

Jeffrey and Jennifer McVay

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October 30, 2023

Mesa Historic Preservation Board
C/O: Mesa Planning Division
55 N. Center Street
Mesa, AZ 85201

RE: Appeal of Historic Preservation Office denial of ADM23-00135

Chair Babos and Boardmembers,

Thank you for your consideration of our appeal of the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) denial of our request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for a guest house located at 111 W. 7th Place, in the Evergreen Historic District. When we sold our property and moved from the Fraser Fields Historic District to the Evergreen Historic District, it was with much excitement as our new property had sufficient land to build a guest house for aging parents to escape the Midwest winters that have become more difficult in which to live.

In addition to providing a winter home for aging parents, we also desire to incorporate an RV carport into the guest house construction to protect our means of escaping the city (RV) from the Arizona sun. While the HPO's denial shows, the guest house and standard carport are not a concern, but the maximum 15'-6" height and location of the RV carport are the primary basis for the HPO denial. In consideration of the HPO's concerns, we are proposing approval of an RV carport with a maximum height of 13'-2". While we are not able to change the location of the RV carport while still maintaining the guest house within setbacks, we hope the reduction in height addresses the HPO's concerns.

Attached to this letter is Exhibit A – Summary of Staff Concerns and Owner Responses, which provides detailed responses to HPO's denial. We thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of our appeal.

Sincerely,

Jeff and Jen McVay

EXHIBIT A SUMMARY OF STAFF CONCERNS AND OWNER RESPONSES

US Secretary of the Interior Standard:

The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alterations of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

Staff Comment:

The proposed RV garage has a height that exceeds the development patterns within the District. Additionally, the placement on the parcel disrupts the rhythm and character found within the District. It would be better placed elsewhere on the lot or further back if possible.

The proposed driveway apron would be inconsistent with conditions of a previous approval ADM20-00186: The vehicular access gate aligns with the existing curb cut and no new driveways are created. It would also further disrupt the historic pattern found within the District.

Applicant Response:

As stated in the review comments the US Secretary of the Interior Standard is related to the character of the property. With the exception of height in relation to the primary house, HPO concerns are related to relationship to the District. In relation to the property, an earlier renovation and addition to this property received a Certificate of Appropriateness from the City that allowed a significant addition and renovations, which have since made the property non-contributing to the Evergreen Historic District. Understanding that the previous approval happened under different HPO staffing and interpretation of standards, the previously approved renovations and additions have significantly changed the character of the property. While we regret the loss of the historic character, we purchased the property after the approved addition and renovations, and we believe the current request is consistent with the character of the property we purchased and as previously approved by the City.

Related to the height of the RV carport in relation to the primary house, the primary house has a typical roofline of 12 feet, with a maximum height of 14 feet (chimney). The proposed RV carport had a maximum height of 15'-6". Upon creating a visualization of the requested height in response to staff's concerns, we agree with staff that the proposed height of 15'-6" is too high and have revised our request to a maximum height of 13'-2", which is more consistent with the height of the primary house, particularly when considering the RV carport would be located 16'-6" behind the front line of the original house and 51'-6" from the street. To allow reasonable clearance for an RV, we are not able to further reduce the height of the RV carport.

Related to locating the RV carport further back on the property, the larger plan includes a small, one-bedroom guest house for aging parents to live in. As livable space, zoning requires that the building be located within the buildable area of the lot. The existing house and improvements don't allow alternative configurations that include an RV carport, which as proposed is fully compliant with all Zoning Code Requirements related to setbacks and height. The guest house has been located as far south on the property as possible while meeting setback requirements, which precludes relocating the RV further south.

Related to a second driveway, properties with two driveways are a regular condition within the Evergreen Historic District, with more than three examples along the same block as our property. When we purchased the property, there was an RV gate located on the east side of the property, off Macdonald. Until, we relocated the RV gate, we parked our RV on the east side of the property. Given the location of that RV gate, a significant amount of maneuvering space was required, rendering the creation of usable outdoor space in relation to the house's orientation, unacceptable. Since that time, we have made significant investment in our outdoor living space that precludes the location of a guest house or RV carport off Macdonald. Understanding that there are Zoning Code standards related to the total width of driveways for a single property, we commit to complying with such standards as part of the proposed project.

US Secretary of the Interior Standard:

New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differential from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, feature, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

Guidelines Recommend: Constructing a new addition on a secondary or non-character defining elevation and limiting its size and scale in relationship to the historic building.

Ensuring that the addition is subordinate and secondary to the historic building and is compatible in massing, scale, materials, relationship to solid voids, and color.

Staff Comment:

The project as proposed with the RV carport would disrupt the scale and proportion found within the District. This part of the project would not be subordinate to the historic resources and is not limited in size and scale to the historic building.

Applicant Response:

As a non-contributing property to the Evergreen Historic District, the proposed detached guest house and RV/carport will not have an impact on materials that define the character of a historic structure. Having said that, as the RV carport is the primary concern with the proposal, it is important to note that the RV carport only consists of 360 SF of roof area in comparison to the 3,240 SF of existing roof area. The remainder of the guest house proposal, which has a total roof area of 1,612 SF, and has not been noted as a concern has a maximum height of 11'10". We believe that for this reason, the proposal is subordinate to our non-contributing property. In addition, the overall design of the guest house and RV/carport is differential from the old, but uses materials that are compatible with the no longer contributing historic features of the original house.

While the stated Guidelines are specifically related to additions, in response to staff comments concerning scale and proportion related to the District, there exist several examples of similar structures within the Evergreen Historic District. It is such a variety of architecture that played a large part in our decision to purchase our home in the Evergreen Historic District. As such, we do not believe our proposal would disrupt the scale and proportion of the Evergreen Historic District.

US Secretary of the Interior Standard:

Design the new addition to complement and enhance the historic building in size, scale, materials, and details.

Don't: construct an addition which is larger in size or inappropriate in scale to the original building.

Staff Comment:

The RV carport has a scale that is incompatible with the District, especially for where it is placed on the parcel.

Applicant Response:

As noted in our earlier responses, we believe that we have addressed HPO concerns related to this standard.