I read the minutes from the last meeting and understand there was significant discussion. Still, it is difficult to accept that this particular style is viewed as fitting within the established character of our neighborhood. Nearly all new construction here in the past twenty

years has reflected and respected the existing aesthetic of surrounding homes.

Beyond the question of style, I also find the overall scale of the structure concerning. The size of the garage, in particular, feels out of place and makes an already narrow lot appear even more crowded.

Finally, I want to note that the relationship of the proposed house and garage to the neighboring property to the west, owned by Noah Brinkmeyer, is of particular concern. I would like to yield the remainder of my time to Mr. Brinkmeyer, who is the most directly affected neighbor.

Thank you again for your time and for the service you provide to our community.

Thanks,
Brad

On Tue, Nov 4, 2025 at 10:53 AM Van Essen, Jason M. <JMVanessen@dmgov.org> wrote:

> Hello Brad-
>
> The link below sends you to the City's website where you can find a copy of the Architectural Guidelines for New Construction in Des Moines' Historic Districts document.
>
> Pursuant to Section 58-31of the City Code, the HPC uses these guidelines to provide guidance in reviewing COA applications.
>
> The staff report for the item provides analysis of the project against the guidelines. As mentioned at the beginning of the guidelines document, applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
>
> You're welcome to attend tomorrow night's meeting and be a part of the discussion.
>
> Thanks,
>
> Jason
>
> **Jason Van Essen, AICP**
> Planning & Urban Design Administrator
> Development Services
>
> CITY OF DES MOINES

City of Des Moines, 602 Robert D. Ray Dr., Des Moines, IA 50309
Phone: (515) 283-4147

Visit us online at **DSM.city**
Download the **myDSMmobile** app

The City of Des Moines has launched a new online platform to make the Zoning and Planning and Design Ordinances (Chapter 134 and Chapter 135) more accessible. Users will also find direct access to multiple GIS maps, a signage calculator, and a tool that generates Regulations by District reports. The new platform is available online at https://online.encodeplus.com/regs/desmoines-ia/index.aspx.

From: Brad Argo <bradargo@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 3, 2025 10:31 AM
To: Van Essen, Jason M. <JMVanessen@dmgov.org>; Couppee, Jacob T. <JTCouppee@dmgov.org>
Subject: Historic Guidelines

EXTERNAL EMAIL - This email was sent by a person from outside your organization. Exercise caution when clicking links, opening attachments or taking further action, before validating its authenticity.

Jacob,

Thank you for your time this morning. Before our meeting with HPC on Wednesday, I wanted to present a couple documents that the neighborhood has used in the past in regards to new construction.

https://cms2.revize.com/revize/desmoines/document_center/historic_preservation_commission/ArchitecturalGuidelinesforLocalHistoricDistrictsNewConstruction.pdf

The above URL has been used by the neighborhood to date. Considering this was done through planning and zoning, I wanted to see if this was used by your department when approving new construction.

I ask because there are several items in here that would prohibit the proposed home on Center Street.

Thanks,
Brad

From: Ryan Ellsworth
To: Hanley, Stacey R.
Cc: Van Essen, Jason M.; Couppee, Jacob T.
Subject: Text from Brad Argo re: HPC Special Meeting
Date: Wednesday, November 5, 2025 12:55:12 PM

EXTERNAL EMAIL - This email was sent by a person from outside your organization. Exercise caution when clicking links, opening attachments or taking further action, before validating its authenticity.

Hi Stacey, I did receive the following texts today from Brad Argo, the neighbor to the north of the subject property:

Text 1: Ryan, I met with Martha last night to discuss the upcoming HPC meeting. I understand there is not much we can do about the style of home, but I did want you to have a chance to read my letter prior to hearing it in tonight's meeting. The builder has chosen not to engage with the neighborhood or adjacent neighbors, even after we presented several options. In my opinion, a project like this should receive neighborhood feedback. I hope the board tonight feels the same way.

Text 2: My sincere apologies to all parties involved for my absence. I was unable to attend the first meeting due to my wife's illness, and unfortunately, this meeting coincides with an unscheduled business trip. Despite not being present, I hope you understand that, as an adjacent neighbor, this decision directly affects me, my property, and our neighborhood as a whole.
Not long ago, neighborhood meetings allowed residents to have direct conversations with homeowners and developers. That process worked well. Now, because such meetings are no longer required, builders often have little incentive to engage with the community—especially when their projects already meet city requirements. As a result, historic neighborhoods like ours must now rely almost entirely on the HPC to represent community concerns.
I respectfully ask that you keep an open mind when hearing neighborhood feedback and not simply reaffirm a prior vote. I appreciate that each of you serves as a volunteer, and I recognize the time and effort this role requires. If the process itself encouraged more collaboration earlier on, I believe much of this could have been resolved from the start.
As I mentioned in my previous letter, this proposed design introduces a new architectural style to Sherman Hill. I read the minutes from the last meeting and understand there was significant discussion. Still, it is difficult to accept that this particular style is viewed as fitting within the established character of our neighborhood. Nearly all new construction here in the past twenty years has reflected and respected the existing aesthetic of surrounding homes.
Beyond the question of style, I also find the overall scale of the structure concerning. The size of the garage, in particular, feels out of place and makes an already narrow lot appear even more crowded.
Finally, I want to note that the relationship of the proposed house and garage to the neighboring property to the west, owned by Noah Brinkmeyer, is of particular concern. I would like to yield the remainder of my time to Mr. Brinkmeyer, who is the most directly affected neighbor.
Thank you again for your time and for the service you provide to our community.

Text 3: If you feel like discussing this, feel free to give me a call. If not, no worries.

In full disclosure, Brad and I have been friends for 15+ years; I'm sure this is why he is comfortable reaching out to me. He did call me on Oct 15. Most of the conversation was him talking, sharing much of the same concerns shared in his text message today. I said as little as possible, did not agree to anything, and thanked him for sharing his concerns.

Ryan Ellsworth AIA, LEED AP

Project Architect
515.657.4695 w | invisionarch.com

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From: Van Essen, Jason M.
To: Susan Frambach; Hanley, Stacey R.; JoshMandelbaun@dmgov.org
Subject: RE: Historic Preservation Commission
Date: Wednesday, November 5, 2025 10:13:53 AM
Attachments: image001.png

Hello Susan-

We have received your email and will share it with the Commission.

Thanks!

Jason

Jason Van Essen, AICP
Planning & Urban Design Administrator
Development Services

CITY OF DES MOINES

City of Des Moines, 602 Robert D. Ray Dr., Des Moines, IA 50309
Phone: (515) 283-4147

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The City of Des Moines has launched a new online platform to make the Zoning and Planning and Design Ordinances (Chapter 134 and Chapter 135) more accessible. Users will also find direct access to multiple GIS maps, a signage calculator, and a tool that generates Regulations by District reports. The new platform is available online at https://online.encodeplus.com/regs/desmoines-ia/index.aspx.

From: Susan Frambach <smg51frambach@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 4, 2025 1:46 PM
To: srhanlye@dmgov.org; Van Essen, Jason M. <jmvanessen@dmgov.org>; JoshMandelbaun@dmgov.org
Subject: Historic Preservation Commission

EXTERNAL EMAIL - This email was sent by a person from outside your organization. Exercise caution when clicking links, opening attachments or taking further action, before validating its authenticity.

My name is Susan Frambach and I am a life long resident of Des Moines, currently living in Sherman Hill. I am writing in regard to the proposed new construction at 1917 Center Street. I am adamantly opposed to approving this construction. My late husband, Ric, and I first purchased property in Sherman Hill in 1984. At that time, the neighborhood had been in decline for years and was considered dangerous and undesirable. In fact, after we purchased our house, we discovered via an article in the Des Moines Register, that the house was condemned. We straightened out that difficulty, proceeded with rehabilitation and moved to the house in July 1985. Ric served on the Sherman Hill Board and on the planning committee, spending many hours drafting the first comprehensive plan for the neighborhood. Because of this planning and neighborhood consensus, properties have been

restored/rehabilitated consistent with the architecture of the Victorian era. Consequently, property values have steadily risen and this is now a very desirable place to live. Having rules and enforcement of these rules enabled this progress. If all of this work, occurring over four decades, is rebuffed and new, modern construction is permitted, the gains made will be lost. Please protect the integrity of our historic district and do not allow construction to proceed.

Thank you for your consideration of my opinion and your work for the city.
Sincerely,
Susan Frambach
682 Bridal Row

September 05, 2025

Jason Van Essen
City of Des Moines
Development Services Department
JMVanessen@dmgov.org

Councilmembers Josh Mandelbaum, Mike Simonson & Carl Voss
Des Moines City Council
JoshMandelbaum@dmgov.org
CarlVoss@dmgov.org
MikeSimonson@dmgov.org

Re: Appeal of Historic Preservation Commission Decision – 1917 Center Street Project

Dear Mr. Van Essen and Councilmembers Mandelbaum & Voss,

On behalf of the Sherman Hill Association (SHA) and concerned neighbors, I write to inform you that we have filed an appeal of the Historic Preservation Commission's approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed Art Deco-style house at 1917 Center Street.

Our appeal is based on the limited time provided to SHA and adjacent neighbors to review the project prior to the HPC hearing, as well as concerns that our specific objections were not fully conveyed to the Commission. While I understand from Josh that the City has modified its outreach process, the effect in this case was that the neighborhood was deprived of a meaningful opportunity to prepare and present objections. In addition to SHA, adjacent neighbors including Randa LeJeune, Brad Argo, Noah Brinkmeyer, and Andrew Rudolphi objected to the project, raising concerns about the incompatibility of the proposed design with the historic character of Sherman Hill. Those concerns were not included in the record considered by the HPC, leaving the decision incomplete.

As documented in the attached correspondence, SHA specifically requested a delay so the neighborhood could be heard. While we do not impugn Commissioner Taenzer's motives or character, it does not appear that he conveyed these objections to the HPC. Given his role as realtor in the property sale and his simultaneous position as a Sherman Hill representative on the Commission, this creates an appearance of conflict of interest to which we object. In the interests of transparency, we believe it would have been appropriate to disclose that we had made a reasonable request for delay and further study and input given that we had not been previously approached about the project.

Our request to the Council is that it either 1) review the project on the merits or 2) remand the matter to the HPC for further consideration, so that the objections of the SHA and adjacent neighbors can be fairly considered in accordance with the City's preservation framework.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to working with you to ensure that new development in Sherman Hill proceeds with both transparency and respect for the neighborhood's historic character.

Sincerely,

Matt Warner-Blankenship
President, Sherman Hill Association

NOTICE OF APPEAL

Filed with the Office of the City Clerk
City of Des Moines, Iowa

Date: September 05, 2025

To: City Clerk, City of Des Moines
Re: Appeal of Historic Preservation Commission Decision – 1917 Center Street Project

Dear City Clerk,

On behalf of the Sherman Hill Association (SHA) and concerned neighbors, I hereby submit this appeal of the Historic Preservation Commission's approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed Art Deco-style new construction at 1917 Center Street.

I. Decision Appealed

The decision of the Historic Preservation Commission granting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the 1917 Center Street project at its meeting on August 20, 2025.

II. Basis for Appeal

This appeal is filed pursuant to Iowa Code § 15.459 and Des Moines Municipal Code § 58-31(f). The SHA was given very limited time to review this project before the Historic Preservation Commission hearing, learning of it only a day or two before the meeting. While we have come to understand that the City has changed its outreach process, this change does not alter the fact that the neighborhood was deprived of a meaningful opportunity to prepare and present its objections.

In addition to the SHA, adjacent neighbors including Randa LeJeune, Brad Argo, Noah Brinkmeyer, and Andrew Rudolphi objected to the project. Their concerns—focused on the incompatibility of the proposed Art Deco design with the historic character of Sherman Hill—were also excluded from the record considered by the Commission.

As documented in the attached correspondence, SHA conveyed its objections and requested a delay so the neighborhood could be heard. This request was sent to Mr. York Taenzer, a Sherman Hill resident serves as a Sherman Hill representative on the HPC but who also acted as realtor for the sale of the property in question (see attached webpage of the listing).

While we absolutely do not impugn Mr. Taenzer's motives or character, it does not appear that he conveyed SHA's specific request and concerns to the Commission. That omission, coupled with his financial interest in the property transaction, creates the appearance of a conflict of interest to which we object.

Under Des Moines Mun. Code § 58-31(c), the HPC must consider (1) City-approved design guidelines, (2) the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and (3) the relationship of proposed changes to exterior features of structures in the neighborhood. The neighborhood's objections concerned the incompatibility of the Art Deco design with the surrounding historic context, a factor central to subsection (3). Because these objections were not heard, the Commission's deliberations and decision were incomplete and failed to address a required element of the ordinance. As a result, the record before the Commission did not reflect the full impact of the project on the historic district, undermining the validity of the decision and therefore making it arbitrary and capricious.

III. Relief Requested

For these reasons, SHA respectfully requests that the City Council either review the project on the merits or remand the 1917 Center Street project back to the Historic Preservation Commission for a procedurally sound rehearing in which SHA and affected neighbors can present their objections on the record.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Warner-Blankenship
President, Sherman Hill Association

From: York Taenzer
To: Warner-Blankenship, Matt
Subject: Re: 1917 Center Street Project
Date: Thursday, September 4, 2025 9:34:20 PM

[WARNING: EXTERNAL SENDER]

Matt,
Why don't you contact city staff to get the transcript of the meeting so you will have all the details you need instead of me trying to recall. I am crazy busy with work and personal stuff. At the meeting a letter was shared (I think from Brad Argo but maybe someone else) about project concerns by neighbors and requesting a delay. We all agreed the plan adhered to the National Park Services Preservation Brief and I think we all agreed it was good design. There are many more steps in the city's approval process for you to express your concerns.

York Taenzer
York@IowaRealty.com
515-321-1873
Iowa Realty Mills Crossing
5901 Mills Civic Pkwy
West Des Moines, IA 50266
Licensed to sell real estate in Iowa

From: Warner-Blankenship, Matt <matt.warner-blankenship@dentons.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 4, 2025 12:35 PM
To: York Taenzer <York@iowarealty.com>
Subject: Re: 1917 Center Street Project

York –

I want to confirm that you specifically shared that the SHA requested a delay to provide more input with the HPC - is that accurate?

Thanks,
Matt

Matt Warner-Blankenship
Shareholder

My pronouns are: (he/him/his)
O +1 515 246 7805

Des Moines

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From: York Taenzer <York@iowarealty.com>
Date: Wednesday, August 20, 2025 at 10:29 PM
To: Warner-Blankenship, Matt <matt.warner-blankenship@dentons.com>
Subject: Re: 1917 Center Street Project

[WARNING: EXTERNAL SENDER]

The commission unanimously approved the proposed (updated) design.

York Taenzer
York@IowaRealty.com
515-321-1873
Iowa Realty Mills Crossing
5901 Mills Civic Pkwy
West Des Moines, IA 50266
Licensed to sell real estate in Iowa

From: Warner-Blankenship, Matt <matt.warner-blankenship@dentons.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 20, 2025 8:51 PM
To: York Taenzer <York@iowarealty.com>
Subject: Re: 1917 Center Street Project

You don't often get email from matt.warner-blankenship@dentons.com.
Learn why this is important

Thanks York. How did it go?

Matt Warner-Blankenship
Shareholder

My pronouns are: (he/him/his)
+1 515 246 7805

Des Moines

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From: York Taenzer <York@iowarealty.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 20, 2025 4:25:12 PM
To: Warner-Blankenship, Matt <matt.warner-blankenship@dentons.com>
Subject: Re: 1917 Center Street Project

[WARNING: EXTERNAL SENDER]

Thank you for sharing your concerns. I appreciate your input. We will see how it goes tonight.

York Taenzer
York@IowaRealty.com
515-321-1873
Iowa Realty Mills Crossing
5901 Mills Civic Pkwy
West Des Moines, IA 50266
Licensed to sell real estate in Iowa

From: Warner-Blankenship, Matt <matt.warner-blankenship@dentons.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 20, 2025 4:11 PM
To: York Taenzer <york@iowarealty.com>
Cc: Sherman Hill Board <board@shermanhilldsm.org>
Subject: 1917 Center Street Project

You don't often get email from matt.warner-blankenship@dentons.com.
Learn why this is important

York -

I hope all is well. I'm writing on behalf of the Sherman Hill Association to share our concerns, and those voiced by our members, including all of the adjacent homes, about the proposed new construction on Center Street that we have recently become aware of.

While the design has been described as Art Deco and technically falls within the district's window of significance, based on the plans we have seen so far, its overall scale, massing, and flat-roofed form feel inconsistent with the surrounding homes. The connection of the courtyard wall to the garage, in particular, gives the project a block-like, imposing quality that doesn't sit comfortably within the existing streetscape, and it would occupy almost the entire lot, and we are concerned that the size and shape of this home would alter the overall streetscape for the worse.

We are also concerned about precedent and are concerned that allowing a project that reads so differently from the neighborhood's character risks opening the door for other large, stylistically inconsistent houses to follow so long as they are "Art Deco."

Finally, we would urge caution in drawing comparisons between this proposal and nearby commercial or multi-family buildings. This is a single-family home on a residential block, and it should be evaluated within that context.

We appreciate the Commission's consideration and hope these concerns will be weighed carefully and addressed in the review process. In our view, the matter should be tabled so that additional neighborhood review and feedback can be solicited before this proceeds as planned.

Thanks,
Matt Warner-Blankenship
President
Sherman Hill Association

Matt Warner-Blankenship
Shareholder

My pronouns are: (he/him/his)

+1 515 246 7805

matt.warner-blankenship@dentons.com | Bio | Website
Dentons Davis Brown PC | The Davis Brown Tower, 215 10th Street, Suite 1300, Des Moines, IA 50309



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Back Des Moines, IA View as owner

Seller represented by York Taenzer with IOWA REALTY MILLS CROSSING

Buyer represented by Aly Williams with REALTY ONE GROUP IMPACT



What's your equity? (It's easy to find ou

Sold - May 2, 2025

Last sold for

$91,500

5,968 sqft lot

1917 Center St, Des Moines, IA 50314

Land
Property type

$91.5K in 2025
Last sold



View as owner Share

US Military & Veterans $75,000 Home Giveaway. See Off. Rules

Property details

Exterior

Land Info

- Lot Description: Flat, Rectangular Lot
- Lot Size Acres: 0.137
- Lot Size Dimensions: 59.83 X 100
- Lot Size Square Feet: 5972

Exterior and Lot Features

- Road Surface Type: Asphalt

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Local Home Services

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Financial Services

LAST CHANCE! US Military & Veterans $75,000 Home Giveaway. See Off. Rules

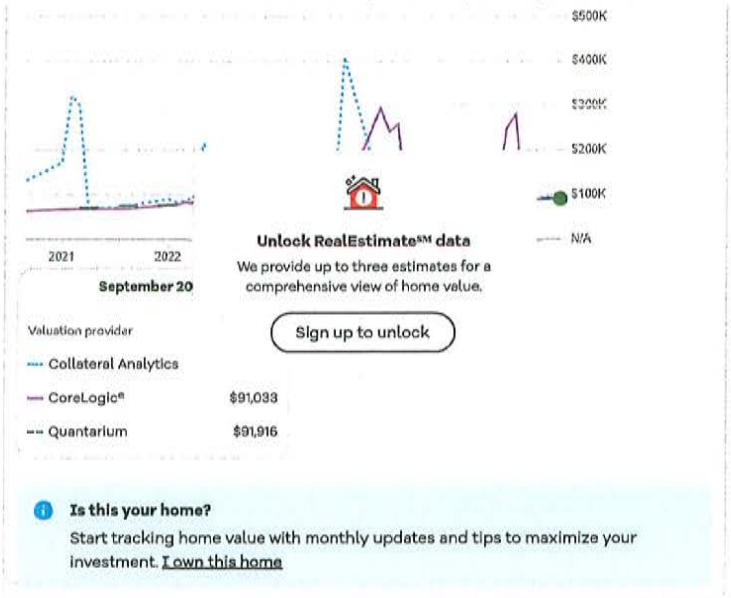
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Home value

RealEstimate℠ Chart Table



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Connect with a lender

Latest home equity rates

Property history

$91,500
Last sold in 2025

$526
2024 taxes

2 permits
Recorded since 2021

Price history

Today

May 2, 2025	Sold DesMoines	$91,500	-

2024

Apr 5, 2024	Sold DesMoines	$81,500 +16.43%	-

Show more

Tax History

Year	Taxes	Total assessment		Land	Additions
2024	$526	$25,800	=	$25,800	+ -
2023	$510	$25,800	=	$25,800	+ -
2022	$506	$20,900	=	$20,900	+ -
2021	$490	$20,900	=	$20,900	+ -
2020	$508	$19,000	=	$19,000	+ -
2019	$474	$19,000	=	$19,000	+ -

2018	$470	$17,100	=	$17,100	+	-

Show more

The price and tax history data displayed is obtained from public records and/or MLS feeds from the local jurisdiction. Contact your REALTOR® directly in order to obtain the most up-to-date information available.

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Permit history

Date	Type of worl		ame ⓘ	Status ⓘ
Aug 14, 2021	Building (residential) garage/shed	**Unlock permit history data** Access public building permits for this property, all in one place.		Applied
Jul 24, 2021	Residential r home or nev accessory hi unit building permit	Sign up to unlock		Applied

Already have an account? Login

The permit history displayed is obtained from public records and provided for informational purposes only. It may not represent the complete permit history for the property. Accuracy is not guaranteed.

Home improvements

Learn which renovations may increase your property value and give you the best return on investment.

Things to consider

Visualize renovations
Upload a few photos, choose your style, and start creating. >

Recommended pros

These pros are highly rated and have upcoming availability in 50314.

Popular services

Home remodel | General contractor | Handyman

Dexter Lab Maintenance Servic
4.3 ★★★★☆ (202 reviews)
2 years in business Hired **487 times**

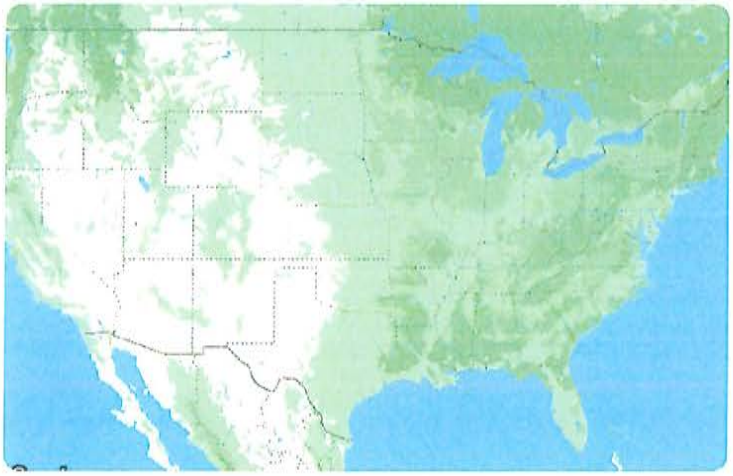
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Neighborhood & schools



Des Moines city in Polk, IA

Nearby Lifestyle Transportation

8 / 10 **Groceries**
New World Kitchen (0.3 mi), Gateway Market (0.3 mi), The Good Butcher (0.4 mi)

8 / 10 **Parks**
Chamberlain Park (0.3 mi)

8 / 10 **Daycares**
Central Academy (0.5 mi), Bright Horizons at the Downtown School (0.6 mi), First United Methodist Church (0.6 mi)

6 / 10 **Cafes**
Smokey Row Coffee (0.1 mi), HomeGrown - Des Moines (0.4 mi), Northern Vessel (0.6 mi)

Show more

Scores provided by Local Logic | Locations provided by yelp

Ask a neighborhood expert. Contact agent

Schools

From listing agent:

Elementary School District: Des Moines Independent High School District: Des Moines Independent
Middle or Junior School District:
Des Moines Independent

We're sorry, no schools data is currently available for this home. Contact an agent for school information.

Environmental risk

Learn more about 1917 Center St

Connect with an agent

Full name*

Email*

Phone*

Are you selling or buying?*

Connect

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Seller represented by:
York Taenzer with Iowa Realty Mills Crossing

Buyer represented by:
Aly Williams with Realty One Group Impact

Broker Location:	WEST DES MOINES
Buyer broker:	Realty One Group Impact
Data Source:	DesMoines
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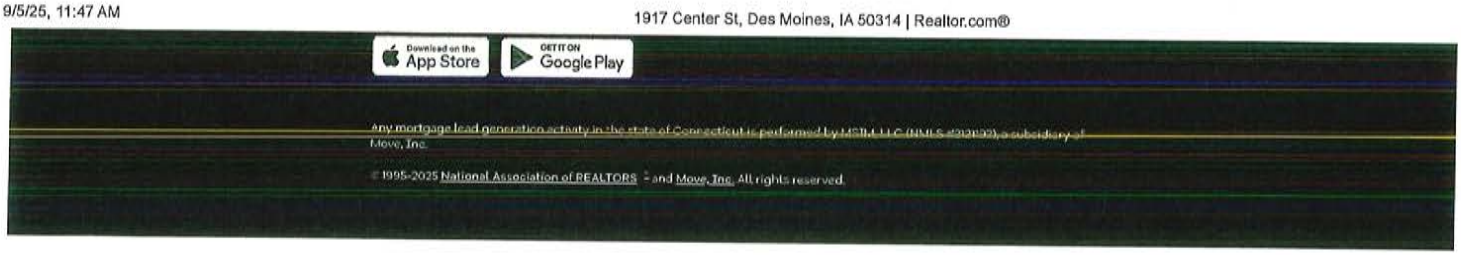
Additional Information About 1917 Center St, Des Moines, IA 50314

See 1917 Center St, Des Moines, IA 50314, a plot of land located in the Sherman Hill neighborhood. View property details, similar homes, and the nearby school and neighborhood information. Use our heat map to find crime, amenities, and lifestyle data for 1917 Center St.

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Massing

New Construction

RESIDENTIAL

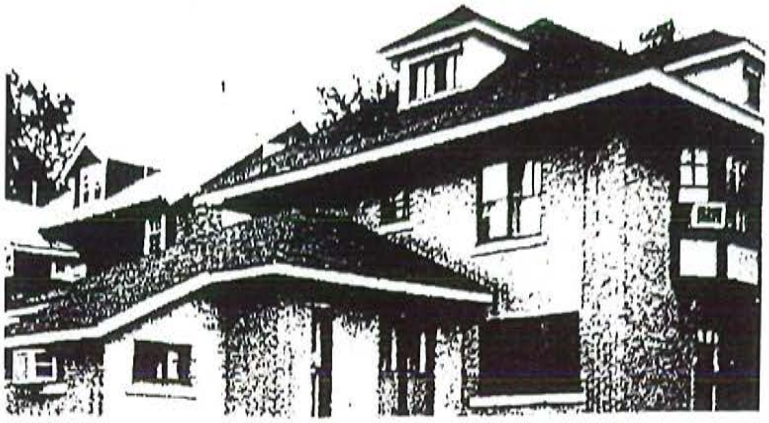
When planning new infill construction in a historic district the following list of characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood should be thoroughly explored and understood. The new construction should show an understanding of these characteristics of historical buildings and site features, not necessarily duplicating them all but establishing a complementary relationship based on them.

The extent to which a new project incorporates similar characteristics and blends with the surroundings will vary from project to project as deemed necessary to become a good neighbor.

1. *Setback from street*
2. *Space from adjacent buildings*
3. *Massing*
4. *Height*
5. *Scale*
6. *Directional emphasis*
7. *Window and door proportions and placement*
8. *Materials*
9. *Color*
10. *Character of decorative elements*

When planning new infill construction small single lots which were historically built on should be given special consideration. The redevelopment of these lots is important to the restoration of the neighborhood streetscape. They should not remain underutilized or be kept as on-grade parking areas.

Those designing new infill projects for historic districts may encounter code and zoning requirements which are more appropriate to suburban development and, if followed, will prevent compatible new work. Special historic district building code (Uniform Code for Building Conservation) and City Zoning Ordinance deal with this problem. Property owners should consult these publications and if necessary, seek variances.



Height

- The height of new construction should be similar in height to other original buildings of its basic architectural type: pitched roof or brick apartment structure or commercial building with flat roof. Height is the vertical distance from grade to the average height of the highest surface.
- New construction should be an appropriate height when it is viewed in relation to other original buildings on the block in which it is built in the neighborhood.
- Single-story structures are not permitted in either of Des Moines' historic districts. 1½ story structures with a steeply pitched roof (8:12 or greater) may be permitted in Sherman Hill if the height is similar to that of the other cottages in Sherman Hill and the location in the neighborhood is appropriate.

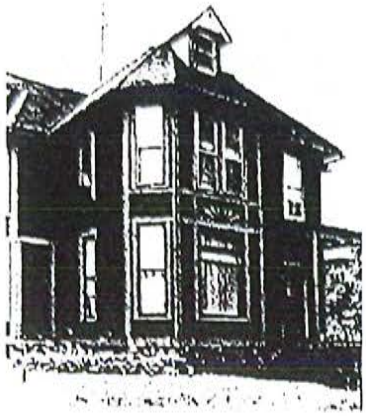
Roof Form

- Roof pitch and roof shape should be the same as that of existing original structures, repeating basic roof forms found in the original neighborhood.
- The roof volumes of new construction should be similar to that of buildings of the same basic type within the same historic district.
- Low pitched roofs (less than 8:12) are not permitted for new construction in either Owl's Head or Sherman Hill.
- Wood shingles should be used on new construction with pitched roofs if this is the predominant original roofing material in the neighborhood. Asphalt or fiberglass shingles in a medium to dark color may be an acceptable substitute.

The massing of a building is the way the main volumes of the build-ing are composed. It is a combination of the base size and shape, overall height and roof form and is most often the strongest design element of a structure.

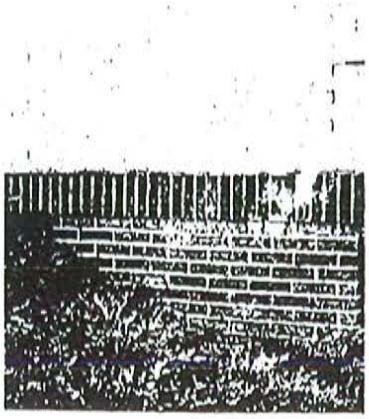
The massing of a building can be horizontal or vertical, compact, or broken up, symmetrical or asymmetrical. During particular times in history typical approaches were taken to massing. For example, the wood frame structures of Sherman Hill were typically 2½ stories, between 25 and 40 feet in height, with 10'+ floor-to-floor heights, and a first floor height of 1½ -3' above grade. Roofs were often steeply pitched (12:12) and were typically hipped or gabled. The result was a more massive structure than is typical for single-family residences built today. This large volume, often no longer feasible in a single family residence, can be economically workable by creating a multi-family building on a site which originally had a single family building

Materials



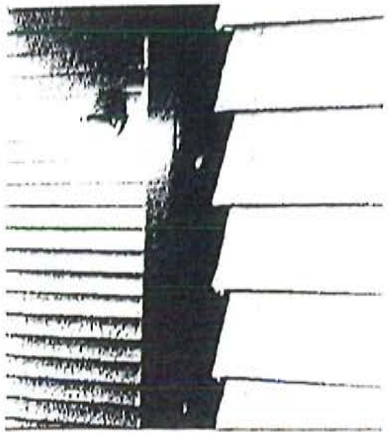
Vertical emphasis

- Vertical emphasis is a characteristic of the architecture of both historic districts. It should be reinforced by overall building height, vertical windows, doors with transoms, window bays, repeating column bays, and floor-to-floor heights.
- The floor-to-floor heights of new construction should match the floor-to-floor heights of adjacent historic buildings or other original buildings of its basic style and construction type.
- Strong horizontal emphasis is not appropriate in either the Owl's Head or Sherman Hill historic districts.



Foundations

- The amount of exposed foundation should be typically 12-18" or greater depending on the other similar original buildings in the neighborhood, compatibility with building style, adjacent buildings and site characteristics.
- The exposed portions of new foundations should be faced with brick similar to the original brick typically used in both historic neighborhoods.
- Light wells should be constructed of brick or concrete.
- Openings in foundation should be similar in size and placement to those on similar type buildings in the neighborhood



Siding

- New construction should continue the material pallette of the historic buildings in type, size and color.
- Masonite and other synthetic sidings may be an acceptable substitute for wooden clapboard siding; however, they should be of high quality, well-detailed and appropriate in size, texture and color.
- Other very contemporary and contrasting new materials may also be appropriate when a complementary relationship is established with the surrounding context.
- Color selection should be based on architectural design, historic appropriateness and compatibility with other adjacent buildings.

The apartment blocks, because of their overall size and height, further contribute to the relatively large scale of buildings in Sherman Hill. These blocks, typically built between 1900 1920, are characterized by their brick material, simple rectangular shapes, flat fronts, orientation to the street, and concentration of overall detail at doorways, cornices and windows. These design elements contribute to the historic pattern of Sherman Hill and should be considered in the massing of new multi family buildings.

The massing of the buildings in Owl's head, though predominantly single family, is also relatively large - 2-2½ stories with substantial bases. Many of the homes are rectangular in plan with the long side facing the street and the roof ridge running parallel to the street, incorporating prominent gable and dormers.

Site Relationships





Street Rhythm

- The spacing between buildings on a block and the size of building fronts should relate to the existing rhythm that is already established on a block face.
- Larger residential buildings should be visually subdivided and broken down in scale and given a vertical directional emphasis to maintain this rhythm.
- Horizontal and monotonous facades which break the street rhythm should not be used in historic districts.

Solar Design

- Elements of solar design, either active collectors, trombe walls or passive collectors, should be kept to the back or a side away from the street and incorporated into the building design to result in the site placement, massing and roof forms which are compatible with the neighborhood pattern.
- Solar collectors should be mounted flush to the roof plane and at the same angle as the roof plane.
- In-fill buildings should be designed and positioned on the site to minimize the blockage of sunlight from solariums and sunspaces of existing adjacent buildings.

The Front

- New entry levels should match the height of the entry level of adjacent buildings of its basic construction type unless the site makes this inappropriate
- The general historical pattern for the way the fronts of original buildings were designed should be carried to new construction of similar building types.
- Sherman Hill buildings constructed on corners should typically face the streets running north/south
- Front porches and steps, articulation of surface areas, special emphasis at window and door areas, and other decorative features should be used in a simple contemporary version of the neighborhood pattern in order to lend emphasis to the entry and make it visible from down the street.

Historic Buildings generally have a definite "front" which faces the street. This is the location of the primary entrance and makes an inviting and interesting presence to the passerby. This often means special emphasis at window and door areas, front porches and steps, articulation of surface areas and edges, and other special features which lend emphasis to the entry when viewed from a distance down the street. Landscaping elements consistent with the established historic pattern can aid in defining the front and establish a relationship to the street which ties the new project to its context. Low hedges, fences, retaining walls and changes in grade may be necessary to maintaining continuity with other site elements common to your particular street.

Historically, Sherman Hill's corner buildings typically faced the street running north/south. Parking functions were kept to the back and the front yards were oriented to pedestrian traffic. These relationships should be maintained in any new construction

Examples and pictures of modern homes that were denied construction in historic districts

ChatGPT said:

Here are **three documented examples** of modern- or contemporary-style homes (or new construction proposals) that were *denied* or blocked in historic districts. Each includes an image group, the background of the case, and what the rejection tells us about how historic-district design review works.

1. Oakwood Historic District (Raleigh, NC)







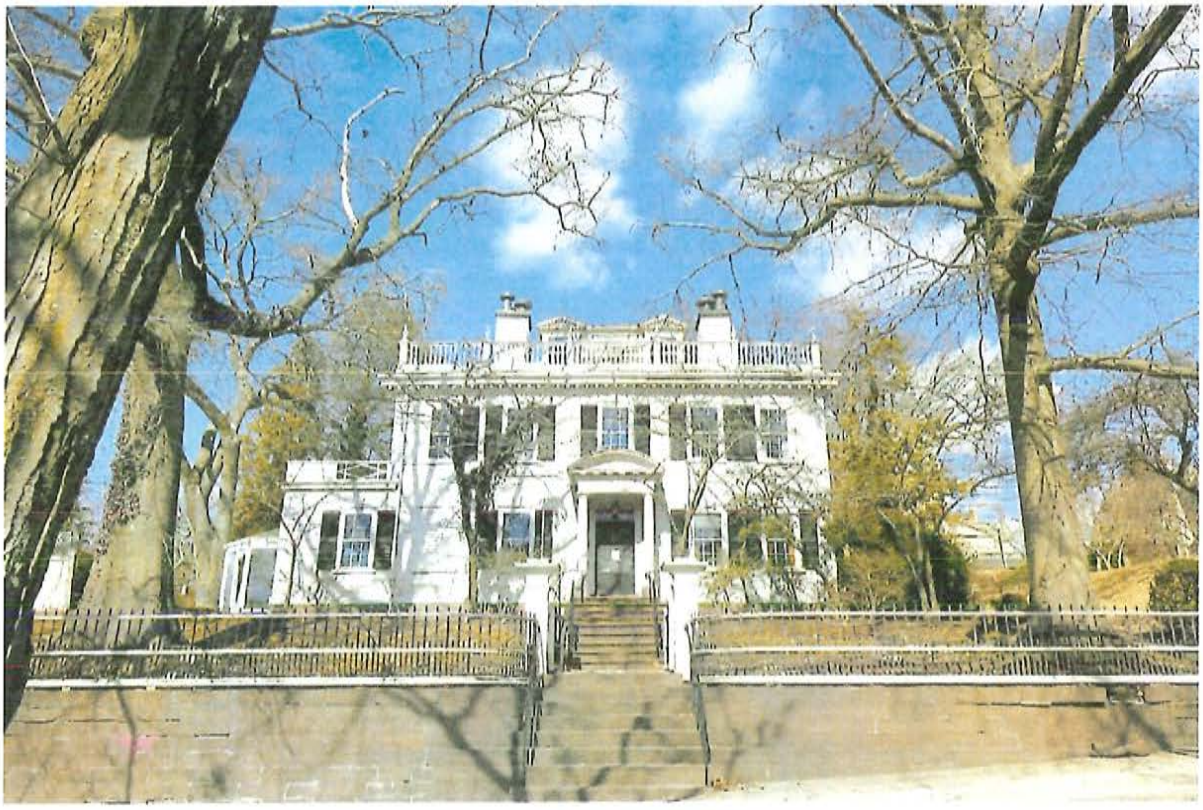
6

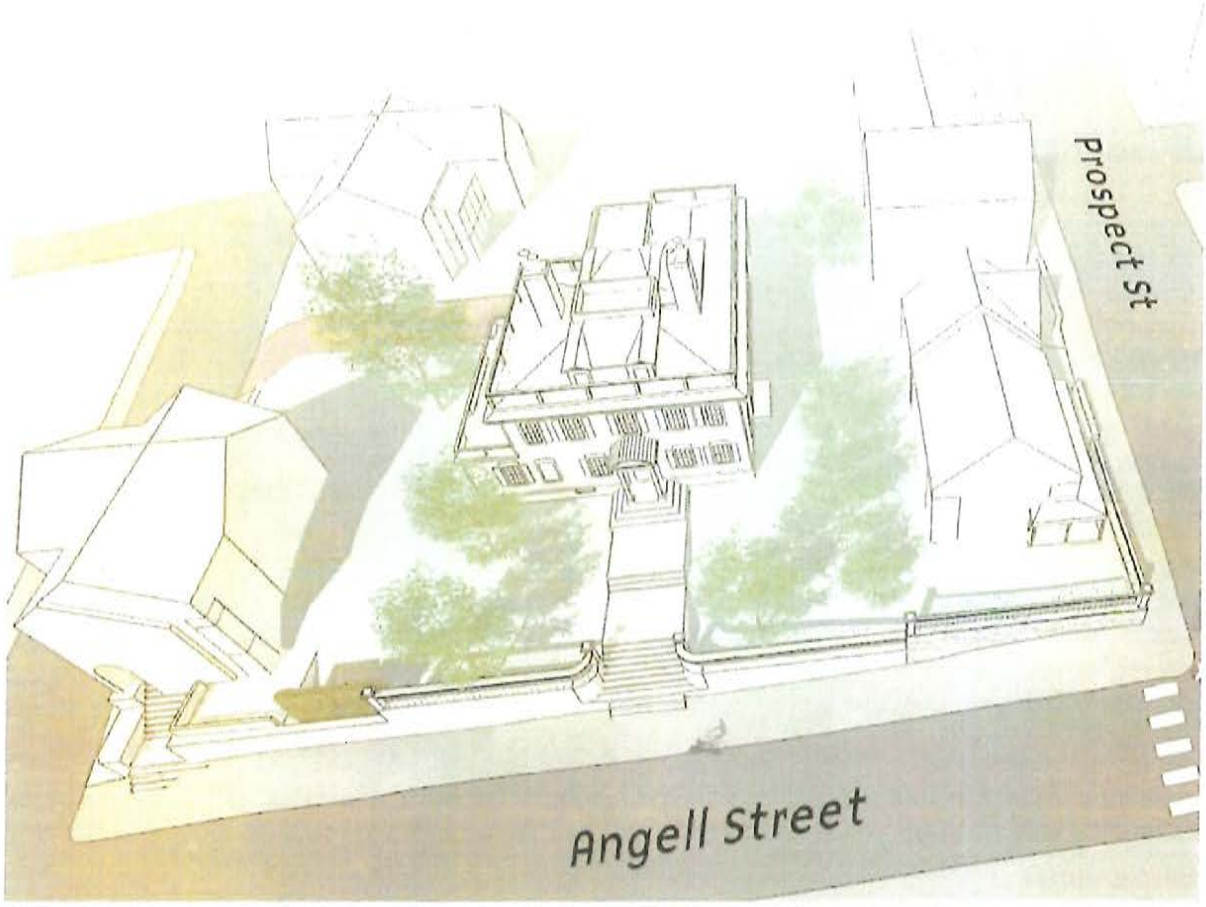
Background:

- Architect Louis Cherry designed a modern-looking house in Oakwood, which is a historic neighborhood in Raleigh containing 19th- and early-20th-century houses. Vanity Fair
- Though the design had received initial approval by the local Historic Development Commission, a neighbour appealed, and the Board of Adjustment ultimately reversed the permit because of procedural issues (and perhaps aesthetic objections). Vanity Fair
- The neighbour objected to the "modern" character of the house, fearing it would disrupt the historic feel of the district. Vanity Fair

Key takeaway:
Even a modestly modern house that tries to "fit in" (in this case designed to be compatible) may still face rejection if the community and review boards feel it conflicts with the character of the historic district. One practical lesson: in historic districts, approvals aren't guaranteed even when zoning permits the build; design review and appeals can overturn things.

2. College Hill Historic District (Providence, RI) – Lot 64 Angell Street




Prospect St
Angell Street



6

Background:

- A developer proposed subdividing a large historic lot (which included the 1796–97 Captain George Benson House) into multiple smaller lots and building new homes around it. The Providence Eye+1
- While the zoning law technically permitted major subdivision and new construction, the Historic District Commission ruled that one of the proposed structures (on the corner of Angell and Prospect St) would obscure key sight-lines, harm the historic house's dominance, and thus adversely affect the historic district. Thus the concept was *not approved*. ArchDaily
- Importantly: the denial was *not* against "modern" architecture per se, but rather it was about the massing, placement, visibility, and compatibility of the new structure in the historic context. The Providence Eye+1

Key takeaway:
Historic district review often focuses not only on stylistic match but also on **scale, siting, sight-lines, context**. A modern design might be acceptable if it appropriately respects those elements—but if not, it can be rejected.

3. Village of Hinsdale Historic District (Illinois)





The 100 block of East First Street will look a lot different with this proposed home poised to replace the historic Whitney House. Developer Robert Cimala plans to replace the nearly 150-year-old Italianate architectural vestige with the more modern design seen here and turn


Google
Image capture: Oct 2022 © 2025 Google United States





The 100 block of East First Street will look a lot different with this proposed home poised to replace the historic Whitney House. Developer Robert Cimala plans to replace the nearly 150-year-old Italianate architectural vestige with the more modern design seen here and turn the front entrance from First to Park Avenue, as seen in

"P3 142 e first 9-4.icml" is available for anyone to edit.

Cimala said it can't feasibly be preserved. (Images provided)

6

Background:

- A homeowner and architect in Hinsdale submitted a proposal for a new home, described as contemporary/modern in character. The local Historic Preservation Commission and design review team critiqued it, saying while it was a "fine design, lovely home, but not for the historic district." CitizenPortal
- Specifically, the trustees preferred more conventional features – e.g., double-hung windows, front porch, more traditional references – rather than the modern orientation of the proposed design. The application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) was rejected. CitizenPortal

Key takeaway:

Even if a modern design is high quality, in many historic districts the review boards expect "traditional" architectural cues or direct reference to the prevailing styles in the district. If a design veers too far from those cues, it may be denied.

Summary of Patterns

Here are some common threads across these cases:

- **Historic district guidelines** matter a lot: they typically govern compatibility of new construction, not just preservation of old buildings.
- **Style alone isn't everything**, but it is influential: "Modern" isn't automatically banned, but it must often align with context, scale, materials, façade rhythm, etc.
- **Siting and massing** are as important as design details: how a building sits in the lot, its height, setbacks, visibility, relationship to old structures.
- **Community/neighbor reactions** and appeals can derail approved-plans (or pending ones) if perceived to conflict with neighborhood character.
- **Review processes and Certificates of Appropriateness** are key steps; denial means you either redesign or abandon.

Would you like **more examples** (with pictures) across different cities, perhaps including both approved and denied modern homes in historic districts? I can pull together a broader gallery of ~ 8-10 case studies if you like.

Sources

You said:

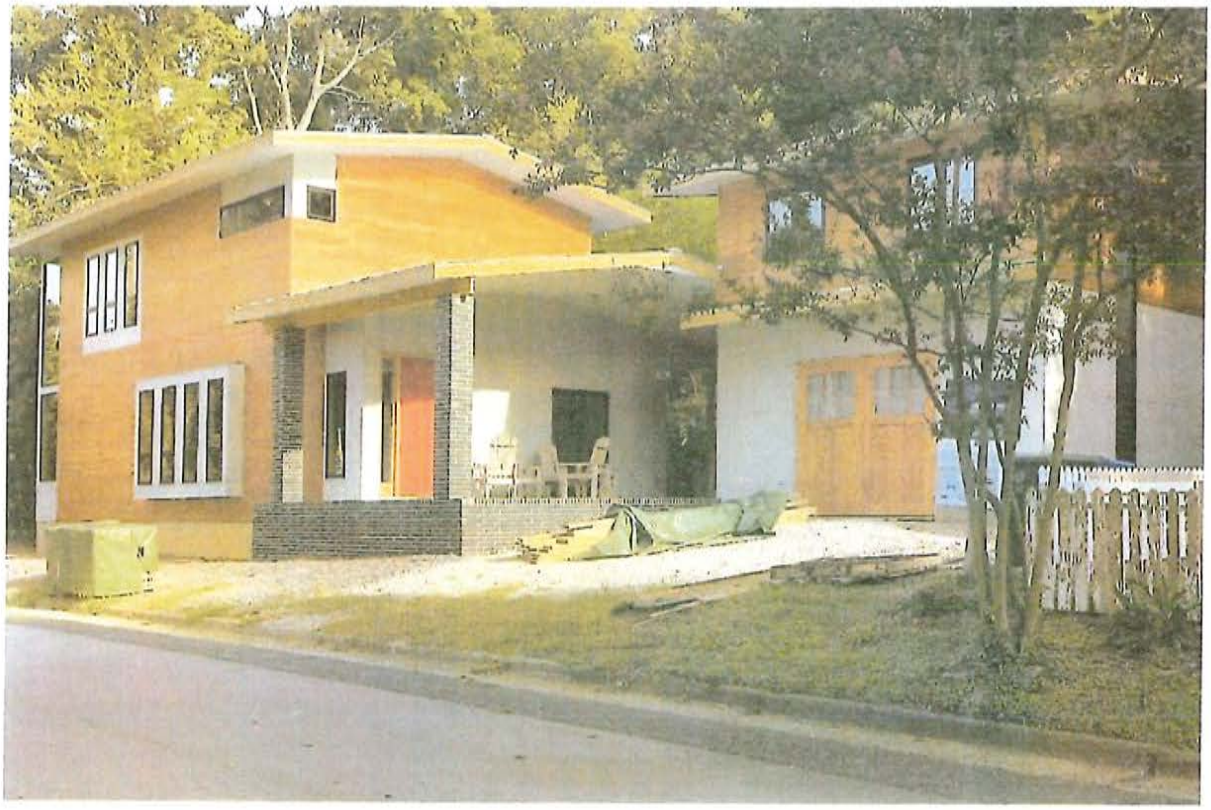
Yes, show me

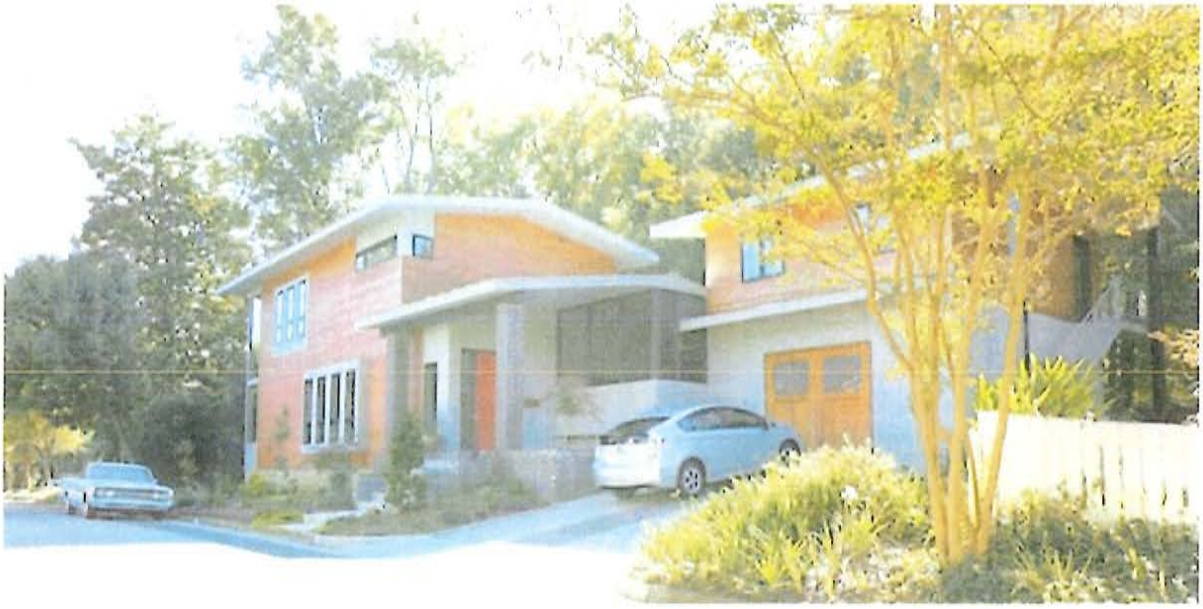
ChatGPT said:

Great — here are **five additional case-studies** of modern/new construction proposals (or builds) in historic districts, with pictures and background. They span a range of outcomes (some approved, some denied/blocked) so you'll get a broader sense of how this plays out.

1. Oakwood Historic District, Raleigh (516 Euclid St)







6

Overview:
Architect Louis Cherry and his wife designed a modern-inspired two-story house in the Oakwood Historic District of Raleigh, NC. The local historic-district review commission originally approved the design and granted a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA).

Challenge:
A neighbor appealed, arguing the home's contemporary look "did not fit" the historic neighborhood character. The city's Board of Adjustment revoked the permit on procedural grounds.

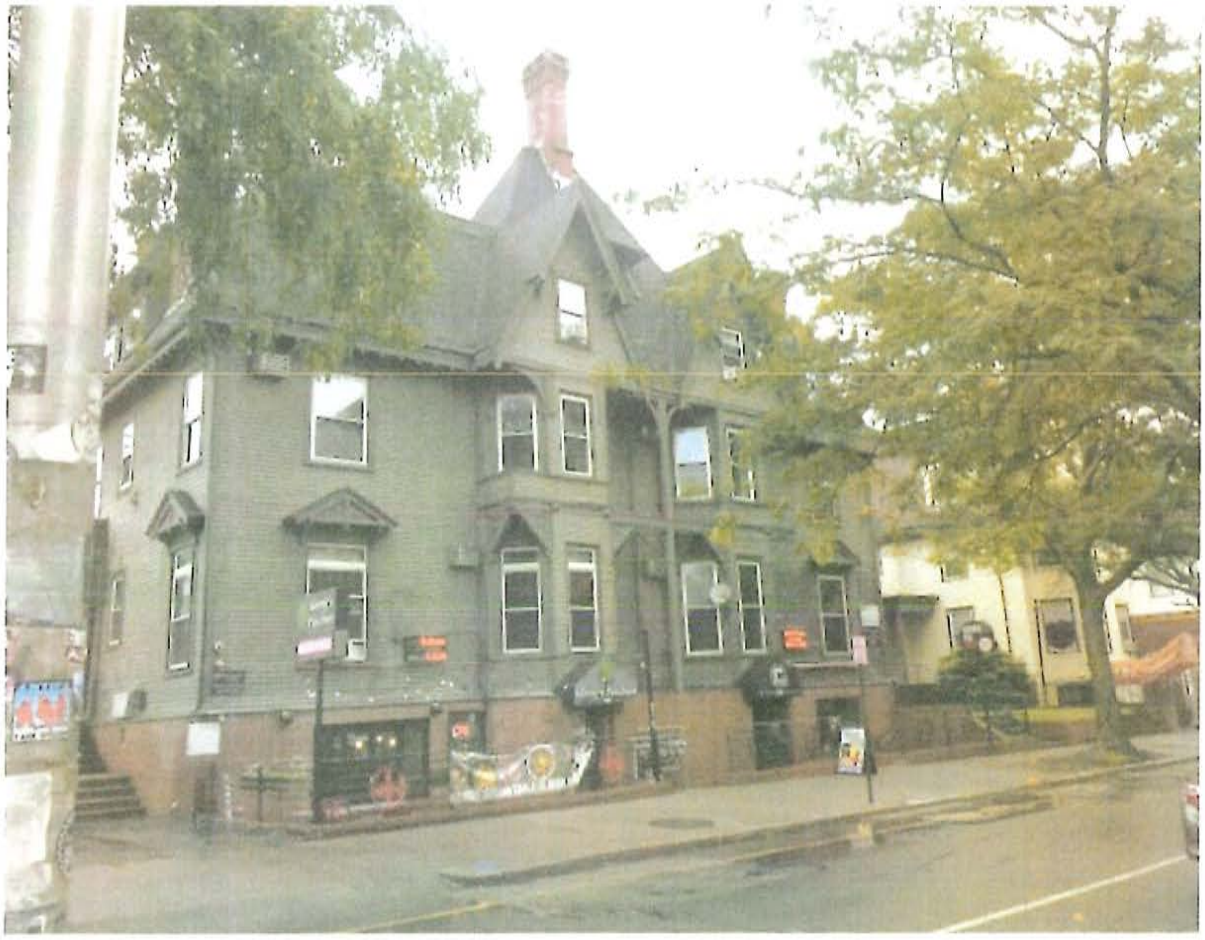
Outcome:
Later, the state appeals court upheld the homeowner's right to build, ruling that simply being "too modern" was not sufficient to block the construction.

Takeaway:
Even though this one *didn't* end in a denial of modern construction, it shows the high risk, expense and community-response that new modern homes in historic districts can face. The process can be drawn out and contentious.

2. College Hill Historic District, Providence RI – Proposed Subdivision & New Build







6

Overview:
In this case a large historic lot including a house from 1796–97 was proposed to be subdivided and new homes built around it. The district is guarded for its 18th/19th-century architecture.

Challenge:
The historic district commission rejected one of the proposed new homes, finding that it would obscure key sight-lines, harm the dominance of the historic house, and be incompatible with the district context.

Takeaway:
Here the issue wasn't purely style but **scale, siting, visibility**, and how the new home fit into the historic fabric. A modern home might be acceptable if these aspects are handled, but if not it can be blocked.

3. Sherman Hill Historic District, Des Moines IA – Proposed International/Art Deco-Style Home







6

Overview:

In this very recent case (2025) a modern home (International style/Art Deco inspired) was proposed on a vacant lot in the Sherman Hill historic district.

Challenge:

Local residents and the neighborhood association objected, saying the design did *not* align with the district's historic character of Victorian/Queen Anne/Craftsman homes. They filed an appeal after the initial approval.

Takeaway:
This shows that even though historic districts often allow new construction, when a design very visibly deviates from the prevailing neighborhood language (both in style and scale) it can trigger appeals and rejection risk.

4. Savannah Historic District, Georgia – Modern Architecture vs Preservation

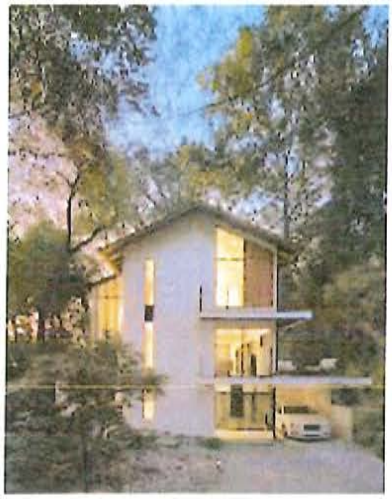


Overview:
In Savannah with many strict historic districts, modern/new architecture is rare and heavily scrutinized. A recent article noted that while not outlawed, modern homes are often forced to *blend* with historic surroundings. The Wall Street Journal

Takeaway:
This is a good "caution zone" example: even if a modern home is allowed in principle, the practical difference between "allowed" and "approved with peace" is large. The design review boards emphasize continuity of rhythm, scale, materials and relationship to historic fabric.

5. Various Mid-Century Modern Homes in Historic Districts Facing Demolition/Removal







6

Overview:

Not all cases are about new modern homes; some involve mid-century homes within historic districts that are *removed* or denied designation, which reflect the flip side of the issue: what happens when a "modern" house is part of the historic fabric (or trying to be). For example, the article "Stop Tearing Down Midcentury-Modern Houses!" points out the

risk for mid-century modern homes even within historic districts.
Takeaway:
Historic districts often reflect traditional styles (Victorian, Craftsman, etc.). Modern homes may face uphill battles—even when they are old enough or significant enough to be worthy of preservation.

Summary of Key Patterns

- Modern/new design in a historic district is **not automatically prohibited**, but the review process is difficult and unpredictable.
- **Style alone** is only part of the equation — **scale, form, materials, siting, visibility, context** matter a lot.
- Neighbors and preservation-minded residents often exert strong influence, and appeals or litigation are common.
- Even after approval, design-review and zoning boards may still intervene (often on procedural grounds).
- Successful modern homes in historic districts tend to either:
    - Respect the scale, rhythm, setback, etc of the district while introducing modern language; or
    - Lie in an area within the district that already has a variety of architectural styles and is more tolerant of modern infill.
- Anticipate higher costs, delays, and risk of rejection or appeals when building modern in a historic district.

If you like, I can **pull together a gallery of ~ 10-15 more examples,** with *both* denied and approved modern homes in historic districts from across the U.S., along with links to case-documents. Would you like that?

Sources

You said:

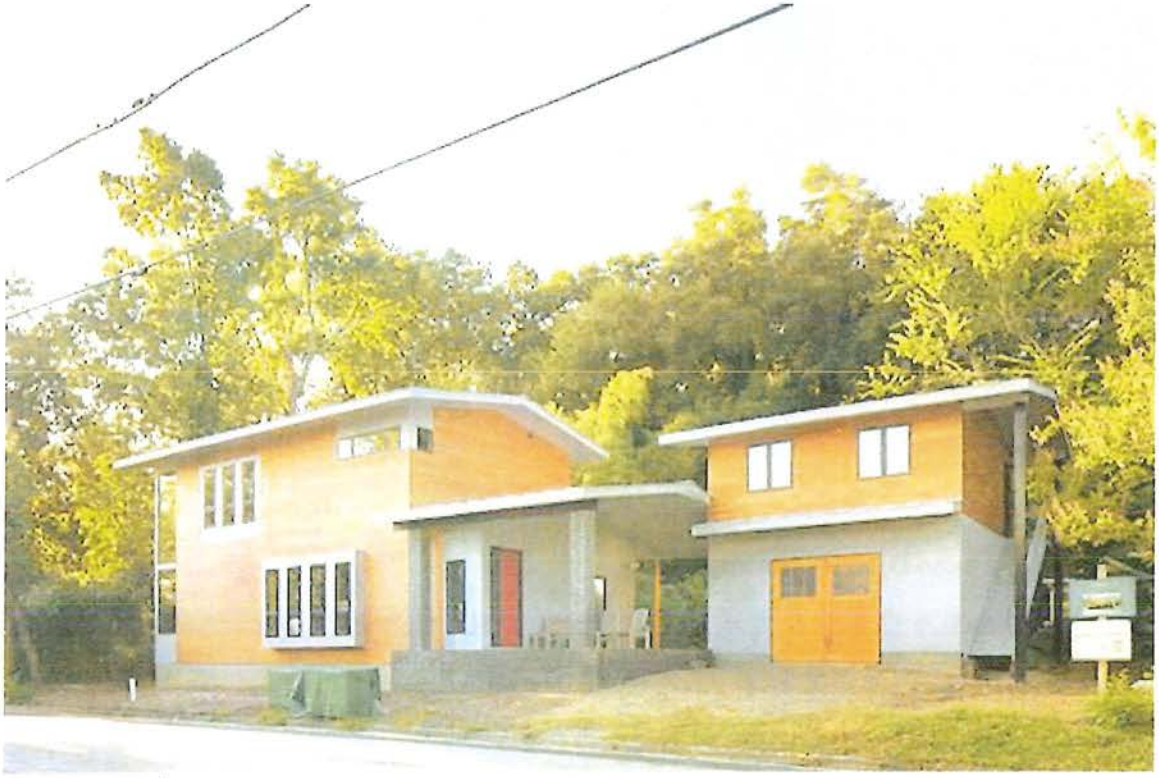
Yes please

ChatGPT said:

Here are **seven additional case studies** of modern homes (or new/altered homes) in or adjacent to historic districts — with some accepted, some rejected, to provide a broader picture. For each I include background, images, and key take-aways. Because in many cases the full documentation is limited, some are more illustrative than deeply documented.

1. Oakwood Historic District, Raleigh NC







Background: Architect Louis Cherry designed a modern-looking house (516 Euclid St) in Oakwood, a historic district with lots of 19th/early-20th century homes. The local Historic Development Commission initially approved the design, but a neighbor appealed; the Board of Adjustment revoked the permit on procedural grounds.
Key take-away: Even when design review boards initially approve a modern home, appeals and procedural challenges (standing, jurisdiction) can undo things. Modern design isn't automatically permitted simply because new construction is allowed.

2. Boulevard-Raymond Road Historic District, West Hartford CT




RAYMOND ROAD
EXISTING RESIDENCE
EXISTING RESIDENCE
EL. 104
PROPOSED 2-FAMILY
EL. 103
EXISTING RESIDENCE #146
EL. 101.5
EXISTING RESIDENCE #150
EL. 99
EXISTING 2-FAMILY #152
EL. 99
DRIVEWAY
EXISTING SIDEWALK
EXISTING SPACES
12 UNITS ±
EXIST'G GARAGE
STRUCTURED GRASS PARKING
APPROX EDGE OF TROUT BROOK
26' SETBACK
125' SETBACK
NORTH



4

Background: A homeowner in this historic district sought to build a new duplex and five carriage houses plus detached garages in the rear of several lots, but the district's Historic District Commission denied the plan. New Haven Register

Key take-away: The conflict isn't always aesthetic style—it can be **density, use,** or **mass** (e.g., many new units on a lot) rather than simply "modern look." Historic-district review often controls more than façade style: it can control scale, lot division, use.

3. Siesta Key (Sarasota County, FL)

Architectural Overview - Ranch House



Gerlach Residence 112 Sandy Hook Road South

Flat or gently sloping front gabled roofs

Jalousie and clerestory windows

Vertical wooden siding or concrete block construction often scored to emphasize horizontality

Open ceilings with exposed rafters and ridge beams

Exterior cantilevered beams

Interior finishes that often include tongue and groove vertical paneling and terrazzo floors.

Integrity-Section 66-114 of the Sarasota County Code indicates that the site proposed for designation must possess at least three attributes of integrity. Four are identified.

Location – occupies its original location

Setting – retains the natural setting of Siesta Key



Along the bayou (both)



Association – the home has a historical connection with Mary Rockwell Hook as demonstrated by the Declaration of Restrictions recorded in S.C. Deed Book 350.

Feeling – retention of the natural environment provides a sense and feeling of the past

Architectural Overview - Ranch House



Gerlach Residence 112 Sandy Hook Road South

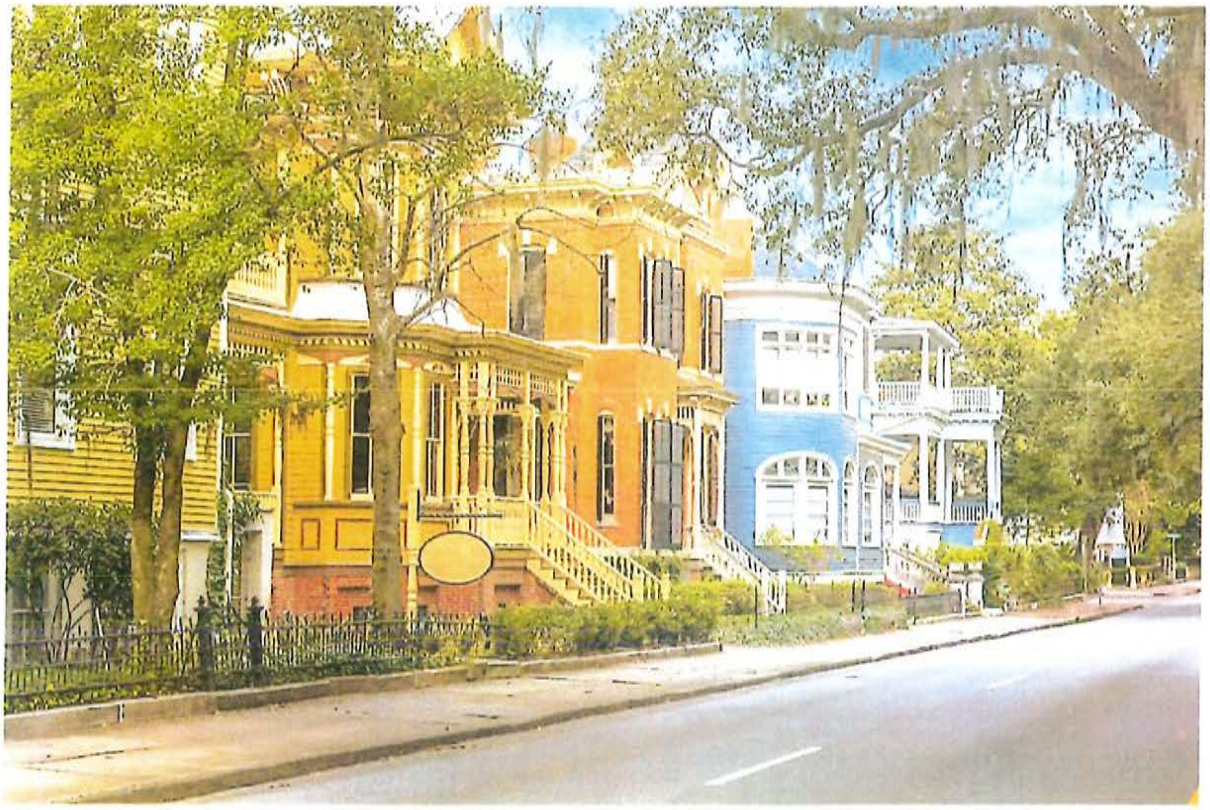
- Flat or gently sloping front gabled roofs
- Jalousie and clerestory windows
- Vertical wooden siding or concrete block construction often scored to emphasize horizontality
- Open ceilings with exposed rafters and ridge beams
- Exterior cantilevered beams
- Interior finishes that often include tongue and groove vertical paneling and terrazzo floors.

4

Background: A mid-century modern ranch (1960) built in a subdivision developed by noted architect Mary Rockwell Hook was denied formal historic designation because of "later additions and alterations" and the fact that the original owners were not seen to have made sufficient historic-significance contribution.

Key take-away: The decision here was about *designation*, not new build. But it demonstrates that modern homes themselves (even mid-century) in historic contexts are sometimes blocked from recognition—and thus may lack protections, increasing risk of demolition or incompatible alteration.

4. Savannah Historic District, Savannah GA



4

Background: An article noted that while modern architecture is *not* outright prohibited in Savannah's historic districts, there is strong resistance and many new projects require careful blending. The review boards emphasise compatibility with the historic fabric.

Key take-away: Even where modern design *can* be approved, the bar is higher in strict historic districts. You'll likely need to show how the design respects scale, rhythm, setback, materials, and the "feel" of the district.

5. Sherman Hill Historic District, Des Moines IA







4

Background: A recent (2025) proposed modern house (International/Art Deco style) was met with neighborhood opposition in Sherman Hill, a historic district known for

Victorian/Queen Anne/Craftsman homes. An appeal was filed over the approval process.

Key take-away: Modern proposals may run into resistance when district character is strongly skewed toward historic styles. Even if technically allowable, public/neighborhood opposition and review board scrutiny can delay or block construction.

6. Greenwich Fourth Ward Historic District, Greenwich CT







GREENSKY REAL ESTATE LLC

S.R. MINOR & CO., INC.

Background: Though not exactly a "modern home in a historic district" example of new build, this case involved denial of a historic overlay designation for an 1880s house with many alterations — showing how historic-district controls also extend to which homes *can* claim historic status.

Key take-away: The control mechanisms behind historic districts are broad: they affect new construction, demolition, alteration, and **designation** of existing buildings. If you're building new, you also must understand how these overlays and review rules apply.

7. General Design Strategy Considerations



4

Background: According to an article in Dwell magazine, designing a new modern home in a historic neighborhood can work if you pay attention to proportions, form, setback, and neighborhood context.
Key take-away: If you're contemplating a modern/new home in a historic district, these design strategies improve odds of approval:

- Match the **scale** (height, width, roofline) of adjacent homes.
- Maintain **setbacks** and rhythm of the street.
- Use **materials** or colors that reference the context (even if interpreted in a modern way).
- Show how your design will **sit** in the lot and relate to its neighbors rather than dominate or clash.

If you like, I can **compile a full gallery of ~ 15-20 case studies** — each with 2-4 images, links to review board decisions (where available), and a table summarizing **approved vs denied, key risk factors, design responses**. Would you like that?

Baumgartner, Laura L.

From: Robert Beaman <rgb01@rocketmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 5, 2026 11:09 AM
To: Boesen, Connie S.; CityClerk
Cc: Nicole
Subject: 1917 Center St. Appeal of Historic Preservation Committee ruling

Mayor Boesen,

Hi, my name is Rob Beaman, and my wife Nicole and I are the owners of the property located at 1917 Center St. in Sherman Hill.

As you are aware the approval of appropriateness issued by the Historic Preservation Committee on December 17, 2025 has once again been appealed to the City Council and is on the agenda for the upcoming January 12 meeting.

Aside from introducing ourselves as the owners of the property, I'm writing in the hope you might be able to provide some clarity regarding the intention of the City Council as it relates to the appeal. As it is worded it is not clear if the appeal is calling the ruling of the HPC into question, or again questioning the process by which the ruling was rendered.

Nicole and I have not been through a process of this nature (nor had we ever appeared before the City Council prior to the last appeal) and are left unsure if we should be prepared to defend the design of our home, or once again the process by which it was approved. While the defense of the process is fairly straightforward, a defense of the design is fairly intricate (and has already been made before the HPC twice).

When appearing before the council during the first appeal the concerned parties were each given two minutes to present. Understanding what we are defending, and how long we have to make our defense would be of great assistance as we prepare for the meeting on the 12th.

We would appreciate any insight you can share and are also available at any point this week should you want to review the details of the discussions that occurred during the HPC review process.

Best Regards,

Rob Beaman

Dear Councilmembers Josh Mandelbaum, Mike Simonson and Carl Voss

We are writing to formally express our opposition to the appeal filed by Noah Brinkmeyer against the approved Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed new construction at 1917 Center Street, located within the Sherman Hill Historic District.

The proposed project has undergone review and approval by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) twice. At the first meeting on August 20, 2025, the HPC heard an analysis of the project from City of Des Moines Urban Developer Stacey Hanley along with her recommendation for conditional approval based upon several changes to the design. Prior to their discussion of the proposed design a letter in opposition to the project was given to each member of the HPC by Ms. Hanley. After thoughtful debate, the Certificate of Appropriateness was unanimously approved. On November 5, the HPC once again reviewed this proposal at the direction of City Council following an appeal. At this hearing, the HPC opened the floor for concerned parties to share their thoughts. Five residents of the neighborhood were able to make detailed presentations related to their concerns. The HPC again engaged in a debate on the merits of the project, sought clarification on several details from our design team, and once again unanimously approved the Certificate of Appropriateness for this project. For more depth and to see the full set of materials and minutes from both of these meetings, please access https://www.dsm.city/government/boards_commissions/historic_preservation_commission_meetings.php#outer-567sub-582

In both hearings this project was thoroughly reviewed by HPC. In both hearings the HPC read or listened to concerns from the public. In both hearings the HPC confirmed the proposed design meets the Architectural Guidelines set forth in "Architectural Guidelines for New Construction in Des Moines' Historic Districts", as well as the guidelines set forth by the Des Moines Historic Preservation Commission. The HPC further confirmed the proposed design adheres to the National Park Service's guidelines for New Construction within the Boundaries of Historic Properties and Neighborhoods which states, "new construction should also be distinct from the old and must not attempt to replicate historic buildings elsewhere on site and to avoid creating a false sense of historic development".

Throughout this process we have engaged with the City of Des Moines Development Services, as well as HPC, the group appointed by the City Council to review proposed projects in Des Moines Historic Districts. The Historic Preservation Commission carefully evaluated the design and scope of the project to ensure compatibility with the historic character of the district while also allowing responsible and reasonable property use.

As our discussions with Development Services and the HPC progressed, we have continued to evolve the design in response to their feedback. The following are changes to the scope and design of the project made to date:

Prior to 8/20 HPC Hearing (per City of Des Moines Design Development comments).

- Pushed the entire house and landscape/retaining walls to the East 2'-0" for a total distance of 5'-0" away from the property line.

- Added an additional window to the West facade on Level 1 (kitchen) to break up the blank wall.
- Raised the rear courtyard wall slightly to remove the 'notch' between the top of wall and the bottom of house soffit.
- Changed from a solid to a perforated wall above 6' in height to break up the West facade.

In response to 8/20 HPC Certificate of Appropriateness Conditions.

- House shifted an additional 3'- 2 1/2" East to 8' 2 1/2" off property line.
- Garage shifted 5'-0" East.

In Response to 11/5 HPC Certificate of Appropriateness Conditions.

- Privacy fence on West facade shortened to 6'-0" tall with a 1 1/2" pipe rail running at 8'-0" above finished floor to promote future vine growth.
- Materiality of the privacy fence on West facade was switched from stucco-clad concrete to a black-finished metal fence and rail.
- Two windows were added to the West facade of the garage.
- Garage was reduced in scale in the West/East dimension by ~4'-0" and is now ~39'-0" x 24'-0" which allows the West wall of the garage to be flush with the privacy wall.
- Removed the site retaining walls along Center St. as well as along the neighboring property line to the West
- Of note: there is a 6'-0" tall privacy fence along the entire West facade of the garage and privacy wall, recently installed by the neighbor to the West

We have worked extensively with our architectural team to address the questions and concerns identified by the City of Des Moines Development Services, the HPC and where possible the residents of the neighborhood to bring a high quality, architecturally sound design to this long vacant property.

The appeal filed challenges a project that has met all required standards and has followed due process as established by the City Council. Allowing this appeal to overturn a properly vetted and approved project would set a concerning precedent, undermining the integrity of the city's established review process and creating uncertainty for other property owners who rely on clear, consistent application of the rules.

We have made a good-faith effort to respect the historic nature of the district through thoughtful design, appropriate materials, and compliance with all preservation requirements. The project contributes to the continued vitality of the neighborhood while honoring its historic significance.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the City Council to deny the appeal and uphold the approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness for this project.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued commitment to fair and balanced decision-making for our community. Should you find it helpful to discuss this matter further, please reach out as we would be happy to engage in further discussions prior to the January 12 council meeting.

Sincerely,

Rob and Nicole Beaman

1917 Center Street

25-1680
33

Register Order No. 13195 Roll Call Legal Bulletin Board Followup

NOTICE OF HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of Des Moines, Iowa, will consider an appeal by Noah Brinkmeyer, owner of the property located at 1921 Center Street, from the Historic Preservation Commission's conditional grant of an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to Colbert Properties for the property located at 1917 Center Street. This appeal will be considered at a meeting of the City Council on January 12, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. Persons interested in the appeal will be given an opportunity to express their views at that hearing.

CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA
Connie Boesen, Mayor

Published in the Des Moines Register on December 31, 2025.

From: Brad Argo <bradargo@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 12, 2026 8:23 AM
To: Mandelbaum, Josh T. <joshmandelbaum@dmgov.org>
Subject: 1917 Center Appeal

EXTERNAL EMAIL - This email was sent by a person from outside your organization. Exercise caution when clicking links, opening attachments or taking further action, before validating its authenticity.

Dear Councilmembers Mandelbaum, Voss, Simonson and Members of the Des Moines City Council,

We are writing as individual Sherman Hill neighbors—not in any official association capacity—to express our continued concerns following the Historic Preservation Commission's most recent decision on the 1917 Center Street project.

As you know, after the City Council remanded the matter to the HPC for further consideration given the conflict of interest, the Commission again approved the project. Our neighbor Noah Brinkmeyer has now appealed that decision because, in his view—and ours—the Commission's ruling disregarded well-argued, record-supported evidence presented at the rehearing by Noah and by Jacki Bergman. That evidence went directly to the applicable design guidelines, which require consideration of harmonization with the existing streetscape and the rhythm and character of the individual block. Yet, this was ignored.

The transcript of the HPC hearing clearly reflects that rather than engaging with those guideline-based arguments, several commissioners substituted their own subjective aesthetic preferences for the standards set forth in the ordinance. In doing so, the Commission appears to have acted arbitrarily in disregarding the very criteria it is required to apply.

We are also troubled by the role of City staff in this process. They recommended approval of what they described as an "international style" house, yet provided no explanation—either in writing or at the hearing—for why that style is appropriate in a neighborhood that, by staff's own admission, contains zero buildings of that type. That staff's recommendation despite this makes it difficult for neighbors to understand how the recommendation aligns with the preservation framework that governs all of us who live in the district.

Separately, we want to address the owners' stated desire to "be part of the neighborhood." Despite repeated offers from neighborhood leaders and individual residents to meet and talk, the owners have made no effort to engage directly with the community. At every stage, they have avoided feedback and instead made only the minimum adjustments they believed necessary to secure approval. This approach does not feel collaborative, instead, it stands in sharp contrast to the constraints the rest of us live with under the historic guidelines—constraints we accept as part of being good neighbors in Sherman Hill.

That disconnect was particularly apparent at the most recent HPC meeting, which was opened by the owners' attorney emphasizing the project's contribution to the **"tax base."** What was notably absent was any genuine expression of interest in actually being part of the neighborhood or, more importantly, engaging with the people who live there. For example, when asked why the second floor porch was oriented toward the alley, with a taller wall on the opposite (Noah's) side, we were told that while it could be done in an alternate way, it was done the way it was because better for the owner's privacy. That seems to be a theme.

For those of us who cannot install gutters or build a fence without approval, it is difficult not to feel that this project is being pushed through as an exception—framed as "historic" in name only—despite significant neighborhood opposition.

We are not opposed to investment in Sherman Hill, nor are we reflexively opposed to change. What we object to is a process that appears to bend the rules for one project while expecting everyone else to continue living within them, and a posture from the owners that treats neighborhood input as an obstacle rather than a resource.

We appreciate your time and your continued attention to this matter, and we hope the City Council will take a hard look at whether the historic preservation standards are being applied consistently, transparently, and in good faith.

Respectfully,

Brad Argo, Matt Warner-Blankenship & Jacki Bergman

Sent from mobile