



4 March 2021

Ms Kathy Rose
Director of Zoning and Building
City of Bexley
2242 East Main Street
Bexley, OH 43209

Re: Review of 394 South Columbia Ave

Dear Ms Rose:

As a licensed architect in the State of Ohio who has done contextual additions in Bexley and as a teacher of architecture, I have been asked to comment on the character and quality of the structure at 394 South Columbia Avenue.

I have examined the building and have reviewed the City of Bexley Zoning Ordinance Criteria to determine preservation significance. I will organize my comments relative to the list of criteria:

1. *The age and the condition of the structure:* The building is definitely in need of updating. It would be possible to rehabilitate it, but there is at least one issue: the separation of the garage from the house. In this day and age, it is reasonable to expect that the primary garage be attached to the house. Clearly, there is no way to attach a garage to the existing house.
2. *The quality of the structure's architectural design, detail, use of materials or construction:* This is the main issue. 394 South Columbia is a mashup of a Craftsman style and Bungalow style house. On the one hand, it might be classified as a side-gabled Craftsman style house (*A Field Guide to American Houses*) as the house has some typical elements of that style, including dormered second floor, exposed rafter tails, large overhanging eaves, fly-rafter rake extensions, and cantilevered bays. Or, it might be seen as more singular Bungalow style which is more singular with an encompassing roof and front porch. Unfortunately, the most prominent design feature, a large front porch tucked under the main roof, has been filled in on the right with an insensitive addition which totally destroys the solid/void ratio of the front of the house. In addition, on the right side there is a high window with vertical windows on either side. Although this might be seen as a "Craftsman" element, it is in the wrong place. Such windows would normally be found as a compositional element on the gabled side elevations. A Bungalow porch would typically have full height windows looking out on the porch with the purpose of the porch being to protect the expansive view from front rooms. Although less important, in the rear of the house, the box projection under the eave is gracelessly attached to the roof and original window openings have been awkwardly infilled, again damaging the design of the house. I have reviewed the applicant's submission of many Craftsman style homes in Central Bexley and there are many examples of more refined and classic versions of Craftsman homes. Many with original and defining design elements intact.

3. *The importance of the structure to the character and quality of the neighborhood:* There is an awkwardness on that side of South Columbia Ave. due to the large differences in size and scale of the existing houses. Rather than having too many smaller scale houses sandwiched in between much larger homes, the new house offers a “bridge” size, not too small and not too large that helps blend the block together.
4. *The significance of the design or style of the structure to the historical architectural or cultural development of the City, Central Ohio, the State or nation:* Others can comment on the “cultural” value of the house, but as I have commented the building is not a particularly good example of a style of architecture. At best it is a mishmash of styles. At worst it is a collection of accommodations with little regard for the whole.
5. *The impact on the City’s real property tax base of restoration versus replacement and/or removal:* I have reviewed the design for the replacement house and there is little doubt that it is an improvement over the existing house. Although it is a considerably larger house, it has articulated pieces that maintain a domestic scale, but add up to a coherent whole thus referring to both the larger and smaller scale of the nearby homes. Because of its character and quality, it is an excellent addition to an eclectic neighborhood. There can be no question that the new house improves the property tax base.

It is for these reasons that I would recommend that the Bexley Architectural Review Board allow the demolition of 394 South Columbia Avenue. If you would like further elaboration or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Robert S. Livesey FAIA FAAR
Professor and Director Emeritus