



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date	12/4/2023	CCF #231055
Ald. Brostoff	Staff reviewer: Tim Askin	
Property	2239 N Terrace Ave	North Point South HD
Owner/Applicant	Thomas and Suzanne Roepsch	TKWA

Proposal

This project intends to fully reconstruct the east facing front deck of the home. The existing structural masonry walls are in poor condition due to water infiltration, and many bricks are cracked and deteriorating. Of note, the south wall brick veneer is buckling significantly. The concrete porch floor is cracked in several locations, and rusting rebar and sections of spalled concrete are visible under the floor.

New porch walls will be reconstructed using new veneer brick over CMU. The new brick for the deck will closely match the brick visible on the house (there are many different colors/sizes of brick on the existing deck due to multiple repairs over the years). Many of the existing stone caps and stone base pieces are in good condition and will be cleaned for reuse, the pieces with significant chipping will be recreated with new stone. Any existing deck brick with a good match to the home will be salvaged during demolition for future projects. The homeowner has found an area where the original mortar color is visible (a red-toned mortar) and will be gradually tuckpointing the entire home with that original color. The deck project will also use that original mortar color.

The existing deck walls range from 27" to 32" high above the deck floor - this inconsistency is due to settling and cracking of the floor and drainage to scuppers. The original plans do not indicate a deck wall height, but the drawings show the deck walls low enough to see the home window sills. To meet this intent, this project proposes reconstructing the deck walls 30" above the deck floor. This will require a building code variance, as it does not meet the required guard height of 36". Applicants request HPC's endorsement of the variance request.

We are proposing expanding the size of the deck by sliding the entire east deck wall (including stair and wing walls) further east by 4'-0" - roughly the width of the bushes visible today. The path to the front porch will be demolished and replaced with new concrete following a similar curved path.

Staff comments

The house is a 1902 Eschweiler in the Arts & Crafts style. The exterior of the home is substantially intact. The applicant's description is accurate as to the poor condition of the existing front deck. Age, improper footings, and prior inexpert repairs have caused notable damage. This includes damage to the brick from both inappropriate mortar and from repointing with an oversized electric grinder.

This is the third major porch expansion we have seen in recent years. Following the explicit wording of our preservation guidelines, the project seems permissible. The only caveat being that additions be "located so as not visible from the public right-of-way, if at all possible." Nonetheless, with the house's deep setback and the expansion in only one dimension, the project should have only a marginal visual effect on the property and thus does not "intrude upon the principal elevation."

Recommendation

Approve with conditions and endorse building code variance request on basis of historic appropriateness.

Conditions

1. On-site cleaning of masonry will require a separate building cleaning permit from DNS-Environmental that is subject to additional HPC staff review for compliance with Wis. Stat. 101.1215 and SPS 372.

Relevant Guidelines

Porches, Trim and Ornamentation

- a. Retain porches and steps visible from the public right-of-way that are historically and architecturally appropriate to the building. Avoid altering porches and steps by enclosing open porches or replacing wooden steps with cast concrete steps or by removing original architectural features appropriate to the building. Avoid altering porches and steps by enclosing open porches or replacing wooden steps with cast concrete steps or by removing original architectural features, such as handrails, balusters, columns or brackets.
- 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.
- c. Repair or replace, where necessary, deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using replacement materials that do not accurately reproduce the appearance of the original material.

Additions

Make additions that harmonize with the existing building architecturally and are located so as not visible from the public right-of-way, if at all possible. Avoid making additions that are unsympathetic to the original structure and visually intrude upon the principal elevations.

Guidelines for Streetscapes

The streetscapes in North Point South are visually cohesive because of the intact building stock and the retention of period street and landscaping features. There are few non-contributing buildings or visually prominent inappropriate additions to historic structures. The traditional landscape treatment of the building lots and the period streetlights contribute to the maintenance of the district's traditional residential character.

1. Maintain the height, scale, mass and materials established by the buildings in the district and the traditional setback and density of the block faces. Avoid introducing elements that are incompatible in terms of siting, materials, height or scale.
2. Use traditional landscaping, fencing, signage and street lighting that is compatible with the character and period of the district. Avoid introducing landscape features, fencing, street lighting or signage that are inappropriate to the character of the district.