



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date **1/12/2026** **CCF # 251520**

Ald. Brower **Staff reviewer:** Andrew Stern

Property 2015 N. Lake Drive **North Point South**

Owner/Applicant John and Sarah Hambrook
2015 N. Lake Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Proposal

1. Create balcony atop south bay window structure.
2. Remove west chimney and install modern furnace vent.

Staff comments

The Ida Lane house is 1902 design by Elmer Grey. Grey did limited work in Wisconsin before going on to significant fame in Southern California.

Balcony

The balcony is an unusual proposal, but not necessarily a glaring alteration to the property. A simple wood and metal railing is proposed. Metal doors in an industrial steel design are proposed to replace existing windows for access. The railing, if done in all black or all glass, would be largely unobtrusive, but the door design is not suited to the property or its Arts & Crafts character. There are several better options to be pursued for access.

1. French doors may work, but would need to be custom-designed wood, with trim matching the existing window trim including the window hood. The proportions of the existing window sash and the central mullion should be generally replicated in the door design.
2. A single door, the width of one existing window opening may also be an option.

Chimney Removal

The second part of this proposal is the removal of a chimney located in the peak of the roof towards the center-rear of the house. The house has two chimneys. One on the side façade services the home's fireplaces. The chimney proposed to be removed served as an incinerator chimney and is currently used to exhaust the boilers. The chimney is a large, corbelled red brick chimney that protrudes prominently from the center of the house.

Relevant guidelines

g-1 Whether the proposed work would destroy or adversely affect any exterior architectural feature of the improvement upon which the work is to be done or adversely affect the external appearance of other improvements on the site or within the district.

Windows and Doors

a. Retain existing window and door openings that are visible from the public right-of-way. Retain the original configurations of panes, sash, lintels, keystones, sills, architraves, pediments, hoods, doors, shutters and hardware. Avoid making additional openings or changes in the principal elevations by enlarging or reducing window or door openings.

Porches, Trim and Ornamentation

b. Retain trim and decorative ornamentation including copper downspouts and guttering, copings, cornices, cresting, finials, railings, balconies, oriels, pilasters, columns, chimneys, bargeboards or decorative panels. Avoid the removal of trim and decorative ornamentation that is essential to the maintenance of the buildings historic character and appearance.

The house sits on a highly visible corner of N. Lake Drive and E. Windsor Place. Both proposals would be visible from the right of way. The addition of a balcony on the bay window would require the removal of some historic fabric. The preservation guidelines state to “avoid making additional openings or changes in the principal elevations by enlarging or reducing window or door openings.” The balcony proposal, however, would require a minimal amount of modification and can be accomplished with moderate changes. Staff recommends the doors be modified to an all-wood design that respects the Arts & Crafts character of the house and either a clear glass or a black metal railing. For the chimney, HPC has approved chimney removals in the past in the North Point historic districts. However, in those cases the chimneys proposed to be removed were wholly non-functional, utilitarian in design, and not visible from the right of way. In this case, the chimney is still being used to exhaust the boilers, is a nicely designed corbelled chimney, and is highly visible from the right of way. Staff recommends keeping the chimney and examining if it is possible to retain the exterior stack while removing the interior portion of the chimney. A replica chimney can also be considered if necessary.

Recommendation

For the purposes of a clean motion and closing the file, deny both requests. However, the applicant is encouraged to return with revisions to the balcony design that include full design drawings incorporating design changes suggested above.

Conditions

1. Work with staff to find an all-wood door design that suits the Arts & Crafts character of the house. A single door the width of one window is preferred, but French doors as discussed above can be considered.
2. Install a code-compliant railing that is glass or black metal.