

Joseph Alvarez
219 N. Ellsworth Street, Naperville, IL 60540
Phone: 269.492.5985
Email: joe.alvarez@yahoo.com

November 6th, 2020

Naperville City Council
400 S. Eagle St.
Naperville, IL 60540

City Council,

I am writing to appeal the decision of the Historic Preservation Commission to not grant me a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA #20-3281) for changes already made to the primary façade of my home. The decision was made on October 22nd around 8 pm.

As they stated during the meeting, they would not have approved the changes that were already made, had I submitted a COA prior to the work being done. According to my notes during the decision tally on whether or not to approve my COA, two members were actually in favor of allowing me to keep the changes because of the potential cost associated with removing the stone and re-exposing the brick.

In addition, a member of the HPC also mentioned that they were only able to enforce that I change the front of my home, which would not include the sides of my home that were also altered with stone to cover the brick. So my home's curb appeal would be negatively impacted because of brick and stone not matching, therefore reducing the value of my home.

A few things I would like to mention in our defense:

- I drove around the neighborhood within the Naperville Historic Boundary limits and have the addresses of 7 other homes that have the exact same stone pattern that I used, and it's in the front of their homes. Therefore, I feel as though I am being 'targeted' and unfairly treated with regards to other homeowners in the area. I mentioned several times and the HPC agreed that *ignorance is not a defense* for me not submitting a COA prior to the work being done. I would argue, that if the HPC didn't enforce their guidelines, where homes were allowed to have the same stone as us because they weren't aware of the homes, that *ignorance is not a defense* for not enforcing HPC guidelines, and therefore, I am being singled out.
 - I'm happy to provide a list of those addresses if requested
 - I'm hoping this doesn't negatively impact those homeowners, and that they aren't sent notices because it obviously wasn't important enough to enforce the first go around, so why would that be any different now.
- Only one person from the public, Tim Messer, spoke up with regard to not wanting to approve the changes. This however, is an unfair and biased attendee of the call because he is the Plan Commissioner for the City of Naperville. I also saw him on a YouTube video pleading with the City Council to stop overturning the HPC's denial of COA's. But if you remove the appeals process so that they City Council may overturn decisions, then what's the point of having an appeals process altogether? Whatever the HPC says, goes, no matter how unfair or unjust or irrational. Every other person on the call represented the HPC. I was outnumbered.

- If neighbors and residents of the historic district disagreed with the changes we made to our home, I have to ask why more of them, or any of them, didn't attend the zoom session.
 - In my opinion, if people who live here in the neighborhood were negatively impacted, then they would have attended the zoom meeting.
- The valuation of my home will decrease and will be negatively impacted financially:
 - Given the current economic environment, there's a lot of uncertainty, and we may need a home equity line of credit to get us through any rough times. If our home is devalued, it would negatively impact how much we would be able to borrow.
 - Some of the HPC members seemed to be numb to not only the current pandemic we're living in, but also the financial impact to me and my family. My wife is a nurse, who is now 14.5 weeks pregnant with our first child, and she may or may not be able to continue working as there is still uncertainty around COVID and the effects on pregnant woman. If she stops working, I would be the sole provider for our family. Regardless, we have some big costs coming up in the next several months and every dollar helps.
 - I work for a very small company that is backed by private equity. Like many businesses we are struggling, and I don't know if I'll have a job next week or next month. So any unplanned additional financial investment puts us in a disadvantaged position.
 - *In a 2014 Zillow survey, real estate agents named curb appeal one of the five most important factors when selling a home. And those same experts estimate great curb appeal can add 15-20% of value to your home while poor curb appeal can devalue your home by 10%. Source: <https://www.plygem.com/blog/natural-stone-veneer-adds-awesome-curb-appeal-to-your-home/>*
 - Using this data (and there are several other sources to show similar numbers), our home at a conservative market value with the stone is roughly \$745,000 per our realtor at John Greene. With mismatched brick and stone, this would reduce our home value by minimum 10%, or \$74,500. So this isn't just about the cost to make it the way the HPC wants it, but it also hits us hard in the pocket as we attempt to sell our home.
 - We thought we would be able to sell our home quickly because of the master bed/bath rehab we did, but we pulled the public listing because we were told by the Zoning Coordinator that it was 'illegal' to sell our home while this was pending a decision. We had a planned inspection for the master bed/bath permits, and that is the reason we were flagged as changing our primary façade without a COA. We also need permits to change the outside, which we were unaware of, but currently in the process of remedying.
 - Tranquility Builders, who do a good amount of work in Naperville were shocked we got a stop work order for adding stone to the outside. I let them know we needed a COA, and their response was, "you need an approval to make your house look a lot nicer?". I mention this because an HPC member made mention that any reputable contractor in Naperville would have known there was a HPC approval process. Well, if Tranquility Builders knew, they made it seem as if they had no idea.
 - Our home was classified by the Architectural and Historical Survey as **Contributing (C)**. There are 4 grades of homes, **Significant (S)**, **Potentially Significant (PS)**, **Contributing (C)**, and **Non-Contributing (NC)**. Exhibit A (embedded in a PDF file below) is the historical evaluation of our home. There is no mention of the brick in the front being historically significant in any way. It does mention, "front gable porch with brick knee walls (enclosed)", with enclosed being the key word. The inside of the porch, that you

cannot see from the outside, hence, enclosed, is made of brick. One of the HPC members on the call misinterpreted or falsely claimed that the survey stated the brick in the front of the home was historically significant, which is entirely inaccurate per the report.

- There's a tax benefit to the City of Naperville.
 - If my home is worth more money, it benefits my neighbors and the city may increase revenues because the home/property is assessed at a higher rate. It also means my neighbors homes will be worth more money.
- A rising tide lifts all boats. If you look at the data of price per square foot of a home within the historic district that has stayed true to the historic preservation commission, they are underperforming the market. Our neighbors have a beautiful home next door to us and I think there home is fairly valued, but it has been sitting on the market. Yet homes that are brand new at \$1M are selling faster. Why? The data shows people buying homes want new or newly rehabbed. This is what we are having to compete with and its extremely difficult to do so within the historic district. Here is some data from Zillow (<https://www.zillow.com/naperville-il/sold/>), but more importantly an article (and there are several) breaking down New home values versus Resale home values: https://www.builderonline.com/money/affordability/new-versus-resale-home-prices-risk-and-opportunity_o.

There's no doubt that there's a lot of charm and nostalgia to living or owning in any historic district. This whole process has taken a lot of my time, energy and effort, and all because I made changes to an area of a wall that spans roughly 20 feet wide by 4.5 feet tall, or 90 square feet. If I lived in any other part of Naperville, this would be a non-issue. In addition, one of the questions the zoning coordinator's posed was if any mention of me living in the Historic District was on my Title. I am confirming that none of the documents, including the Title make any mention of the Historic District during the closing process, nor does it make any mention of the requirement/commitment we would need to make for living in the historic district. With this being our first home and obtaining permits for other work to our home, we are hoping you'll appeal the decision of the HPC for the reasons noted above and allow us to keep the changes.

Thank you for taking the time to read through our appeal. I am happy to meet with you any time to discuss this further.

Respectfully,



Joseph Alvarez

Exhibit A



Naperville
Architectual Report.

STREET #

DIRECTION

STREET

SUFFIX

PIN

LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE RATING

POTENTIAL IND NR? (Y or N)

Contributing to a NR DISTRICT?

Contributing secondary structure?

Listed on existing SURVEY?



GENERAL INFORMATION

CATEGORY CURRENT FUNCTION

CONDITION HISTORIC FUNCTION

INTEGRITY REASON for SIGNIFICANCE

SECONDARY STRUCTURE

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION PLAN

DETAILS NO OF STORIES

BEGINYEAR ROOF TYPE

OTHER YEAR ROOF MATERIAL

DATESOURCE FOUNDATION

WALL MATERIAL (current) PORCH

WALL MATERIAL 2 (current) WINDOW MATERIAL

WALL MATERIAL (original) WINDOW MATERIAL

WALL MATERIAL 2 (original) WINDOW TYPE

WINDOW CONFIG

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

ALTERATIONS

HISTORIC INFORMATION

HISTORIC NAME

COMMON NAME

COST

ARCHITECT

ARCHITECT2

BUILDER

ARCHITECT SOURCE

HISTORIC INFO

PERMITS

LANDSCAPE Midblock on west side of residential street; front sidewalk; partial side driveway; rear alley; similar setbacks; mature trees

COA DATE

COA DECISION

PREPARER

PREPARER ORGANIZATION

SURVEYDATE

SURVEYAREA



DIGITAL PHOTO ID

DIGITAL PHOTO ID3

DIGITAL PHOTO ID2

DIGITAL PHOTO ID4



before



before



After