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The Fred Hotel to Expand With 34 Rooms as Historical Preservation Committee Gives Greenlight

Architectural integration and parking adequacy key in Fred Hotel's proposed expansion, with plans for 34 new rooms and external parking solutions.

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Janeka Simon **April 22, 2024**

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The Fred Hotel in Frederiksted, St. Croix

The St. Croix Historic Preservation Committee conditionally approved the expansion of the Fred Hotel during its April monthly meeting following a detailed discussion with architect Clarence Browne.

Mr. Browne made the application before the HPC last Thursday, presenting plans to refurbish an existing structure and build a new one to accommodate 24 additional guest rooms near the corner

of Strand and Fisher Streets. Another new building was proposed for the empty lot just north of the Fred, across the Queen Street right of way. That would be subdivided into 10 more guest rooms, the architect explained, for a total of 34 more rooms overall.

The construction project would be conducted with the goal of maintaining architectural harmony with the existing buildings, Mr. Browne told HPC members. The guest blocks would be two-story buildings, with the existing building on the south corner renovated to align its aesthetic with that of the Fred, ensuring a seamless visual transition between structures. The intention, according to Mr. Browne, is to add capacity without altering the neighborhood's overall look and feel.

Committee members raised several concerns, including ensuring that the roofline of the new 24-room building would connect to the existing structures in a way that is not too jarring. "I think we'll take a look at that," responded Mr. Browne, assuring that final designs would ensure a coordinated look for the completed project.

The applicant and committee members also discussed privacy concerns at the ground floor level. "That is an ongoing issue that we need to manage," said Mr. Browne, saying that privacy becomes more of an issue "as you get towards the outskirts of the property." An idea to eliminate doors and porches along the first floor Fisher Street frontage was considered favorably, once certain windows along that facade were fitted with door-sized shutters, with masonry infill below to maintain the appropriate look and feel.

Parking was also extensively discussed, with HPC member Phil Codrington enquiring whether there were plans to provide additional parking spaces as part of the project. "The owner is actively looking to find lots that he could add to parking in Frederiksted, period," Mr. Browne responded. The acquisition of additional land for parking would hopefully "alleviate his parking challenges as well as those of the broader community." Securing parking elsewhere in Frederiksted would also be a strategic move for the owner, as "using his waterfront property to add parking is not his favorite use," Mr. Browne quipped.

Because of zoning requirements mandating the provision of a certain number of parking spaces for hotels, Mr. Browne said that the expansion plans would rely on receiving exemptions or waivers from the relevant agencies. "It's something that we're going to ask both HPC and DPNR to be as lenient as possible [about]," the architect disclosed.

However, HPC member Sean Krigger, the director of the State Historical Preservation Office, informed that under the current zoning designation, the HPC did not have discretion to waive parking requirements. Instead, he suggested raising the height of the new buildings to accommodate parking on the ground floor, with guest accommodations on the second and third floors.

"We'll have to get creative here," Mr. Browne acknowledged, asking that approval be granted on the designs as presented on condition that parking logistics are adequately addressed. The HPC agreed, and approval was duly granted, with the expectation that Mr. Browne would soon revert to show that the concerns outlined had been resolved.

"Thank your client for continuing to beautify Frederiksted," said committee chair Collette Woodsoon Burgess, as she closed the discussion on this application.