

January 13, 2022

Dear Newton Historical Commissioners,

We are writing to express our desire to see the Newton Historical Commission (NHC) do everything in its power to ensure that the decision to Landmark 145 Warren is not in vain. What tilted the scale in favor of the Special Permit was the promise of building to "passive house" standards and the development be LEED certified. But there is a tension between building to those standards and the Landmark preservation standards. We believe it is a slippery slope if Newton starts weakening its preservation standards for Landmarks, which is supposed to be the highest level of protection, in favor of other goals which are not codified in ordinances.

We are concerned that there is considerable political pressure on the NHC to apply a different standard than it would typically apply to a Landmark. In the November meeting, a Commissioner shared that they were unclear what standards they were expected to apply given this was also going through the special permit process and that the Landmark standard is that none of the addition be visible from the street. The assertion that the four units behind the present structure at #145 will not be visible from the street is laughable, as anyone who actually drives or walks down Warren Street will realize. So will the HC be pressured to ease up on its standard because of the pressure for "passive house" house construction and LEED certification? Will we have a Landmark building where one of its most distinctive features, the roof line with clay tiles, is attached to a massive development of four new units with solar panels covering their roofs?

We are disappointed that such a massive development was approved by the City Council as we think that is both out of context for both our street and attached behind the Landmark. We understand that the Historical Commission has jurisdiction over the entire property and may agree with us and require it to be scaled back. A couple of points that should be considered.

1. The development is a single structure. It is what is known as a five single family attached dwellings. Some visual space was created between the housing units, but they are all attached through terraces and garage structures.



2. In regards to claim that the development not being visible from the street, that is absurd. . Below is the view from the driveway of 136 Warren. If the Landmark is at 12:00, this is the view from 5:00. Clearly the structure will be visible from the street. Only if the viewer is standing directly in front of the Landmark structure would the development behind it not be visible. Take a few steps and the new additions will be clearly and obviously visible

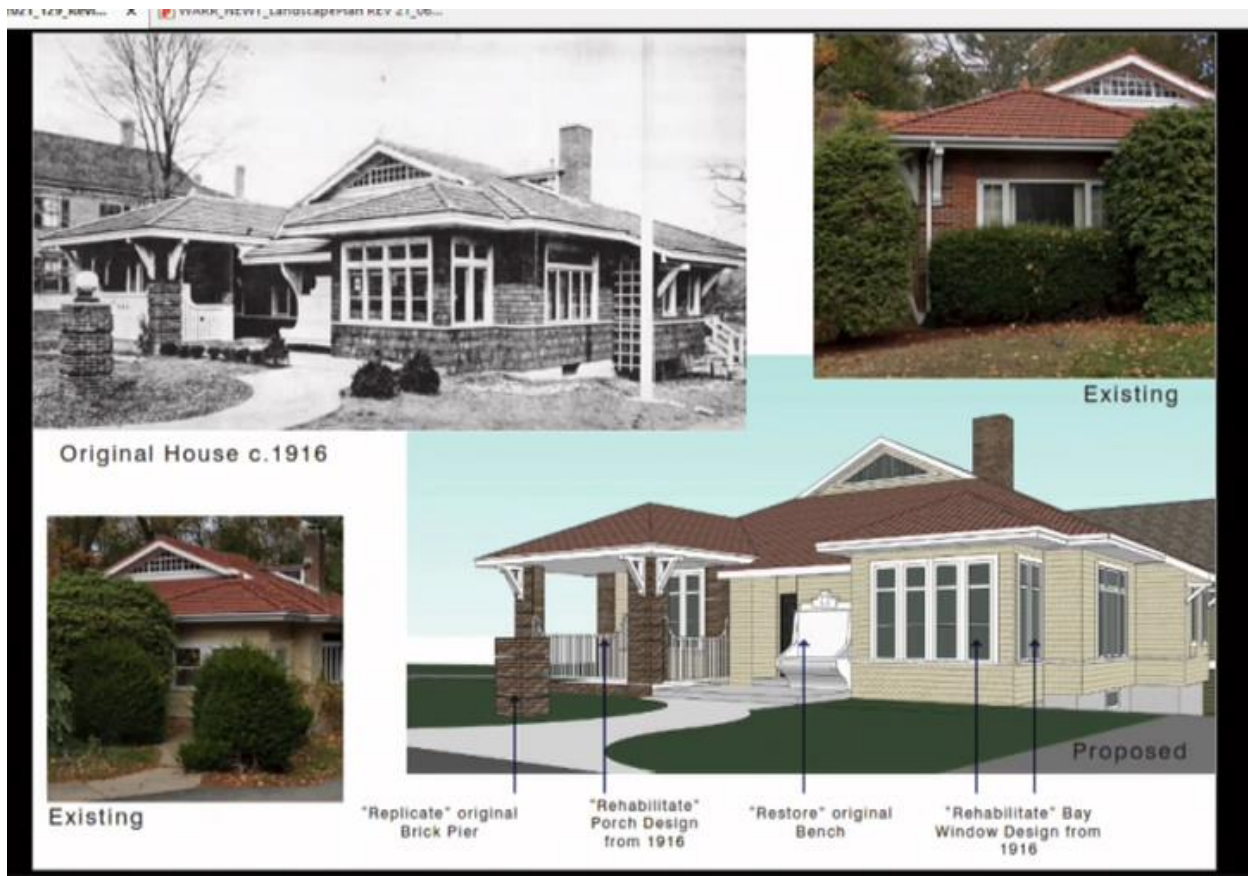


Notwithstanding the aforementioned, we are fully aware of the political realities and if the development, as set forth in the Special Permit, is approved by the NHC to be attached to the Landmark we do request that certain conditions be consider in regards to both the Landmarked house and the development attached to it.

The Aloha Bungalow

In the December 9th Land Use Meeting the developer presented the slide below and said “Our intention all along has been to restore the exterior to its original look”. Some of what they committed to is detailed in their slide below.

When the Developer last came before the NHC in November, they definitively promised to restore the house to its “original grandeur” We urge the NHC to hold them to that. At that meeting, they were short on specifics and we assume in the January meeting those specifics will be detailed. We do worry that all of the actions they are proposing below are in quotes i.e. “Replicate”, Rehabilitate” “Restore” and some probing of that should be undertaken by the NHC.



Elements of the Aloha Bungalow

Windows

The developer indicates in the slide that they will “rehabilitate” windows. They also said they would replace the front windows that had infill and transom removed. We suspect that they will look to replace all the windows because of some promise made of efficiency. We think that is why the windows were left open through a part of last winter. If they are going to suggest replacing all of the windows it should be required that they exactly match what was there originally

Siding

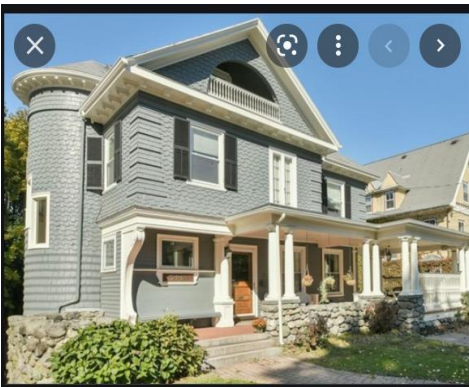
There was a comment made in the November HC meeting that the developer intended to restore the siding to its natural color which was described as stained cedar siding, but then they also talked about paint colors. In the board order crafted by the Planning Department it was stipulated that they would scrape and paint, but that is just routine maintenance, not historic restoration. We feel that the siding should be restored to the original color/stain to be most authentic to the original house. It is also noteworthy that in the proposed picture above, the siding is shown to all be of a consistent size, running horizontally. But in the original picture, there is clearly a pattern change between the bottom third and the top two thirds so if they are keeping the siding, that doesn't make sense. You will note that in the picture below of 31 Chase, also built by William Church, there is similar execution of a pattern change with the shingle siding. We think that is a significant element.

Porch

The developer was quite clear in the December 9th Land Use meeting they intend to re-open and restore the porch and they must be held to that. Throughout their appearance before the Historical Commission they have proffered differing plans in that regard.

Pillar, Stained Glass Window, Aloha Sign, Bench & Door

Since all of the photos are black and white, it is hard to say exactly how these originally looked. However there is a home at 31 Chase that was also built by William Church in 1900 that has a similar bench and aloha sign, so that should be used for reference. See below. The developer's crew knocked down the brick pillar in 2021 so that should be rebuilt.



Roof

No changes should be made to the roof line or pitch. It should be cleaned up and any damaged tiles should be replaced or repaired. No solar panels or additions should be allowed on the roof of the Landmark structure

Development in Back

IF the NHC ultimately is going to allow such a massive addition to the Landmark, which will undoubtedly be visible from the street in conflict with Landmark standards, then minimally they should hold the developer to his word that he will restore the house to its original grandeur, and improve the congruence of the development with the Landmark through the use of materials that tie-in with the Landmark.

We request the following ways that could be accomplished through the utilization of materials:

1. Utilize shingle siding on the new structure stained to match the Landmark. Even if it isn't 100% shingle siding there should be enough that it is obviously inspired by the Landmark.
2. In our opinion, the tile roof is the single most prominent element of the Landmark. While we would love to see that carried over to the new structure, minimally we think the roof color should be the same as the Landmark to improve the congruence of such a structure relative to the existing house.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of our concerns and requests.

Best Regards,

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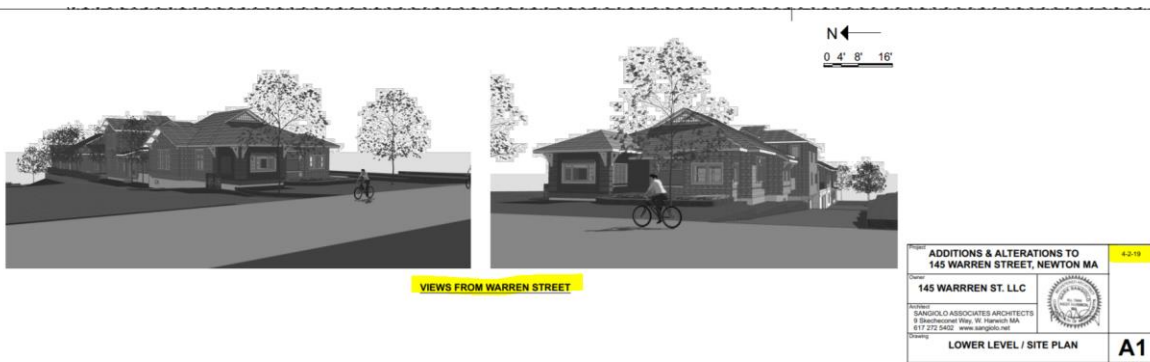
Submitted to NHC on 1/27/2022 from MaryLee Belleville 136 Warren Street

In addition to what was covered in the Warren Street Neighbors' email of 1/13/2022 relative to the certificate of appropriateness, I would like to share two additional data points.

The plans from 4/2019 are relevant since when CIVCO purchase 145 Warren, the Newton Historical Commission made an administrative decision that a new review wasn't needed since the plans were essentially the same and the NHC could rely on those plans. Those plans were reviewed by the NHC in 2018.

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/54818/637444074644330000>

A relevant data point from the developer's depiction below is how the view from Warren Street was represented. Clearly the development is visible from the street. While that might be okay when making a decision related to a partial demo permit, we understand that Landmark standards are higher. None of the changes from the 1st developer's plans and CIVCO's design approved through the Special Permit change that street view that is not our representation but the developers.



The relevant data point below is that when the 1st developer was presenting plans for a waiver of a demo delay, when the property was not yet a landmark, they were committing to carrying both the tile roof (synthetic) and shingle siding through the addition. This creates the congruity that the neighbors requested in our 1/13/2022 email to the NHC. A lower treatment should not be acceptable since this is now a Landmark.

The one difference is that the area marked out in red has been eliminated, however the lower level still creates an uninterrupted connection between the original house and the rest of the structure and that elimination will not change the street view. Also we believe that the roof line of the back half of the structure is now more solid vs the multi-height showed in the drawing.

