

City Council - Regular

Meeting Date: 04/02/2024

Initiated by: Jose A. Valdez Jr., Assistant City Manager/City Secretary

Initiated by: Ccecorio, LLC, Owner; Jamshid Yeroushalmi, Applicant; Pedro A. Avila (Architect), Representative

Staff Source: Vanessa Guerra, Interim
Planning Director

SUBJECT:

Public Hearing to approve an addition of a double iron gate to the main entrance of the building and altering the second level by adding a false door and restoring 6 windows on Lot 2, Block 41, Western Division, located at 516 Flores Avenue. The property is within the Old Mercado Historic District.

Historic District Landmark Board failed to establish quorum on March 14, 2024, therefore, the item is being presented for Council consideration pursuant to Municipal Code of Ordinances Section 2-156, which states, *"To the extent permitted by law, if a committee is unable to establish a quorum for a regularly scheduled meeting, the city manager may bypass the committee and place any item on the committee's agenda for that meeting on the next regularly scheduled city council meeting."* (Ordinance Number 2018-O-050)

Staff **supports** the application **with the exception** of the addition of the false door on 2nd level, and recommends the proposed false door remain a window.

HD-003-2024
District VIII

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION

None.

BACKGROUND:

Previous Action:

On March 19, 1997, the Historic District Landmark Board was presented with the installation of signs. However, the item was tabled due to the applicant not being present.

On April 16, 1997, the Historic District Landmark Board was presented with the installation of signs. However, the item was tabled again due to the applicant not being present.

On May 21, 1997, the Historic District Landmark Board tabled the item since the applicant removed the signs.

Proposed Scope of Work: The applicant is proposing an addition of a double iron gate to the main entrance of the building and altering the second level by adding 6 windows and a false door.

Please note there is evidence that identifies previous windows on the second level of the building. Please see attached Photos (Photo - Interior 2nd Level).

Building Type: The type of building at this location is considered to be a Late Victorian Commercial as per the City of Laredo Historic Urban Guidelines. As per the City of Laredo Historic Urban Guidelines, the Late Victorian Commercial style is similar to the early Twentieth Century Commercial buildings but has Classical revival and Italianate details that include the following elements:

- Usually a two-story building; symmetrical facade.

- Stamped metal cornices and articulated columns and pilasters.
- The street level has a storefront with large window openings.

Site: The property is in an H-AE (Historic Arts and Entertainment) zoning district.

Letters sent to surrounding property owners: 23

- **For:** 0
- **Against:** 0

Granting or Denying an Application:

- As per the Laredo Land Development Code, Section 24.1.2.2(2), the Historic District Landmark Board shall utilize the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings; and the City of Laredo, Texas, Historic Urban Design Guidelines

Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

None. (Failure to establish quorum on March 14, 2024)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff **supports** the application **with the exception** of the addition of the false door on 2nd level, and recommends the proposed false door remain a window.

Staff **supports** the addition of a double iron gate to the main entrance of the building and restoring the second level 7 windows for the following reasons:

1. As per the City of Laredo Urban Design Guidelines, historic precedent exists for using metal bars on openings and are simple and yet decorative in design. Therefore, the proposed double iron gate is in line with the Urban Guidelines.
2. The proposed double iron gate is similar and compatible to the historic building located across Flores Avenue.
3. As per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, it may be an accurate restoration based on documentary and physical evidence, but only when the historic feature to be replaced coexisted with the features currently on the building is recommended. There is evidence as per attached Photos (Photo - Interior 2nd Level) that identifies windows that were previously on the second level of the building. Therefore, the addition of the windows will restore the historic character of the building.
4. The glass used in the windows shall appear similar to that used historically, and transparent, clear glass is appropriate, as per the City of Laredo Urban Design Guidelines. The proposed windows are transparent, clear glass and will not alter the appearance of the historic character.
5. The City of Laredo Historic Urban Design Guidelines states to preserve historic upper story windows and consider re-opening windows that are currently blocked. The restoration of the secondary windows will preserve and maintain the integrity of the historic structure.

Staff **does not support** the second level addition of a false door for the following reasons:

1. An addition to an historic building front is inappropriate as per the City of Laredo Historic Urban Designs Guidelines. Therefore, the second level addition of a false door is inappropriate as it will diminish the historic characteristics of the building.
2. The storefront should not be altered or obscured as per the City of Laredo Historic Urban Designs Guidelines. Therefore, the alteration of the false door will negatively impact the building's historic character.
3. As per the City of Laredo Historic Urban Guidelines, the Late Victorian Commercial style is usually a two-story, symmetrical facade building. Therefore, the addition of the false door will alter the Late Victorian Commercial style and will no longer be symmetrical.

Staff General Comments:

1. Any improvements which are approved by the Historic District Landmark Board shall also comply with all Building Code requirements and other regulations as provided in the Laredo Land Development Code.
2. Approval by the Historic District Landmark Board does not guarantee approval of a building permit or any other permit which may be required.
3. It is recommended that all existed improvements utilize the following resources as a guide:
 1. The Secretary of the Interiors' Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings
 2. City of Laredo Historic Urban Design Guidelines
 3. City of Laredo Historic Preservation Plan
4. No other improvements, changes to the building, site or new construction on the property shall be permitted without prior review and approval by staff and/or Historic District Landmark Board, to meet compliance.
5. As per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, all proposed scope of work should be physically and visually compatible to the original materials and features of the historical structure.

Attachments

Maps

Narrative

Site Plan

Materials

Floor Plan

Photos
