The Elwell Garage Addition to Pencraig Cottage Carriage House

96 Harrison Avenue

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The proposed addition of the Elwell Garage to the Pencraig Cottage Carriage House is a methodically developed design that adheres to the Newport Historic District Standards and Guidelines for the Local Newport Historic District (revised 2016) and the Historic Zoning Ordinance Chapter 17.80. in its size, scale, massing, details, siting, and considered architectural design.

The original asymmetrical massing, the earliest indication documented in the Sanborn Map of 1903, is continued in the placement of the new addition in the center portion of the eastern side of the building. The proposed addition is of carefully considered architectural design with the objective of seamlessly blending old with new, respecting the key character defining features of the original structure.

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1. The overall size and massing of the new structure is in scale with the original building.
2. The clapboard siding complements the same surface material on the original building.
3. The slanted jerkinhead gables for the roofline and dormers reference those in the original building and are in accord with The Historic District Zoning Ordinance as follows:

Architectural Quality. New construction, reconstruction and new walls, gates, gateposts and fences made subject to review pursuant to[Section 17.80.100](https://library.municode.com/ri/newport/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COOR_TIT17ZO_CH17.80HIDIZO_17.80.100EX)(6) of this Chapter should be of thoughtful and considered architectural design.

1. The addition in no way affects the overall structural integrity of the original structure. It may be removed without causing any major damage to the original structure as cited in Section 17.80.060 (7):

Minimize Harm from Alterations. Undertake exterior alterations, including new additions, in such a manner that minimizes harm to historic materials and that if removed will not change the essential form and integrity of a contributing structure. Make proposed additions or exterior alterations to a contributing structure compatible with the existing materials, features, size, visual relationships and massing to protect the integrity and scale of the original historic structure or site.

1. The addition is distinguished from the original structure through the indentation of its connecting wing in accordance with the Historic Zoning Ordinance as follows:

Appearance. New construction, reconstruction and new walls, gates, gateposts and fences made subject to review pursuant to[Section 17.80.100](https://library.municode.com/ri/newport/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COOR_TIT17ZO_CH17.80HIDIZO_17.80.100EX)(6) of this Chapter may clearly read as such and need not present a false historic appearance.

The addition also adheres to 5.3 in the Newport Standards and Guidelines for the Local Newport Historic District:

Additions may be designed in the spirit of the existing architectural style, or may be clearly

differentiated from the historic structure but compatible with it and with the surrounding

buildings in the historic district. Although designed to be compatible with the original

building, an addition should be discernible from it. For example, it can be differentiated

from the original building through a break in roofline, cornice height, wall plane, materials,

siding profile, or window type

1. The building, both the original structure and its proposed addition, is set back at a distance from the street so there is no visible impact on the character of the site or the historic district. This adheres to the Historic Zoning Ordinance as follows:

Compatibility. New construction, reconstruction and new walls, gates, gateposts and fences made subject to review pursuant to[Section 17.80.100](https://library.municode.com/ri/newport/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COOR_TIT17ZO_CH17.80HIDIZO_17.80.100EX)(6) of this Chapter shall be compatible with the surrounding historic area in terms of size, scale, siting, massing, setback, materials and details.

The proposed addition of the Elwell Garage to the Pen Craig Cottage Carriage House methodically follows historic preservation principles and practices for additions, as quoted below from 5.3 in the Newport Standards and Guidelines for the Local Newport Historic District (revised April 2016):

A major misconception about historic preservation is that additions are not allowed on

designated buildings. Over the life of a building, its form may evolve as additional space is

needed or new functions are accommodated. However, sensitively designed additions allow

historic buildings to compete with contemporary ones in terms of livability and in fact help to

preserve historic homes by keeping them available for the continued use and enjoyment of

Newport’s residents. Many buildings in the Newport Historic District reflect their history

through the series of previous alterations and additions that they exhibit. Consequently, such

changes are significant to the history of the building and the district. New additions within the

historic districts are appropriate as long as they do not destroy historic features, materials, and

spatial relationships that are significant to the original building and site. A new addition

should be designed to respect a building’s character and to preserve its historic integrity. This

generally means using existing rooflines, trim lines, material and massing as a guide for

designing the new addition. It is critical that additions do not visually overpower the original

building. Further, new additions should be differentiated from the original building and

constructed so that they can be removed in the future without damage to the building.

Additions that replicate the features of a historic building must be clearly differentiated as new

construction to preserve the visual understanding of the original historic building. This

differentiation can be accomplished by breaking the plane of a wall to inset the addition,

giving the addition a lower roofline or using a different material.

The placement, massing, scale, use of rooflines and dormer details, the proposed addition is in line with the best practices of new construction for historic buildings. It respects historic integrity and authenticity, is sympathetic in form, materials, and details with the original structure, and is also being differentiated from it in its plan for a connecting indented wing. The Elwell Garage addition sensitively adds to the historic structure, and that is the essence of well managed historic preservation projects. The Standards and Guidelines of the Local Newport Historic District defines the character of historic neighborhoods as varied and complex. The purpose of the guidelines is to allow for old and new buildings in a district as follows in section 5.5 under Design Criteria:

Historic neighborhoods in Newport contain a wide variety of building types and architectural

styles. While some streets demonstrate great similarity of building sizes, shapes, materials and

setbacks, others are characterized by great diversity, demonstrating how a neighborhood has

grown over time or how different activities were carried out in the same area. This variety

makes it impossible to mandate a specific design for new construction. These guidelines

therefore deal with general issues of building height, mass, scale, siting, rhythm, materials,

etc. They are intended to provide a framework within which design creativity and the needs of

the property owner can co-exist with respect for designated historic districts.

The Elwell Garage addition sensitively adds to a historic structure with respect to mass, scale and the rhythm of the overall form of the original building , differentiates from that original building, does minimal impact to the form and materials of the original building, and its setback on the property makes it blend in its siting with its surroundings, marked by mid-to-late 19th and early 20th century summer houses and their outbuildings. The addition is a complement to the original structure and a fine example of how historic buildings can be adapted to contemporary use.

C.