



Memorandum

TO: Decatur City Commission

FROM: Aileen de la Torre, Historic Preservation Planner ^{AdLT}

CC: Andrea Arnold, City Manager
Angela Threadgill, Planning and Economic Development Director

DATE: April 10, 2023

RE: Historic Preservation Commission Recommendation for a Proposed Project
at 465 Clairemont Avenue

Per Section 11.2.1. of the UDO, when proposed amendments to zoning or conditional use permits effect properties located within a local historic district, the Historic Preservation Commission provides a review and recommendation. The following item was considered at a public meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission on February 23, 2023. Forwarded herein to the City Commission is the recommendation and the meeting minutes from the Historic Preservation Commission for further consideration prior to final action on the request.

1. Review and Recommendation on applications filed by Smarties Academy c/o Bogumila Kabat, owner, requesting an amendment to a previously approved conditional use permit to operate a daycare, and an amendment to a previously approved comprehensive site development plan to operate a daycare at **465 Clairemont Avenue**.

Motion by Ms. Hahn, second by Ms. Dean, motion to recommend denial to the Planning and City Commissions of an amendment to a previously-approved Conditional Use Permit and an amendment to a previously-approved site development plan unanimously approved for the following reasons: 1) the modern style of the proposed two story addition, which will be visible from Clairemont Avenue, does not substantively reference the surrounding properties; 2) the massing and height overwhelm the existing building; 3) the materials at the rear elevation do not substantively reference the existing building; 4) the siting encroaches on the streetscape; and 5) the submitted renderings were confusing.

**City of Decatur
Historic Preservation Commission
February 23, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes**

1. Call to Order at 6:30 PM

Present: Navratil (Chair), Breslin, Dean, and Hahn

Absent: Cushnie

2. Old Business

- a. Approval of Minutes from the November 15, 2022, Regular Meeting.

Motion by Ms. Hahn, second by Ms. Breslin, minutes unanimously approved as presented.

- b. Approval of Minutes from the January 18, 2023, Work Session.

Motion by Ms. Breslin, second by Ms. Dean, minutes unanimously approved as presented.

3. New Business

None

4. Other Business

Staff described the process and purview of the Historic Preservation Commission in relation to commenting on a Conditional Use Permit in a local historic district.

Bogna Kabat, owner, and Erik Lewitt, architect, presented. They explained the reason for the expansion and the mission of the school. They stated the design of the addition reflects the historic building while maintaining modern lines and large classrooms.

Mr. Lewitt stated the building has been lowered and widened from the previous design presented to the Historic Preservation Commission in November in order to address those concerns. He stated the previous ribbon windows will now be punched windows with lintels and the breezeblocks along the side reflect the diamond-paned windows of the former church building. He also stated there is now less parking on the site.

In response to a question from Ms. Hahn, Mr. Lewitt indicated the proposed building will be approximately 6 to 7 feet above existing.

In response to a question from Ms. Breslin, Mr. Lewitt indicated the clerestory windows at the roof will be operable and they chose a design with lots of light for the children's well-being.

In response to a question from Ms. Breslin, Mr. Lewitt indicated the changes from the previous design include changing the glazing pattern, reducing parking, and making the primary façade, which will face the neighborhood, less modern. He stated they are in talks with their neighbors about adding trees to the site.

In response to a question from Ms. Dean, Mr. Lewitt indicated they considered putting the proposed building on the empty parcel to the rear of the property, but it did not work for their concept.

In response to a question from Mr. Navratil, Mr. Lewitt indicated there are 74 parking spaces in the current design. He stated they want more parking so that parents can park for events.

In response to a question from Ms. Breslin, Mr. Lewitt indicated the current number of spaces meets requirements, but they want to expand their childcare and summer programs.

In response to a question from Ms. Dean, Mr. Lewitt indicated the ingress and egress is combined at Erie but is only an egress at Clairemont.

Mr. Navratil opened the floor to public comment.

Mark Brown, 128 Erie Avenue, stated the neighborhood did not have any input regarding the proposed design and the whole project will be seen from the right-of-way.

Kim Gordon, 144 Erie Avenue, stated the design does not reflect the historic church building or any other building in the neighborhood, which will diminish the enjoyment of being in a historic area.

Julia Brown, 128 Erie Avenue, stated she appreciates the mission of the school and admires Ms. Kabat, but the design does not fit with the neighborhood and is a very commercial look.

Robin Pifer, 450 Clairemont Avenue, stated they were never aware of any communication between Smarties Academy representatives and the community. She stated the church building is from 1950 and was deliberately built to reflect the neighborhood.

Dave Kemper, 517 Clairemont Avenue, stated it's worth noting this is the church building that is on the City of Decatur logo.

Kris Webb, 449 Clairemont Avenue, stated the church building is quaint and the addition is not related to it at all. She stated the massing is very large, it has a flat roof, and the view from the building next door will be of a parking lot.

Rhonda Wildman, 1017 Clairemont Avenue, stated the public experience of this district is as a residential corridor leading to downtown, which the proposed building would harm.

Gael Doyle, 449 Clairemont Avenue, stated the parking area should not be expanded as they already have headlights reflecting in their homes all the time.

Maria Alvarez, 449 Clairemont Avenue, stated Smarties Academy previously requested they be allowed to expand enrollment but were denied. She stated the neighbors requested the trees at the rear of the property remain when Smarties received their previous Conditional Use Permit in order to meet some of the climate goals of the 2030 plan.

Mark Pifer, 450 Clairemont Avenue, stated he is considering not putting up his holiday inflatables if this building is constructed.

There being no more comments, Mr. Navratil closed public comment and opened executive session.

Ms. Hahn expressed concern about how much taller the addition is to the historic church building and how it does not conform to anything in the neighborhood. Mr. Navratil agreed, stating that he appreciates how it has been lowered from the previous design but it still dwarfs the existing buildings.

Ms. Dean expressed concern about the scale, which does not reflect the scale of the neighborhood, as well as the setback of the new building, which is significantly closer to the street than the church.

In response to a question from Ms. Breslin, Staff indicated the Commission reviews what can be seen from the Clairemont Avenue right-of-way and new construction. Additions should not harm spatial relationships and be differentiated but compatible with the existing property. Staff indicated Smarties Academy will have to return for a Certificate of Appropriateness for an addition regardless of what happens today or in the Planning and City Commission meetings.

Mr. Navratil expressed concern with how the recommendation will be referenced if they return for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

In response to a question from Ms. Breslin, Mr. Lewitt indicated there is some flexibility in the design but they want to continue offering high quality childcare.

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5. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Hahn, second by Ms. Dean, unanimously approved at 8:16PM.