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STAFF MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: January 11, 2022
DATE: January 3, 2022
TO: Auburndale Historic District Commission
FROM: Barbara Kurze, Senior Preservation Planner
SUBJECT: **Additional Review Information**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the members of the Auburndale Historic District Commission (Auburndale HDC) with information about the significance of the properties being reviewed and the application process, which may be useful in the review and decision-making process of the Auburndale HDC. Additional information may be presented at the meeting that the Auburndale HDC can take into consideration when discussing a Local Historic District Review application.

Dear Auburndale HDC Members,

The following is additional information for the Local Historic District Review applications that you should have received in your meeting packet.

Applications

136-144 Hancock Street and 169 Grove Street, Walker Center – Working Session

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE: The 1860 Colonial Revival house at 138 Hancock Street was built in 1860 by Congregationalist minister Sewall Harding and sold in October 1861 to master mariner Charles T. Haskell of Boston. The Haskells left Auburndale in 1893, at which time Walker Home founder Eliza Harding Walker began raising funds to purchase the property to create an annex to her parents' home at 144 Hancock Street. She bought the property to house the growing number of missionary children that she cared for and named it Walker Cottage. The building has gone through a series of alterations over the years. The building was converted to dormitories and the front façade was redesigned to conform to the Colonial Revival taste in 1911. A two-story brick annex was added in the back in 1933. Shed dormers, sun porches and vinyl siding were also added.

The 1913 Colonial Revival house at 144 Hancock Street was designed by local architects Coolidge and Carlson and built to replace an earlier building destroyed by fire in 1912. It was the main building for the Walker Missionary Home, Inc.

The 1955 Cape House at 169 Grove Street was designed by Albert W. Kreider for the Walker Missionary Home as an accessible house for Mrs. Masters and her son, who contracted polio while serving as missionaries in Southern Rhodesia.

APPLICATION PROCESS: The owners want feedback on a project to renovate 136-144 Hancock Street, to build a connector addition between the wood building (138 Hancock Street) and the brick building (144 Hancock Street), to demolish the 1955 Cape house (169 Grove Street) and build five townhouses along Grove Street.

The proposed location of the connector addition between 138 and 144 Hancock Street is shown on the proposed site plan.

Note: No elevations or drawings were provided, so the commission only really provide high-level feedback.

Per The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, and Newton’s Historic Preservation Design Guidelines, an addition to a historic building should be subordinate to the historic building and read clearly as an addition. There is no development as of right in the local historic districts; scale, form, and massing must be appropriate for the historic building. The City of Newton Historic Preservation Guidelines for Additions and New Construction are included for reference.

The applicants propose demolishing the Cape House at 169 Grove Street and building five townhouses along Grove Street. Examples of townhouse design concepts are provided with the materials. The Cape House was built as part of the Walker Center complex to provide accessible housing for two missionaries, Mrs. Masters and one of her sons, both of whom contracted polio in Southern Rhodesia and were wheelchair users.

Note: Examples of townhouse design concepts are provided with the materials.

Per The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, and Newton’s Historic Preservation Design Guidelines, the demolition of all or portions of resources on properties or within a historic area is considered a drastic action since it alters the character of the streetscape, surrounding buildings and the demolition site. Demolition of significant buildings within a historic area is rarely considered to be an appropriate option.

Per The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, and Newton’s Historic Preservation Design Guidelines, new construction must be well-designed and sympathetic to its distinctive surroundings. Proposals for new construction must take into account how the design and materials will appear within the streetscape and surrounding neighborhood context.

The HDCs encourage:

- Preservation of the cohesive ambiance of historic properties and neighborhoods with compatible and sympathetic contemporary construction that is not visually overwhelming
- Matching setbacks (distances to property lines) of adjacent buildings on a streetscape
- Compatible siting, proportion, scale, form, materials, fenestration, roof configuration, details and finishes to adjacent and nearby properties
- Reference to the related Guidelines to better understand the historic context and appropriate design and materials within a historic context

The City of Newton Historic Preservation Guidelines for Additions and New Construction are included for reference.

MATERIALS PROVIDED:

Photographs

MHC Form B for 138 and 144 Hancock Street, and 169 Grove Street

Site plans

Examples of town house designs

Newton Historic Preservation Guidelines for Additions and New Construction

Energy & Sustainability in Historic Districts – Presentation and Discussion

Newton’s Energy Coach, Liora Silkes, will present how the work of the historic districts pairs with Newton’s climate action goals. The focus of the presentation will be the modern energy updates that we are seeing more of such as solar panels, electric car charging stations, and heat pumps.

The presentation is not yet available and will be sent out separately.

Administrative Discussion

Minutes: Review the draft December meeting minutes.