II. REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION AS AN HISTORIC LANDMARK

A. Collier House (H 76-5)

A portion of Tax Lot 100 - Assessor's Map 17-03-32

Located on the southwest corner of East 13th Avenue and University Street, 1170 East 13th Avenue

Requests consideration as an Historic Landmark

Background Information

Phyllis Collier Kerns, granddaughter of George Haskell Collier, original owner and builder of the Collier House, is requesting that the Historic Review Board initiate this application in order that the Board may determine whether the structure is of significant merit and should be recommended to the Planning Commission as an Historic Landmark. The structure is located on the University of Oregon campus and was purchased by the Board of Regents of the University of Oregon from Professor Collier in March, 1896.

Evaluation

After reviewing the information presently available and the criteria set forth in Section 9.489 of the City Code, the Staff makes the following preliminary findings:

Section 9.489(d): The structure merits recognition because of its inclusion in an official Register of Historic Places.

The Collier House is one of twelve sites listed in the Statewide Inventory of Historic Sites and Buildings. It has also been recognized by the State Board of Higher Education as being of "prime significance" and "top priority for preservation or restoration" on the University of Oregon campus.

Section 9.489(a,e,f): The structure merits recognition because of its association with historic or famous events, its relationship to the broad cultural history of the state and community, and its identification with persons who have significantly contributed to the history of the City.
George H. Collier, a professor of Physics and Chemistry at the University of Oregon from 1879 to 1895, bought 9½ acres south of the "old campus" from H.R. Kincaid in 1884. Beginning construction in 1885, Professor Collier completed the house in May of 1886 just in time for the Junior Class "Strawberry Supper", the first of many family gatherings, parties, committee meetings and University events to be held in the Collier House.

In March of 1896, the University bought the Collier House for use as a women's dormitory. Instead, the upper floor became the home of the University's third president, Dr. Frank Strong, and the downstairs housed the college library. The Collier House was the subsequent home of a number of University of Oregon Presidents (Prince Lucien Campbell, Arnold Bennett Hall, Donald Erb) and Chancellors of the State System of Higher Education (William Jasper Kerr, Frederick Hunter). As such, it was a social, intellectual and cultural center where students gathered for concerts or strawberry dinners and visiting dignitaries were entertained. "From 1902 to 1925, during the Campbell occupancy of the President's home, it was the very center of University life and activity, faculty and student body being considered one big happy family by Dr. and Mrs. Campbell. Many 'first' events were presided over by gracious Susan Campbell, among which was the Y.W.C.A. sponsored Senior breakfast in 1915." (Harpham, p.6) In 1941 after the acquisition of the George McMorran House by the University, the Collier House was converted to the Faculty Club.

Section 9.489(c)(1): The structure merits recognition because of its representative character of a period or style of architecture.

Although there is no documentation as to the source of the design of the Collier House, it appears that Professor Collier may have been influenced by Warren Haywood Williams, the third architect of note in Oregon and the designer of Villard Hall. (Villard Hall was completed in the same year, 1886, as the Collier House.) Williams designed many rich examples of the Italianate style in the Portland area, unfortunately all but one, the Morris Marks House, have disappeared. Typical of Williams' interpretation of the Italianate style was a symmetrical main facade with a central porch and matching two-story bay windows, all of which are features of the Collier House.

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Through the years the structure has been modified. The most dramatic changes have occurred on the south and west sides of the building where a number of additions have been made, the latest in 1963 on the southwest corner. It
appears that a number of the original windows on the southern and eastern side toward the rear of the house have been eliminated. The front porch and doorway with side and top lights was redesigned in 1914 by E.F. Lawrence, the Dean of the new School of Architecture and Allied Arts; the other porches to the rear have also been modified through the years. The cast iron railings, located midway up the roof, have also been lost.

Special note must also be made of the grounds surrounding the Collier House. "Mrs. Collier was a trained Botanist, so the trees, plants and shrubs were selected not only with loving care but with intelligent discretion. Through the years the setting has become increasingly beautiful and lends great charm to the old home. On this property are to be found False Cypress, Knob Cone pine, Western White pine, Sitka spruce, Big Leaf maple, White Magnolia and Oregon myrtle of the tree family. Among the shrubs are: English laurel, English yew, lilac, box wood, English holly, Japanese maple and skimmia, spirea and glossy abelia. In Mrs. Collier's garden were many lovely flowers as well, including a favorite bed of blue polemoniums." (Harpham, p. 4) Although some of the above mentioned plant materials have been lost in recent years, the grounds continue to be an important feature of the Collier House.

Recommendation

Based on the above evaluation of the information currently available and the criteria set forth in Section 9.489 of the City Code, the Staff would conclude that the Collier House has met five of the criteria necessary for recognition of a structure as an Historic Landmark and that the Historic Review Board should recommend to the Planning Commission that the Collier House be established as an Historic District.

When an area is classified as an Historic Landmark, it is necessary to adopt specific elements in accordance with the requirements set forth in Section 9.490. The Staff would recommend adoption of the following specific elements in conjunction with the Historic Landmark recommendation.

1. Description and Purpose Section: The Collier House, 1170 East 13th Avenue, should be classified as an Historic Landmark in order to achieve the following purposes:

   a. To afford the structure special treatment so that the uses permitted and restrictions imposed upon it will preserve and allow renovation of its distinctive qualities;

   b. To provide restrictions upon exterior alterations, moving and demolition of the structure; and
c. To establish procedures and criteria controlling its renovation and maintenance following application of the Historic District classification.

2. Use Section: The Staff would recommend that uses presently allowed under its current zoning, PL Public Land, be allowed to continue as long as they do not adversely affect the character of the exterior of the structure or its site.

3. Standards Section: The Staff would recommend that at a minimum the structure and its site should be maintained in its present condition and that any repairs or alterations to the structure should be in character with its original exterior or with Italianate style of Victorian architecture, and that any rehabilitation of the garden or grounds should be in character with its original use as a residence, especially the residency of the Collier’s.

4. Repairs and Maintenance Section: The Staff would recommend that the repair and maintenance of exterior detailing, made with materials and craftsmanship similar to the original be permitted without an alteration permit, but that alteration of the exterior require an alteration permit under the procedures specified in Section 2.410 of the City Code.

Attachments: Sources
Photographs
Vicinity Map

Sources:
Photographs, University of Oregon Archives and Lane County Pioneer Museum
Collier House (H 76-5)

Substitute the following Standards Section:

The Staff would recommend that any repairs or alterations to the structure should be in character with its original exterior or with the Italianate style of Victorian architecture, and that any rehabilitation of the garden or grounds should be in character with its original use as a residence, especially the residency of the Collier's.

Add the following statement:

Further, the Historic Review Board would encourage the University of Oregon to perform some immediate maintenance work on the Collier House to prevent further unnecessary deterioration, i.e., termite and dry rot inspection and necessary remedial work performed, moss removed from the roof, repair of the foundation and painting of the house.

Chambers House (H 76-7)

Add the following statement:

"Further, the Historic Review Board would encourage restoration of the Chambers House whenever possible in accordance with the Standards Section. This would include restoration of the fence (pictured in attachment to Staff Notes) as well as exterior features, such as the tower roof, chimney pot, cresting and finials. The Board would also be willing to inform the owners of the Chambers House about Victorian architecture and resources which could help in the restoration of the structure."