



**HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD
DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE
STAFF REPORT
October 24, 2019**

Project #	HPB19-192
Project Type	Minor Exterior Alteration
Property Address; Historic Name	417 Frank Lloyd Wright Way; The "Columbus W. Deen" House
Historic District; FMSF#	South Lake Morton Historic District; SLM #7-34
Owner/Applicant	Mr. Steve Shelnut / Mr. Thomas Brawner
Design Professional	Mr. Jon Kirk, Straughn Trout Architects
Zoning; Future Land Use; Context District; SPI	MF-12; Residential Medium Urban Neighborhood; South Lake Morton SPI
Existing Use	Residential
Adjacent Properties	Residential, Institutional
Previous Approvals	N/A

REQUEST

The Applicant requests Final Approval to make exterior alterations to the building on the subject property, as well as to add an ADA ramp and parking areas on-site, in order to convert the building into a pre-school.

SUMMARY OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The subject property is a half-acre, corner lot (approximately 135' X 150' in area). This property features a prominent, two-story house constructed circa 1912 and known locally as the Columbus W. Deen House. As a contributing building of major significance in the South Lake Morton Historic District, the Deen House represents the Prairie architectural style, which is characterized by its rectangular plan, low-pitched hipped roof with widely overhanging eaves, banks of casement windows, the use of continuous horizontal banding, substantial tapered columns decorated with a triangular motif, round urns on pedestals, and a wide porch that wraps around the home's north and east elevations. While the house is clad in blond brick with a running bond, the columns and pedestals are covered in stucco. Three blond brick chimneys decorated with the repeated triangular motif are present, and the hipped roof is crowned by a decorated square cap.

The Deen House is located at the center of the subject property, which features a large, landscaped yard enclosed by a historic wrought iron fence and stucco knee wall. Triangular concrete walkways extend from the front porch to the sidewalk on the north and east sides of the property. At the southwest corner of the property, a two-story garage apartment in an architectural style similar to the house is present; a concrete driveway connects the garage apartment to Success Avenue. A portion of the rear and west side yard is enclosed by a contemporary wooden privacy fence.

The Deen house is a rare and unique landmark for its architectural and historic significance. Originally built for Mr. Deen and his family as a single-family residence, this house is the only example of historic Prairie style architecture in the South Lake Morton Historic District. The National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Historic District describes the Deen House as "the most architecturally significant building in the area." Similarly, the Florida Master Site File Inventory Form considers the Deen House the most significant historic site in the District "because of this home's architectural significance and association with the district's developer and one of Lakeland's most influential early 20th century investors." The building displays a high level of architectural integrity and design, owing to architect Guy Platt Johnson's training under Frank Lloyd Wright. Because of its architectural

significance and historical associations, the Deen House is eligible for designation as a City of Lakeland Local Historic Landmark and for individual designation on the National Register of Historic Places.

Following Deen's death in 1927, the property was sold to Judge R. Lee Wright and briefly served as a private hospital and sanitarium in the 1930s. In 1940, it was acquired by Florida Southern College and used as housing for College faculty and students. These institutional uses occurred prior to the establishment of the City's first zoning code and the Florida Building Code. Use of the home by the College resulted in many alterations and damage, but the house was authentically restored by its former owners, Lon Stanley and Keith Etheredge, after they purchased it in 1994. The property's current owner purchased it in 2012 as a single-family home and listed it for sale in 2017. Both the principal and accessory dwellings are currently being used as short-term rental units.

The request proposes to remove four casement windows from each of the west elevation, second-floor window openings, as well as the architectural banding and brick wall below the banding, to construct fire escape doorways. A steel door measuring 36" X 84" is proposed for each doorway, and a painted metal fire escape stair is proposed to be installed at each new opening. The Applicant also requests the installation of a concrete ADA ramp with a metal handrail, approximately four to five feet wide and 24 feet long, at the rear (south elevation) of the house for entry into the rear door. Additional paving is being requested on-site consisting of four parallel spaces adjacent to the existing driveway at the rear of the property, and ten parking spaces in the west side yard along the alley.

The Applicants and their architect met with staff on October 10, 2019 to discuss the project and staff suggested removing classrooms from the second story to avoid the need for two fire escape doors and stairs. The Applicants responded that the project would not be economically viable if the classrooms proposed for the second floor were removed, as it would not accommodate the target enrollment.

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES:

The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the City of Lakeland's *Design Guidelines: A Guide to the Exterior Design of Buildings in the Dixieland, Beacon Hill, East Lake Morton, South Lake Morton, Lake Hunter Terrace, and Biltmore/Cumberland Historic Districts* are the basis for review per the City of Lakeland Land Development Code ("LDC"), Article 11: Historic Preservation Standards.

The following *Standards* apply to this project:

Standard 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.

Standard 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.

Standard 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.

Standard 5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

Standard 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.

Standard 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.

The following *Design Guidelines* apply to this project:
Chapter 5: Rehabilitation of Contributing Buildings.

Exterior Walls/Features

- Use the wall finish most acceptable for the architectural style.
- Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was originally constructed, such as imitation cast stone, imitation brick siding, or brick veneer.
- Removal of any original wall surface with a material inappropriate to the style is not recommended or acceptable.
- Retain original masonry and mortar where possible.
- Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as nearly as possible. Mortar color and texture should match that of the original whenever possible.
- Original detail should be continued and replicated. Coursing spacing and mortar joint size should be maintained.

Windows and Doors

- Windows and doors should reflect the architectural style of the building.
- Existing windows, doors, cornices, siding, brackets, and other decorative details contributing to the building's character should be retained.
- Window and door openings should be kept in the same proportion as originally provided. Window and door head heights should be consistent throughout the building.

Not Recommended/Not Acceptable:

- Modification that alters the character of the building.
- Removal of door or window details.
- Reducing window or door size.
- Use of stock windows, doors, posts, or other items not compatible with the house.
- Addition of out-of-scale features.
- Replacement windows that are smaller than the original.
- Windowpane patterns that are not the same as the original.
- Use of overly decorative hardware.
- Replacement of original steel casement windows is discouraged because a compatible alternative is not generally available.

ANALYSIS:

The Deen House is unlike much of the vernacular-style buildings that make up the fabric of Lakeland's Historic Districts, as it represents one of the few examples of high-style historic architecture in Lakeland, and the only historic Prairie style house in the South Lake Morton Historic District. It is an exceptional landmark individually eligible for historic designation, which is an uncommon characteristic within the City's residential historic districts.

While the Historic Preservation Board and Design Review Committee do not review land use changes, changing the use of a building from a single-family residence to a school often requires building alterations compliant with life safety codes that affect the building's envelope. When a historic building is involved, these types of changes must be carefully considered to ensure architectural integrity is maintained and protected.

In evaluating the request for building alterations, staff finds the request to remove four casement windows, architectural banding, and brickwork from the second-story, west elevation wall to install doorways for fire escape stairs is inconsistent with the Standards and Design Guidelines listed above, as it adversely affects the architectural integrity of this landmark building. Banks of horizontally-oriented casement windows in consistent opening sizes are a character-defining feature of the Prairie style, as is the brick banding beneath the windows. The request proposes to remove historic materials and interrupt the horizontal rhythm of these character-defining window openings and banding on a highly visible wall, as well as introduce intrusive doorways and stairs. This alteration is also unlikely to be reversed in the future.

Regarding the request for site-related changes, staff finds:

- The materials and placement of the ADA ramp are consistent with the Standards and Design Guidelines. This alteration is appropriately placed at the back entrance, will not damage historic materials, and is reversible.
- The request to add ten parking spaces to the west yard of the property is inconsistent with the applicable Standards, as this parking lot diminishes the historical setting of the property. The original setting is a component of a property's historic integrity, and is important to maintain for properties as significant as the Deen House. While the Design Guidelines contemplates vehicular access for single-family residences from alleys to detached garages, carports, or parking pads in rear yards, this guidance is not contextually appropriate for a commercial parking lot.
- The request to add four parking spaces adjacent to the existing driveway does not detract from the historical setting and context of the property, as these spaces are located at the rear of the property and the original driveway width is maintained at the entrance from Success Avenue.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends design approval of the Applicant's request for an ADA ramp and four parking spaces adjacent to the existing driveway as submitted, provided that a Conditional Use is approved by the City Commission allowing for the use of the building as a pre-school and the ancillary parking.

Staff recommends denial of the request for conversion of the second-story, west elevation casement windows to doors, addition of fire escape stairs, and the addition of a parking lot consisting of ten spaces in the western yard off the alley.

Report prepared by: Emily Foster, Senior Planner, Historic Preservation
Liaison to the Historic Preservation Board