

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 21-1204, **Version:** 1

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**PRESENTER:**

Caleb Chance Gasparek  
Historic Preservation Officer

**SUBJECT:**

**HST21-377** Consideration of a Certificate of Alteration for the construction of an approximately 535 square foot addition to the side and rear of 708 W. Mill St., a local historic landmark known as the Mergele House.

**DEPARTMENT:** Planning & Development Services

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** District 1

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Alteration for an addition of approximately 535 square feet onto the rear and side of the existing landmarked building known as the Mergele House. The applicant has indicated that exterior materials will be of matching materials, utilizing custom millwork for the siding. The proposed addition will be largely shielded from view from the right of way by the existing fence, and is of a compatible design to the existing historic structure.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT:**

Deed research indicates that property is primarily associated with Moritz Mergele and Elizabeth nee Wilke. Both were lifelong residents of New Braunfels and were married in 1907. Both were descendants of original New Braunfels founders. Moritz was a bartender at "The Tavern" where the NBU building currently stands on the Main Plaza. He later owned a novelty liquor store called the Plaza Package House at the Capitol theater Building next door to Black Whale Pub.

The property was surveyed by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) in 1975 as a property of significance. The THC gives an estimated construction date of 1880. This is consistent with the folk Victorian style of the building, which was popular in the US from about 1870 to 1910. Additionally, several similar folk Victorians in New Braunfels are known to have been constructed at this time. The folk Victorian style is characterized by its simple form, with the porch area bearing the most decorative details such as elaborate spindles and gingerbread detailing. The dwelling appears to be minimally altered with the exception of a small rear sleeping area that was added prior to 1975.

**ISSUE:**

A Certificate of Alteration is required for any alteration to a landmarked property or a property within a local historic district.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Approval of a Certificate of Alteration waives all permit fees associated with the building permit.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Alteration based on criteria 1, 2, 9, and 10 of Chapter 66-58 Criteria for approval of an alteration certificate.

1) Every reasonable effort shall be made to adapt the property in a manner which requires minimal alteration of the building, structure, object, or site and its environment.

*The proposed addition is clearly secondary to the primary form of the historic dwelling. The diminished scale does not have the effect of “overshadowing” the defining folk Victorian characteristics of the main house. The additions secondary status, diminished size, and location at the side and rear of the historic dwelling are all recommended guidelines endorsed by the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.*

2) The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure, object, or site and its environment shall not be destroyed when possible. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.

*None of the folk Victorian character defining architectural features will be irreplaceably destroyed by the proposed addition.*

9) Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural, or cultural material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property, neighborhood, or environment.

*The applicant has proposed custom millwork for the additions siding, and as noted in criteria 1 and 2, the additions secondary size and scale is an appropriate new use of space.*

10) Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to buildings, structures, objects, or sites shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the building, structure, object, or site would be unimpaired.

*While removing the addition in the future would be impracticable, it could theoretically be done without significantly altering the overall form of the historic structure. Furthermore, the addition is located on the side and rear of the existing historic structure, removal would not affect the primary façade of the building.*

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Location Map
- B. Application
- C. Submittal Documents
- D. Supplemental Documents
- E. Sec. 66-58 Criteria for Approval of an Alteration Certificate