



PRESERVATION IDAHO
THE IDAHO HISTORIC PRESERVATION COUNCIL

March 20, 2019

City of Boise Historic Preservation Commission

RE: DRH19-00070 HPC Level Certificate of Appropriateness/Eoff House Apartments

Dear Historic Preservation Commissioners,

Preservation Idaho is writing to express our strong request and recommendation that you do not approve the proposed new construction at 140 East Main Street next door to the historic Eoff/Brady House. The proposed 9-unit condominium and garage is complete out of sympathy with the existing neighborhood and will significantly and permanently detract from the new East Main Historic District. That historic district was created in late 2018 exactly so the neighborhood could be protected. The design violates many of the criteria set out in the Design Guidelines for Commercial Historic Districts. We outline specific concerns and recommendations below.

First, let us note that we do not understand nor agree with using the commercial guidelines rather than the residential guidelines to review this application. The commercial guidelines were created for neighborhoods like Hyde Park, Old Boise, and the 8th Street Warehouse districts and they are specifically referenced in the guidelines. These were commercial neighborhoods from the time they were built while the East Main Historic District was a completely residential neighborhood and 7 of the 10 contributing buildings in the district are still residential. Looking at the commercial guidelines, it is hard to see much overlap in the buildings on East Main and the buildings in the guidelines. The proposed building itself is a residential building. The city has indicated that it sees this district as akin to the Hayes Street Historic District, however, that district was already more commercial when it was created in 2004. In 2019, the East Main District is still 70% residential. We question why this application would be considered under the commercial guidelines except as a way to allow for deviation from the requirements of a residential district? Even with those greater deviations, Mr. Hon's design is still contradictory to 21 sections of the guidelines. Shouldn't that tell us all something about the quality of the design?

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Let Mr. Hon building his condos, if he feels he must, but require him and his architect, Dennis Taggart, to make the changes that we suggest in this letter. These changes will give him the real estate project that he is seeking without damaging the rest of the district in perpetuity. The changes are not onerous and could easily be done during this design and planning stage. The building, as it is proposed, is a modern box with a faux pediment stuck on top. Look at the east and west elevations and you can clearly see this is so. There was almost no effort put into the design except for the faux pediments and some brackets around the windows. Every other style element on the building is inappropriate for a historic district of this era and for this particular district.

The design is contradictory to the following sections of the Design Guidelines for Commercial Historic Districts:

Height/2.2.2, Setback, Orientation and Plazas/2.3.1, 2.3.9, Mass and Form 2.4.2, 2.4.4, 2.4.5, Proportion/2.5.10, 2.5.12, Facades/2.6, 2.6.1, 2.6.7, 2.6.8, Doors, Windows, Entrances, and Storefronts/2.7.3, 2.7.4, 2.7.5, 2.7.8, 2.7.9, 2.7.10, Roofs, Parapets, and Cornices/2.8.8, 2.8.10, and Parking/2.15.6.

We propose that the HPC require the following changes be made to the design for the 9-condo unit building. Specific recommendations are underlined:

1. **The height of the building is much too tall compared to its neighbors. The new building will be 50' high compared with 43 1/2' for the Eoff House on the west and 32 1/2' for the Regan House to the east. These historic buildings have variances in height and style, but this new building is a simply a modern box design. The dark squares at the bottom of the drawing are vents to the garage, which covers the full first floor. The garage should be sunk into the ground by a half-story to reduce the impact of this modern feature on its historic neighbors.**
2. **The building should not have a flat roof. If the garage was lowered a half-story, it would allow the owner to substitute a more sympathetic hipped or gabled roof and still have the same number of units. The building would still be too high but would not distract from the harmony of its neighbors as much. No other building in the district has a flat roof.**
3. **The building setback needs to be the same distance from the street as its neighbors. This setback should apply to the front of ANY part of the building. The current design includes hardscape planters set back only 10'**

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- from the sidewalk while the adjacent buildings begin 20' back. It will loom over the street and its neighbors.
4. **Details of the building should be in keeping with its neighbors and itself. This is basically a modern rectilinear box building with a faux pediment stuck on the top of it. The pediment is too small, not to scale, and doesn't match the style of the building. The developer should: Remove the pediment and window brackets and replace those architectural features with the new historically appropriate roof style, reduce the size of the front facing floor-to-ceiling windows so they have wall space beneath them, change the sliding glass doors on the balconies to a french door or single door with vertical window, and replace the horizontal windows above the front door with vertical windows, like the rest of the neighborhood.**
 5. **There should be no sign on the building itself. The historic district is made up of contributing buildings that were all residential. In keeping with its neighbors, the sign should go on the ground not on the building.**

We support compromise and we work to be realistic about maintaining historic relevance in Idaho while allowing for growth and "modernization", but this building detracts from the historic district in too many significant ways. The design more easily be fixed now before plans are approved and any site work is done. We are asking that the city follow its guidelines and require the owner and his architect to fix these issues before they build. We are asking the Historic Preservation Commission to recognize these deficits and require their correction before approval is given and construction begins.

Respectfully,

Paula Benson

Paula Benson
Board President
Preservation Idaho