

The owner of 120 Franklin purchased a lot behind their house (fronting on Stockton Avenue). They have combined this new lot with their existing lot, transforming it, in the process, into their back yard. This creates the unusual condition of a street-facing "backyard."

Street facing backyards are found on the beach block of Bath Avenue. However, in this part of Ocean Grove, the Historic Flare setback creates a natural area of lawn. As well, houses along Bath Avenue have historically been sensitive to both the southern streetscape found further west along the Avenue and the scale of houses on the northern streetscape, as well.

McClintock Street has street facing backyards of a different sort where many of the homes on the south Ocean Pathway have rear garages and curb cuts. Even here, the scale and configuration of the surrounding streetscape and the houses on the south side of McClintock, are respected.

Elsewhere in Ocean Grove—3 Pitman Avenue for example—a house that fronts on both Pitman and McClintock Street, treats BOTH street-facing facades as having front yards, and elements such as fence design and fence height are likewise scaled to 30" (instead of 48", as is proposed here.)

In the case of 120 Franklin Avenue, they propose installing a pool on this lot. To do so, they proposed a 30" berm wall on Stockton Avenue, an area of plantings containing trees along the full width of the Stockton Avenue lot, and a 48" board-on-board fence, a concrete pad (near Stockton) to accommodate pool equipment, and an in-ground pool surrounded by a bluestone patio.

The proposed application is incomplete in the following 4 ways:

A.) Please provide a cat-cut detailing the design (i.e., with newels or stanchions?), material, and color of the proposed fence.

B.) Please provide a cat-cut detailing the proposed wrought iron gate. (Please clarify whether sidewalk, path, or steps, are proposed from Stockton to the afore mentioned gate.)

C.) Please provide material for proposed berm wall. The majority of berm walls along this section of Stockton are historic shadow block.

D.) Please provide a lighting schedule for this area with fixtures and placement.

The applicant is advised that matters of this sort require review by the full Commission and cannot be Administratively approved. A review of the remainder of the application raises the following concerns:

1.) The proposed berm wall at 30" appears higher than the neighboring berm walls along the Stockton streetscape. Please provide some clarification of the height of the proposed wall in relation to these existing neighboring walls.

2.) Section A of the Historic Guidelines—Statement of Purpose—includes the following... "Ocean Grove's Historic District is a unique and valued architectural asset and national treasure. The Objectives of Ocean Grove Historic District - Architectural Design Guidelines for Residential Structures are to preserve the historic architectural integrity, craftsmanship and heritage of the Nationally Designated Historic District and encourage architectural solutions which will Recapture the Spirit of Ocean Grove." The same section continues, "The Design Guidelines address repairs, restorations, renovations, alterations, additions and maintenance to existing historic building facades, as well as design parameters for all proposed new construction within the Historic District in order to retain the aesthetic integrity of the community."

3.) Section D—What to Expect and How to Prepare for an HPC Hearing—in the subsection 7, Determining Compliance, indicates the Commission will review applications for compliance with, "c. Streetscape: The HPC will consider the effect of the proposed work on the historic preservation and enhancement of the Owner's property, adjoining properties, and the Ocean Grove Historic District as a whole.

4.) In the same section D, the Guidelines continue, "Combining Structures: The combination of two or more adjoining dwellings or other buildings for residential occupancy will be considered by the HPC but is not preferred. Proposed improvements, which combine adjacent structures, will be considered if the applicant successfully demonstrates sensitivity to adjacent singlefamily structures and retains the integrity of each structure as visually independent of the other. Essentially, area of the joining of the structures should not be architecturally pronounced, nor become an imposing new element, nor visible to public view as an inappropriate new element.

5.) Section G.—Porch and Balcony—acknowledges, "Ocean Grove is known as a front porch community. The predominant feature in most of Ocean Grove dwellings is the full and, in some cases, wrap around porches...

The section continues...Any new construction should incorporate a full porch and railing detail along the entire street front facade with a minimum of two-thirds of the total porch floor area being useable porch space. Covered porches are preferred. Open air balconies are discouraged.

Section S, while addressing specifically "driveways or curb cuts), does speak to the inappropriateness of modern inclusions and their non-conforming effect on the community: "...Original intent and design of the streetscape did not include provisions for driveways or garages. The modern inclusion of those amenities does not conform to the ideals set forth by the primary planners of our community."

6.) Section T of the Historic Guidelines—Auxiliary Structures—addresses items such as hot tubs and pools. In particular, the Guidelines state (see Guidelines for full text):

..."Any construction features such as sun decks, swimming pools and hot tubs are not in keeping with the designs of the Victorian Era or other historic styles of architecture within the Ocean Grove Historic District. Therefore, such features will be viewed contrary to the "Spirit" of the architectural setting. Introduction of any such feature must fully demonstrate that such a feature would be designed so as not to be visible to public view or adjacent to a public right of way.

..."Property Owners... should...1.) Avoid placement of pools, hot tubs, recreational facilities, sports courts and all other non-period design features on roofs. Any such introduction must be designed in a manner to not be visible to public view."

However, the Guidelines go on to explain more specifically... "2.) The placement of pools, hot tubs or other permanent auxiliary structure in the "front yard" or "street facing side" of a property located in Ocean Grove is unacceptable."

7.) A pool installed in the proposed area would result in a dramatic change of view to owners of either property that abuts this lot on Stockton Avenue. Rooms in these homes with windows that look out to the east and west (typically living rooms, dining rooms, and bedrooms) will now face a pool and yard, presumably with lighting, grills, and other outdoor amenities. Such amenities are typically relegated to areas between the backs of houses, rather than right outside a dining room window. Such a change forced on neighboring houses would be unprecedented in the Historic district.

Historically, block-through lots (such as on the Pathway) treat backyards that front onto streets, with extreme sensitivity to the neighboring houses and the streetscape as a whole. The proposal to completely block a street-facing lot with a berm wall, plantings, and a 48" fence, would be historically inappropriate and would be contrary to what the Guidelines refer to as the "Spirit" of Ocean Grove. That spirit promotes street-facing structures, with street-facing porches. Such properties limit their street-facing fences to 30" height and are typically picket design. HPC considers board-on-board a "solid fence" and routinely permits such solid fences only in side and rear yards where they do not block visual access to street-facing sidewalks.

The consolidation of the Stockton-facing property in question into an existing property lot (itself three lots that were previously consolidated) creates an anomaly that would result in the visual blockage of a mid-block parcel. Such a closing-off of the lot would interrupt the continuity of the historic streetscape along Stockton Avenue in a manner contrary to long-standing community norms. It would not only interrupt the rhythm of the streetscape but would create a visual blockage (with the elevated berm wall, stand of trees, and 48" fence) between the houses to the east and west of it. Such a bifurcation of a historic streetscape creates a direct, physical interruption between properties, houses, and neighbors that is inconsistent with the design, spirit, and history of buildings in the Ocean Grove Historic District.

The Tech Review Team asks the applicant to please provide the missing items, listed above, and to then schedule this application for review by the Commission at the next available monthly meeting.

Incomplete