



Staff Report

Knoxville Historic Zoning Commission

File Number: 10-B-25-HZ

Meeting: 11/20/2025
Applicant: R. Bentley Marlow, Marlow Builders Inc.
Owner: Jennifer Boyce

Property Information

Location: 1014 McGhee Ave. **Parcel ID** 94 F J 019
District: Mechanicsville H
Zoning: RN-2 (Single-Family Residential Neighborhood)
Description: N/A
Vacant lot.

Staff Recommendation

The Commission should discuss the 3' side setback on the left (west) elevation, the design elements that break up the massing, and the building's architectural detail.

Along with any necessary revisions or conditions, staff recommends approval of Certificate 10-B-25-HZ, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) the final site plan to meet City Engineering standards;
- 2) meeting all applicable standards of the City Zoning code, including Article 4.6 and Article 9.3.J, with minor revisions to be approved by staff;
- 3) front setback to meet Middle Housing standards, with final approval by staff;
- 4) allowing for a 4' side setback on the right (east) elevation and a 3' (exact 2'-11 7/8") setback on the left (west) elevation, per the submitted site plan and contingent on meeting building code requirements, because they are consistent with those of existing houses and are thus supported by the design guidelines;
- 5) the decorative brackets to be on either side of all three front porch columns, with drawings approved by staff;
- 6) final window and door selections to be sent to staff for approval; and
- 7) all siding and trim to be the same material, allowing for smooth-finish fiber cement lap siding with a 4" exposure, with official determination of support of the material from the neighborhood organization provided to staff prior to issuing building permits.

Description of Work

Level III Construction of New Primary Building

New primary structure fronting McGhee Avenue. The two-story duplex measures 17' wide by 55' deep (not including porches), with the second unit behind the first. There is no parking indicated on the site plan. The main massing is proposed to be set 19'-6" from the front lot line, with the front porch at 11'-6", and the building is centered between the side lot lines with a 4' side setback on the right (east) elevation (with encroachments) and a 3' (exact 2'-11 7/8") side setback on the left (west) elevation.

The duplex features a 12/12 pitch front-gable roof clad with architectural asphalt shingles with 1' eave overhangs and frieze-board molding. There is a two-story projecting massing with a 4/12 pitch shed roof on the left (west) elevation. The façade features a full-length 8' deep front porch on a block foundation that is recessed under a partial hipped roof supported by three 6" square posts made from pressure-treated wood with trim at the base and Victorian-style decorative brackets at the outermost corners. The porch features a simple wood handrailing with balusters, and the steps will be made of concrete. It will have tongue-and-groove wood flooring and a beadboard ceiling. There is a similar porch on the rear elevation that does not feature a handrailing or decorative brackets.

The building will be clad in fiber cement lap siding (Hardie), with fiber cement cornerboards and trim, and it will rest on a 2'-6" tall parge-coated block foundation, with wood skirtboards. The façade features a quarter-lite paneled door on the left, followed by three paired windows, and the second story features a window centered in the gable. The rear elevation is a mirrored copy of the façade. The left (west) elevation features six windows on the first-story, two windows on the second-story, and the 11' wide two-story massing that projects 1' from the building. The right (east) elevation features two windows on the first story and a secondary entrance with a quarter-lite paneled door in a 2' wide by 3'-4" deep, two-story recess accessed via a small concrete landing. All windows are "aluminum clad", 1/1, single-hung, and feature fiber cement trim and projecting sills, and all doors feature fiber cement trim.

Comments

1. This case was postponed at the October meeting to allow the applicant to revise the plans, particularly the left (west) elevation. The siding-clad faux chimney on the left (west) elevation has been removed, and the shed roof massing has been revised to a two-story projection. The front setback was increased by 4', and Victorian-style decorative brackets were added to the corners of two front porch posts.
2. The applicant intends to use Section 4.6 of the zoning code, the Middle Housing standards, which are "intended to promote development of neighborhood-scale housing forms which are compatible with existing housing in the surrounding area," and "may allow more flexible development of land than is possible under the base district zoning regulations," subject to additional dimensional, design, and parking standards. Middle Housing review occurs separately during permitting; the HZC review focuses on how the project meets the design guidelines. Some elements of Middle Housing review may trigger site plan and building elevation revisions, which would require additional review by the HZC.
3. The lot to receive new construction is a 25' wide by 150' deep vacant lot which previously featured a single-story, modest Folk Victorian-style, shotgun house (demolished between 1980-1996) with a width, depth, form, and roofline comparable to the proposed duplex. New construction in the overlay in the last twenty years has been more elaborate in style and detail. The block to receive new construction features modified Queen Anne cottages and Folk Victorian shotguns with a similar, if not exact design, of the previous structure on the property. The form and proportions of the proposed duplex are appropriate for the relatively modest housing stock along the block, and the Victorian-style porch brackets and frieze board contribute detail compatible with the historic architecture. The design guidelines consistently recommend that new construction feature architectural details that align with the context. Recent new construction on Cansler Avenue (3-B-25-HZ, 3-C-25-HZ), a block with similar housing stock, featured additional architectural details that reflected the context, including shingles and decorative vents in the gable fields and faux rafter tails. The HZC should discuss whether additional architectural details should be added to reflect historic architecture.
4. Guidelines encourage maintaining the historic façade line of the streetscape and aligning new buildings within the existing setback pattern of the street, which is echoed by the Middle Housing standards that require a front setback within 5' of the average of the blockface. The average setback of the blockface is 24'-5". The adjacent house is the closest to the front lot line along the blockface and features a 16' setback, with the front porch at 10'. It should be noted that there is likely a discrepancy in the lot boundaries in KGIS that resulted in an average front setback calculation that is approximately 5' larger than the actual measurements, which can be rectified during permitting.

The proposed 19'-6" front setback, with the front porch at 11'-6", aligns with the blockface and is appropriate. The front setback on the final site plan should meet Middle Housing standards and align with the block.

5. The duplex is proposed to be centered between the side lot lines with a 4' side setback for both sides of the main body of the house and a 3' (exact 2'-11 7/8") side setback on the left (west) elevation for the two-story massing. The Middle Housing standards allow Planning staff to administratively approve a variation for the proposed 4' side setback during permitting, with the support of City Engineering (Article 4.6.G.1.a.ii). However, the 3' side setback on the left (west) elevation would require a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals or approval from the Historic Zoning Commission based on the criteria discussed below.

The HZC has the authority to approve alternative dimensional standards that would otherwise require a variance by issuing a COA if the standards are specifically recommended in the design guidelines (Article 8.5.C). The design guidelines for new construction emphasize that the historic development pattern and consistent setbacks of the neighborhood be respected, and they recommend that "side yard setbacks for new buildings shall be consistent with those of existing historic buildings." The shotgun houses along the blockface on 25' wide lots do not meet modern side setback requirements, with some buildings touching the side lot lines, and the previous structure on the lot also featured small side setbacks. The left (west) lot line is shared with Olde Mechanicsville Park, which reduces concern about the effect of a smaller side setback but makes this elevation highly visible. In the opinion of staff, the 4' and 3' side setbacks, on the right (east) and left (west) elevation respectively, are supported by the design guidelines. In the opinion of City Engineering and Zoning, the reduced setbacks would not pose a safety issue, although a higher-rated fire wall may be required to meet building codes.

The HZC should discuss whether it is appropriate to approve the proposed 3' side setback for the two-story massing on the left (west) elevation.

6. Overall, the scale and proportions of the new duplex are similar to other shotgun houses on the block and in the broader neighborhood. The building is compatible with the neighborhood's scale, width, and massing.

7. Guidelines recommend "avoid[ing] new construction that varies in height, so that new buildings are equal to the average height of existing buildings." The block only features one-story houses, so the duplex would be the only two-story building on the block. However, the second-story employs a vaulted ceiling to allow for a 5' tall floor, making it shorter than a typical two-story building, and the lot is adjacent to the Olde Mechanicsville Park and is in clear view of two-story buildings on Arthur Avenue that are larger in scale. In the opinion of staff, the two-story height is appropriate for the context.

The 2'-6" tall foundation is similar in height to the other houses on the block. Guidelines recommend that "beltcourses or other suggestions of divisions between stories that suggest the beginnings of additional stories shall be used" on new construction, and such an element is not present in the design. The Board should discuss the height of the proposed duplex and whether details indicating the separate stories should be introduced.

8. Guidelines recommend "break[ing] up uninteresting box-like forms into smaller varied massings...by the use of bays, extended front porches, and roof shapes." The proposed duplex uses front and rear porches, the projecting two-story shed roof massing on the (west) elevation (which requires a 3' side setback), and the recessed entry on the right (east) elevation to break up the long massing. These elements on the side elevations fulfill the Middle Housing requirement for a recess or projection on building planes over 50' (Article 4.6.E.4.b). The HZC should discuss whether these elements sufficiently break up the massing to meet the design guidelines.

9. The block features houses with full-length and partial-length front porches. The proposed 8' deep porch is similar in form to those found on other houses on the block, meets the recommended depth and width, and includes the beadboard ceiling, tongue-and-groove flooring, and handrailing recommended by the design guidelines. Design guidelines recommend that porches on new construction "contain design features such as columns and balustrades

that introduce architectural diversity.” Victorian-style brackets have been added to the corners of two of the three 6” by 6” square porch posts, which reflect the supports on the historic houses on the block and are characteristic of a Folk Victorian style. In the opinion of staff, these brackets should be added on either side of all three front porch posts.

10. The proposed 12/12 pitch front-gable roof clad in architectural shingles meets design guidelines for pitch and materials, and it benefits from the eave overhangs and frieze board molding. However, additional architectural elements could be added to the façade roofline to reflect the context.

11. Guidelines discourage split-face block. The proposed block foundation will be parge-coated, which will help it align with the materials present on the block.

12. The guidelines note that “synthetic siding is inappropriate and not allowed...as new siding in new construction,” limiting “concrete siding (also called Hardi-board) allowed on outbuildings and garages for new construction only.”

Fiber cement siding (typically with a smooth finish, 4-5” exposure) has been approved in new construction in all of the other historic zoning overlays in the City (both H and NC districts) through the design review process and with the general consent of the neighborhood.

The Commission extensively discussed the use of fiber cement siding on new construction in Mechanicsville in May where wood was required instead (3-C-25-HZ) and in July (3-B-25-HZ) where wood was required, allowing for fiber cement if staff is “provided official determination of support of the material from the neighborhood organization.” The neighborhood representative informed the HZC at the October meeting that the neighborhood met and is supportive of the use of smooth-finish fiber cement lap siding, allowing the HZC to discuss appropriate exposure. However, a letter from the neighborhood organization officially documenting their support of the material on new construction has yet to be provided.

In the opinion of staff and the neighborhood group, smooth-finish fiber cement lap siding and trim materials are appropriate, despite the guidelines discouraging the use of synthetic siding. The HZC expressed that a 4-5” exposure would be appropriate at the October meeting, but there was some concern about the visual exposure of the material increasing over time; the smallest exposures of fiber cement lap siding tend to be 4” and 5.” In the opinion of staff, a 4” exposure would be the most compatible profile with the historic context, which features wood lap siding with a narrow reveal, but the “official determination of support of the material from the neighborhood organization” must be provided prior to issuing building permits.

13. Guidelines recommend that new buildings use materials and placement for windows and doors that are consistent with the street and the surrounding neighborhood. The “aluminum clad” 1/1 single-hung windows with trim and projecting sills are appropriate, but final specifications should be sent to staff for review. The three grouped windows on the façade and rear elevation could be revised to two. The quarter-lite paneled door on the front porch achieves the “strong sense of entry” recommended by the guidelines, but final specifications should be sent to staff for review.

Applicable Design Guidelines

Mechanicsville Design Guidelines, adopted by the Knoxville City Council on September 20, 2011.

A. Rules for Roofs

1. The shape of replacement roofs or roofs on new construction shall imitate the shapes of roofs on neighboring existing houses or other houses of the same architectural style. Roof pitch must duplicate the 12/12 pitch most often found in the neighborhood, the roof pitch typical of the style being referenced by a new building, or the pitch of neighboring buildings. Roof shapes must be complex, using a combination of hips with gables, dormers, or where appropriate to the style, turrets, or other features that emphasize the importance of Victorian-era or Craftsman

styling.

2. The eaves on additions or new buildings must have an overhang that mimics existing buildings near the property. A minimum eave overhang of at least eight inches must be retained or used on new buildings or additions to existing buildings.
3. Repair or replace roof details (chimneys, roof cresting, finials, attic vent windows, molding, bargeboards, and other unique roof features). Use some of these details in designing new buildings.

C. Rules for Porches

2. Design elements to be incorporated in any new porch design must include tongue and groove wood floors, beadboard ceilings, wood posts and/or columns, and sawn and turned wood trim when appropriate. If balustrades are required, they must be designed with spindles set into the top and bottom rails.
3. In new construction, the proportion of the porches to the front facades must be consistent with the historic porches in the neighborhood.

D. Rules for Entrances

4. A new entrance or porch must be compatible in size, scale, or material.
6. Secondary entrances must be compatible with the original in size, scale, and materials, but clearly secondary in importance.

E. Rules for Wood Wall Coverings

1. Synthetic siding is inappropriate and is not allowed either as replacement siding on existing buildings or new siding in new construction.
4. New construction must incorporate corner and trim boards and appropriate door and window trim to be compatible with the adjacent historic buildings.
12. Concrete siding (also called Hardi-board) is allowed on outbuildings and garages for new construction only. The material can be used like board and batten if placed vertically. Batten strips of wood must be used, however, to preserve the look of historic materials. If used like normal siding, it must have a reveal of no more than 4.25 inches.

F. Rules for Masonry Wall Coverings

8. Split-faced block shall not be used in new construction or as a replacement for deteriorated masonry units. One exception is split-faced block which can be used as a retaining wall.
10. Stucco-surfaced masonry can be an appropriate for foundations in new construction. Brick and stone can also be appropriate.

Rules for New Building Construction

New buildings constructed in historic areas should be compatible with the existing historic buildings and sensitive to the patterns of the environment where they will be placed. The use of similar materials can help in developing continuity...A new building's form and its placement on its lot help determine the compatibility of the building...The form of the houses is also rectangular or irregular with the narrow sides facing the street. This development pattern should be respected if new buildings are built in the neighborhood. Also, the consistent setbacks of the buildings in the neighborhood create a visual order, help to define public and private space, provide privacy for the residents, and permit landscaping in front of a building.

O. Setbacks and Placement on the Lot

1. Maintain the historic façade lines of streetscapes by locating the front walls of new buildings in the same plane as those of adjacent buildings. If existing setbacks vary, a new building's setback shall respect those of adjacent buildings.
2. Do not violate the existing setback pattern by placing new buildings in front of or behind historic buildings on the street.
3. Do not place new buildings at odd angles to the street.
4. Side yard setbacks for new buildings shall be consistent with those of existing historic buildings, so gaps are not left in the streetscape.

P. Scale and Massing

1. Relate the size and proportions of new structures to the scale of adjacent buildings.
2. Break up uninteresting boxlike forms into smaller varied masses like those found on existing buildings by the use of bays, extended front porches, and roof shapes.
3. New buildings must reinforce the scale of the neighborhood by their height, width, and massing.
4. New buildings must be designed with a mix of wall areas with door and window elements in the façade like those found on existing buildings.
5. Roof shapes must relate to the existing buildings, as must roof coverings.

Q. Height of Foundation and Stories

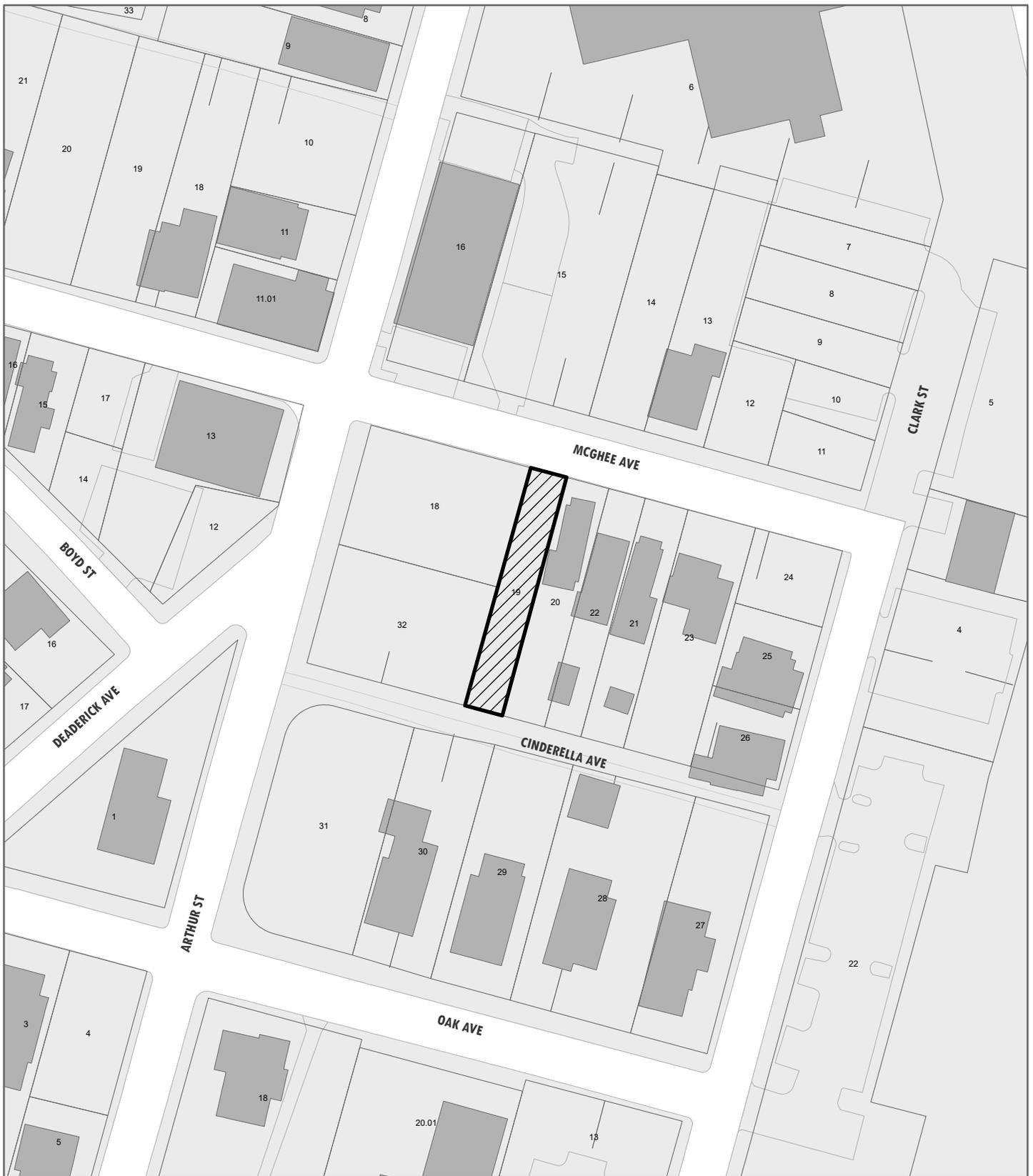
1. Avoid new construction that varies in height, so that new buildings are equal to the average height of existing buildings.
2. The foundation height of new buildings shall duplicate that of adjacent buildings, or be an average of adjacent building foundation heights.
3. For new buildings with more than one story, beltcourses or other suggestions of divisions between stories that suggest the beginnings of additional stories shall be used.
4. The eave lines of new buildings shall conform to those of adjacent properties.

R. Materials

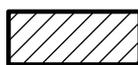
1. The materials used for new building exteriors shall be consistent with materials already found on buildings on the street.
2. Artificial siding and split face block are not acceptable materials for use on new buildings.

S. Features

1. Design new buildings with a strong sense of a front entry.
2. Use front porches in new designs, and make the size of those porches useable for sitting. New porches shall be at least eight feet deep, shall contain design features such as columns and balustrades that introduce architectural diversity, and shall extend across more than half of the front façade.



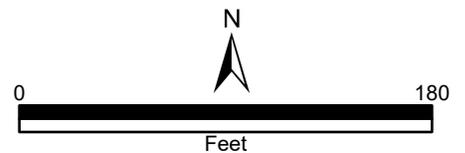
10-B-25-HZ
APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS



1014 McGhee Ave. 37921
Mechanicsville H

Original Print Date: 10/7/2025
 Knoxville/Knox County Planning -- Historic Zoning Commission

Petitioner: R. Bentley Marlow, Marlow Builders Inc.





DESIGN REVIEW REQUEST

- DOWNTOWN DESIGN (DK)
- HISTORIC ZONING (H)
- INFILL HOUSING (IH)

R. Bentley Marlow

Applicant

4 September 2025

16 October 2025

10-B-25-HZ

Date Filed

Meeting Date (if applicable)

File Number(s)

CORRESPONDENCE

All correspondence related to this application should be directed to the approved contact listed below.

- Owner
- Contractor
- Engineer
- Architect/Landscape Architect

R. Bentley Marlow

Marlow Builders, Inc.

Name

Company

322 Douglas Avenue

Knoxville

TN

37921

Address

City

State

Zip

865-607-4357

rbentleymarlow@gmail.com

Phone

Email

CURRENT PROPERTY INFO

Jennifer Boyce

6800 Ottinger Drive, Knoxville, Tenn. 37920

865-660-6324

Owner Name (if different from applicant)

Owner Address

Owner Phone

1014 McGhee Avenue

094FJ019

Property Address

Parcel ID

Deaderick's / Old Mechanicsville

TDR/RN2

Neighborhood

Zoning

AUTHORIZATION

Malynda Wollert

Malynda Wollert

9-4-25

Staff Signature

Please Print

Date

R Bentley Marlow

R. Bentley Marlow

4 September 2025

Applicant Signature

Please Print

Date

REQUEST

DOWNTOWN DESIGN

Level 1:

- Signs Alteration of an existing building/structure

Level 2:

- Addition to an existing building/structure

Level 3:

- Construction of new building/structure Site design, parking, plazas, landscape

See required Downtown Design attachment for more details.

Brief description of work: _____

HISTORIC ZONING

Level 1:

- Signs Routine repair of siding, windows, roof, or other features, in-kind; Installation of gutters, storm windows/doors

Level 2:

- Major repair, removal, or replacement of architectural elements or materials Additions and accessory structures

Level 3:

- Construction of a new primary building

Level 4:

- Relocation of a contributing structure Demolition of a contributing structure

See required Historic Zoning attachment for more details.

Brief description of work: New Construction of a Middle Housing (Art. 4.6) Side-by-Side duplex. This is permitted by operation of Art. 17.3 Nonconforming Lot. This is further permitted under exemption e of Stormwater Ordinance 20-22.5.

INFILL HOUSING

Level 1:

- Driveways, parking pads, access point, garages or similar facilities Subdivisions

Level 2:

- Additions visible from the primary street Changes to porches visible from the primary street

Level 3:

- New primary structure
 Site built Modular Multi-Sectional

See required Infill Housing attachment for more details.

Brief description of work: _____

STAFF USE ONLY

ATTACHMENTS

- Downtown Design Checklist
 Historic Zoning Design Checklist
 Infill Housing Design Checklist

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Property Owners / Option Holders

Level 1: \$50 • **Level 2:** \$100 • **Level 3:** \$250 • **Level 4:** \$500

FEE 1:	250	TOTAL: \$250.00
FEE 2:		
FEE 3:		
Pd., 09/05/2025, SG		

Re: 1014 McGhee Ave: 10-B-25-HZ

From Karly Harrod <karly@harrod.us>
Date Wed 10/15/2025 11:35 PM
To Malynda Wollert <malynda.wollert@knoxplanning.org>
Cc Mike Reynolds <mike.reynolds@knoxplanning.org>

Malynda,

Since our case is last, if the meeting runs long, there is a chance that I may need to leave the meeting early tomorrow to make a medical appointment. For that reason, I wanted to update you on news from our last OMNI Boars meeting that occurred on Tuesday evening of this week.

We have agreed that 4-5" reveal smooth hardie board would be acceptable on new builds within the overlay on non contributing infill lots. Our guidelines specifically state "no more than a 4.25" reveal" when discussing the use of hardboard on outbuildings when used as "normal siding". We would leave it up to HZC to determine if it would be most appropriate to match as closely to guidelines and stipulate the max of 4.25" reveal or if the range of 4-5" would be more appropriate.

The general consensus is also in support of the application given that all staff recommendations are also followed. In particular, there is specific interest related to the staff comments about the set back mimicking the setback of other houses on the block and the importance of adding additional decorative elements to the facade. For a note on the windows, we would hope that they are similar in size, scale and material (wood) to other historic homes on the block.

Karly Harrod

On Oct 15, 2025, at 7:45 PM, Karly Harrod <karly@harrod.us> wrote:

Malynda,

I plan to attend the meeting tomorrow.

Karly

On Oct 15, 2025, at 1:52 PM, Malynda Wollert <malynda.wollert@knoxplanning.org> wrote: