



14 September 2018

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Hon. Randy Casale, Mayor
and Members of the City Council
City of Beacon City Hall
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Beacon, New York 12508

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Subject: Beacon HIP Lofts

Greetings Mayor Casale and Members of the City Council,

This letter presents the findings of my review of the appropriateness of the revised design of the Beacon HIP Lofts project (39 Front Street, Beacon, New York, Tax Parcel ID: 6055-04-590165) insofar as its relationship to the recent amendments to the HDLO Law of the City of Beacon is concerned.

Findings

I have reviewed the new Historic Preservation law for the City of Beacon (Chapter 134) with the intent of assessing the degree to which the proposed design of the proposed additions to the Groveville Mills, within the Groveville Mills Historic District for the Beacon HIP Lofts project is in compliance with respect to their spirit and intent.

Based upon my review of the applicable portions of Chapter 134 of the new zoning regulations for the City of Beacon, I find that

- According to 134-7 (1a) “new construction...shall build on the historic context with applications required to demonstrate aspects of inspiration or similarities to adjacent HDLO structures...”, and, by 134-7 (1c) that new construction “is to reinforce and extend the traditional patterns of the HDLO district”. The addition as designed addresses these concerns in a clear and direct manner.

- The letter of Beth Selig, President, Hudson Valley Cultural Resource Consultants, to Jennifer van Tuyl, dated 14 September 2018 and herewith submitted, substantially reviews the mill complex's historical and physical context, and concludes that the proposed addition "is not out of context with the historic layout of the Groverville Mills Historic District," with respect to massing and height of the proposed addition. These findings are made in reference to chapter 134-7 (2), which is intended to address the "scale and height of the proposed alteration or new construction in relation to the property itself." I concur with the findings presented in Ms Selig's letter.
- Furthermore, with respect to placement and height, I find that the present proposal respects the requirement that "[A]ny alteration or addition to an historic structure shall not damage or obscure the character-defining features of the architecture or site to the maximum extent possible" [134-7(2a)], the building is in compliance, inasmuch as it respects the remaining building's envelope, massing and detailing, and, without replicating it, substantially replaces an unsalvageable portion of the complex with a building of similar size and scale.
- With respect to 134-7(2c), which notes that the "height of any new building facades in the HDLO shall not conflict with the heights of adjacent historic structures on adjoining HDLO parcels", I find that the height of the proposed addition is well within the height envelope established by the remaining historic components of the mill complex. The additional floor introduced in the proposed new portion of the building is set back far enough to establish a continuity of height between the old and new portions of the complex along the principal elevations, and does not unduly alter the overall appearance of the complex through its scale or height.
- With respect to 134-7 (2d), which states that "[l]arger buildings or additions should incorporate significant breaks in the facades and rooflines, generally at intervals of no more than 35 feet" I find that, given the scale and detailing of the historic portions of the complex, the instruction of a series of non-structural pilasters, recesses or other repeated details would make the scale of the new and old portions of the building discordant. Clearly this section of the ordinance is intended to address buildings of smaller scale, in principally urban contexts. In addition, the utilitarian nature of the historic elements of the Groverville Mills Historic District would put them at odds with an addition which would then possess a higher level of detail if such features were introduced. The revised design, presented here, does however, introduce a shallow recess, 16" wide and 8" deep, at the juncture between the old and new portions of the building. While not explicitly indicated in the revised code, this type of detailing is recommended by the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* which indicate that the design of new additions should be undertaken "in a manner that makes clear what is historic and what is new" and that "[n]ew design should always be clearly differentiated so that the addition does not appear to be part of the historic resource."

- With respect to 134-7 (3d), which states that “[n]ew buildings in the HDLO should have a top-floor cornice feature and first-floor architectural articulation...” I find that, as above, such detailing would be incongruent with the extant historic components of the Groveville Mills Historic District, which form the immediate context of the addition. These features are understandably desirable in the principal contexts covered by the regulations, which consist of urban streets where such detailing is common, but are inappropriate for the Groveville Mills Historic District.

Conclusion

It is my belief that the proposed alterations to the Groveville Mills, within the Groveville Mills Historic District, as presented are substantially in compliance with and respect the spirit and intent of the new HDLO law of the City of Beacon, as well as the requirements set out in *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Walter R. Wheeler". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Walter R. Wheeler
Senior Architectural Historian



EDUCATION:

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Bachelor of Architecture May 1987
Bachelor of Science, Building Science, May 1986

QUALIFICATIONS:

36 CFR Part 61 Qualified Architectural Historian

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

- June 1999 – Present Senior Architectural Historian
Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc.
Oversee and prepare reconnaissance and intensive architectural resource surveys; literature reviews and historical documentation; field reconnaissance; report and proposal preparation for projects in New York, New England and the mid-Atlantic. Responsible for preparing documents to be reviewed by NYSOPRHP, NHDHR, MHC, VAOT, VDHP, and USACOE, for SEQR, Section 106 and NEPA. Preparation of reports generated under ACT 250 and the FCCs Nationwide Programmatic Agreement, including preparation of forms 620 and 621. Conducted resource surveys in NY, VT, MA, NJ, NH, and PA.
- November 1992 – June 1999 Architectural History Consultant
Identified, analyzed, and assessed historic structures; researched and wrote for exhibitions and publications including Historic Structures Reports; executed drawings in connection with restoration projects; and conducted reconnaissance and intensive resource surveys. Clients included Rensselaer County Historical Society; Robert Pierpont, both in Troy, NY; towns of Durham and Oak Hill, NY; Albany Institute of History and Art; Metropolitan Museum of Art; the New York Public Library, and John G. Waite Associates, Albany, NY.
- May 1984—November 1992 Junior Architect
Worked for the Office of the New York State Architect, Wagoner & Reynolds, and in the office of Robert N. Pierpont as a Junior Architect. Responsible for restoration projects including the Governor's Mansion, the New York State Capitol, and Wilborn Temple (all in Albany, NY), and the Knickerbocker Mansion, in Schaghticoke, NY.

PRINCIPAL PUBLICATIONS:

- In preparation *Building Albany: Studies in the Vernacular Architecture of the Upper Hudson and Lower Mohawk Valleys*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- 2017 "Magical Dwelling: Apotropaic Practices in the New World Dutch Cultural Hearth," in *Ruralia XI: Religious Places, Cults, and Rituals in the Medieval Rural Environment*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers NV.
- 2010 "Once adorned with quaint Dutch tiles...: A Preliminary Analysis of Delft Tiles Found in Archaeological Contexts and Historical Collections in the Upper Hudson Valley," in Penelope Ballard Drooker and John P. Hart, eds., *Soldiers, Cities and Landscapes: Papers in Honor of Charles L. Fisher*. New York State Museum Bulletin 513, 107-150. Albany, NY: New York State Museum.
- 2009 *Architects in Albany*. Diana S. Waite, editor. Albany, NY: Mt Ida Press/ Historic Albany Foundation. Contributed two biographical essays.
- 2005 *The Encyclopedia of New York State*, Peter Eisenstadt, editor. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005. Author of entries "Philip Hooker," "Archimedes Russell," "Upright and Wing Houses," "Cobblestone Architecture," "Empire State Plaza," and "Architects and Architecture of Syracuse and Central New York."
- 2000 *The Marble House in Second Street: Biography of a Town House and its Occupants, 1825-2000*. Troy, NY: Rensselaer County Historical Society.
- 1993 *In a Neat Plain Modern Stile: The Architecture of Philip Hooker and His Contemporaries, 1796-1836*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.