

November 2021

**Re: Historic Preservation Commission Meeting on Tuesday, November 9, 2021  
1414 Church Street - Ridge Historic District - Case #21PRES-0153**

Preservation Commissioners,

My name is Amanda Ziehm. I live at 1632 Wesley Avenue, with my husband, Kirk, and three children ages 12, 9 and 3. Kirk and I are the property owners, and also the landlords for tenants residing in our coach house at 1628 Wesley Avenue. Built in 1867 and located in the Ridge Historic District, our house is one of the oldest in Evanston. We feel fortunate to be stewards of this historic home and property.

While supportive of improvements to the neighborhood, my husband and I do not support this plan (Case #21PRES-0153) and ask the Historic Preservation Commission to deny a Certificate of Appropriateness and to oppose a Major Zoning Relief of 3 feet when 30 feet is required. We have already shared our concerns with our neighbors, Cory and Patti King, when they shared the plans with us and asked for our support. Ultimately, our neighbors decided to submit their original plans without any changes to the Historic Preservation Commission.

We share more adjacent property lines/area with 1414 Church Street than all other neighbors combined, and we are the only neighbor with a residence directly impacted by the proposed plans. The proposed project would negatively impact the historic character of the area, the quality of life for our tenants, the overall value of our property, and the safety of residents and property due to fire hazard risks.

**Historic Character** - Our coach house at 1628 Wesley Avenue is a historic structure built over 100 years ago that can be seen from multiple public ways including the alley (which is the only view included in the submitted plans), as well as the sidewalk. (Note that the submitted plans provide an incomplete picture of the coach house because parts of the roof and historic arches overhanging the doors were omitted. ***See attached pictures of the coach house on pages 3-5.***)

The proposed close setback of 3 feet, large eave dimensions of the roof, and high elevation of the garage would block and encroach on parts of the coach house. The proposed garage would be so close that any tenant or guest of the coach house could reach out and touch the shingled roof of the garage from the front door steps and landing. Given the smaller size of our neighbor's lot at 1414 Church Street, a two-car garage cannot be accommodated without adversely impacting the historic character and visual aesthetics of the area. In addition, a two-car garage does not seem necessary given that the neighbors only drive one vehicle. In a historic district zoned as R1 (Single-Family Residential), there should be more consideration given to less density of buildings than is proposed in this plan.

**Quality of Life** - In addition, we solicited feedback from our tenants, who have signed a long-term lease. They share concerns about the proposed bulky garage, which would adversely impact sight lines and natural light in the coach house. Windows in the kitchen and dining room would look out onto a shingled roof and receive reduced light from the northwest. This is especially important because the tenant mentioned that he works at his computer from the dining room table near a window that would be impacted.

**Property Value** -

Having purchased this historic property just over two years ago, we prioritized restoring the coach house as our initial project. We have spent significant amounts of money for a new roof & gutters, painted outside & inside, installed a new water line, refinished wood floors, added new appliances and more. We currently have very reliable long-term tenants, but have concerns around the desirability of the coach house if a large, two-car garage would be built so close to the coach house. We want to retain our current tenants as well as appeal to future, quality tenants. Building an oversized garage so close to the coach house could jeopardize our ability to rent out the coach house at the current market rate and negatively impact the value of our overall property.

**Safety** -

Lastly, we are concerned about the increased risk of fire associated with the proposed close setback and building proximity. While the proposed setback of the garage is 3 feet, the actual setback of the garage would be much closer given the large overhang resulting from the eave dimensions. As a result, the roof line will likely be approximately as close as the existing detached single-car garage on the property. One notable difference is that the proposed garage will be approximately 50% taller at the peak and attached to the neighbor's house making this proposed structure a much bigger fire hazard than the existing smaller detached single-car garage. The closer buildings are to each other, the higher the risk of fire spreading. The proposed plan introduces unnecessary fire hazards because of the insufficient setback request. Given that our coach house is both a residence for our tenants and a historic structure, a larger setback is prudent to prevent loss of life and loss of irreplaceable historic structures. The risk of fire spreading decreases as the distance between buildings is increased, therefore a larger setback is a necessary safety measure.

In conclusion, we request that the Historic Preservation Commission deny a Certificate of Appropriateness and oppose the Major Zoning Relief to permit a rear-yard setback of 3 feet instead of the required 30 feet. The close setback as proposed would negatively impact 1) the character of the Ridge Historic District, 2) the quality of life of our tenants, 3) the overall value of our property, and 4) the safety of residents and historic structures.

Thank you for your time and attention related to this matter.

Amanda Ziehm  
1632 Wesley Avenue  
Evanston, IL 60201



1628 Wesley Avenue (east side of coach house; view from Wesley Ave.)



1628 Wesley Avenue (west side of coach house; view from the alley)



1628 Wesley Avenue