



Warren J. Widmayer
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April 11, 2019

Douglas Selby

Via E-Mail to maildoug@me.com

Re: 530 N Division

Dear Doug,

I reviewed the report you sent late Wednesday night and I wanted to reiterate my support for your efforts. Unfortunately I have a meeting in Chicago Friday and I am traveling Thursday morning. I had very much wanted to come out in support of your project. As the owner of the Henry Cornwell House at 538 N. Division, an eminently historic structure right next door, I wanted the HDC to know that we fully support what you are trying to do. Reviewing this report, I have some comments that I would make were I able to be present. This is my reaction based on the very limited time I have had to review this report, coming so late right before the meeting.

From the report, it appears that a contributing resource must add to the historic association, historic architectural quality or archaeological values from which the significant properties derive their significance. In addition to its place in time, to achieve this character the property must relate directly to the values listed above.

Missing from the report is any elaboration on what the “documented significance” of the district is. I cannot believe that it is merely the time in which structures existed. That in itself is a separately listed characteristic. Instead, it must be the elements listed above – association with architectural and archaeological features, style, mass and size – that must be the documented significance, right?

The definition of a “contributing” resource seems to require a that the resource relate directly to the documented significance of the historic district. But the definition of “complementary historic structures” stated in the report seems to encompass structures that by definition are actually only indirectly related to the significance of the district; they play a supporting role. They achieve their contribution to the significance of the district only when considered in aggregate as establishing “the basic neighborhood characteristics of style, scale and mass.” This is not to say that they don’t matter – only that each individual structure, in and of itself, cannot be said to directly relate to the significance of the district. So I would argue that although your building may be complementary in the very limited sense that it helps establish the size and mass of structures in the district before 1944 (but much less the style, in my view), I would

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respectfully disagree with the report's stated conclusion that it relates directly to the documented significance of the historic district.

Your project also does not call for a departure from the neighborhood characteristics of scale and mass that complementary structures in this district help establish in aggregate. My understanding is that you are barely deviating from the existing scale and mass of the current structure. And the least significant characteristic of your structure, from a historical perspective, is its style; the changes that have occurred over the years have transformed whatever historic character the structure once had to a much more contemporary look and feel. Its main supporting function, therefore, is its size and mass, which are not going to change significantly.

There are so many truly significant resources in this district that retain so much obvious character and that, even though not independently significant in and of themselves, clearly contribute directly to the historic character and context of the neighborhood as it has been preserved. Unfortunately, this structure is not one of them. I find it sad that the richness and valuable diversity so vibrantly present and resonant throughout the district should be diluted in the name of rigid preservation, based solely on timing, without regard to the core values that justify historic district regulation and restriction. Those values are deeply and powerfully anchored in the gut and hearts and souls of the people who inhabit and live in and love the neighborhood, and they must have a "you know it when you see it" underpinning. Insisting that mere existence in time equates with direct relation to the historic significance of the district, without significantly more, runs a serious risk of eroding respect for these values that all of us in this district hold dear. I don't think that "significantly more" element is present here.

If you think that sharing these comments may be helpful, please feel free to submit this letter to the HDC.

I hope this moves forward to the next stage and that I can come out and offer my support personally at a later date.

Sincerely,



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