



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 10/10/2022

District: 3

Staff reviewer: Carlen Hatala

PTS #115331 CCFILE # 220755

Property

2409 N. TERRACE AV.

Owner/Applicant

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Proposal

The applicant wants to build a new 2-story slab on grade masonry residence with a one-story rear component and attached garage. Cladding is reclaimed cream city brick and black standing seam zinc. The roof and some side walls are clad in black standing seam zinc. Since there is no basement, the house sits low to the ground atop the concrete slab.

The house is set back behind a smooth gently sloping berm. It is not terraced as shown in the illustration. A pervious paver drive is located at the north side of the property and leads to a two car garage. A landscaped area is located to the rear consisting of patio, lawn and fencing.

The house itself is a sided-gabled structure, 24 feet by 42 feet, with recessed front entrance at the north and a shallow bay at the south. Behind this main block is a 36 foot long one story, flat roofed L-plan wing that connects with the attached garage.

FRONT FACADE

The front façade is symmetrically arranged. The center focal point is the pair of multi-paned rectangular windows that illuminate the stairwell inside. It is positioned 10 feet above the foundation. Below the windows the bricks are slightly recessed.

To the right (north) at the second story is a shed dormer that features a bank of three multi-paned steel windows. Below the dormer at grade is the porch, recessed into the body of the house and located at the corner of the building. The porch's "lintel" is a black steel beam. Supporting this is a black steel post. The porch's walls are clad in thermally modified wood. The front door features a single light and it has a narrow sidelight to the left. The door will be varnished wood. Steps are limestone and the porch floor has a limestone wall cap. A two-over-two rectangular window is located to the right of the entry door and is flanked with black metal sconces.

On the left or south side of the façade is a shallow bay with shed roof. At the second story is a bank of three multi-paned windows. Below at the first story is a bank of three multi-paned windows that are taller than those above. The bay sits on cream city brick. A downspout is tucked into the right corner where the bay meets the wall of the house.

NORTH ELEVATION

The north elevation is simple in design. It features a vent in the gable end, a pair of two-over-two windows at the second story and two four-paned windows on the first story. These are black metal windows.

SOUTH ELEVATION

The south elevation features a tall chimney with flat top that has a recessed channel with patterned brick. To either side of the chimney is located one two-over-two window at the second story and the same arrangement is located at the first story. Windows feature brick soldier course lintels. The windows are black metal.

WEST/REAR ELEVATION

The west or rear elevation is arranged asymmetrically to accommodate access to the exterior and the connection to the one story wing. At the second story on the north or left side is a shed dormer with a single light door. It accesses the flat roof of the wing. To the south or right, still on the second story, is a shed dormer with a bank of three windows that have two-over-two sash. Below this at the first story is a large, sliding patio door. One downspout is positioned next to the door and shows it collected by a rain barrel. Another downspout is located near the north corner of the house

WING

The wing behind the front portion of the house is L-plan in shape extending to the west then turning east. This allows for a courtyard along the east side of the house. The short portion of the "L" abuts the garage. The wing itself is clad with black standing seam zinc on top of a cream city brick base. At the west or rear is a single light window and single light door.

The south elevation of the wing features a bank of three single paned windows and a slender single paned window/door. This side of the wing opens to a patio that has a limestone wall, belt course and steps.

The north elevation of the wing has three single paned windows grouped together at either end. A shallow planter-like feature runs the length of the wing from house to garage driveway.

GARAGE

The garage is a rectangular gable roofed structure oriented east-west. The south slope of the roof carries solar panels. The north elevation features the single two-car-wide garage door with a ribbon of horizontal windows. The west side has a vent and pedestrian door. It has a downspout at the north corner that discharges into a rain barrel. The south side has a bank of three single light windows at the west corner and a single light window near the east corner. Another downspout is located at this corner, also discharging into a rain barrel. The side of the garage facing the wing has a pair of single light windows and a vent in the gable end. All windows are black metal.

Staff comments

The house design is emulating an industrial aesthetic or even a rustic aesthetic. This is not the character of North Point North with its steep front gables, traditional materials as brick, stucco and shingles for cladding. Standing seam metal roofs were used in rural settings and industrial settings historically. However, in the finely detailed historic district, this material appears out of place. Likewise, reclaimed cream city brick from demolished buildings can vary from evenly colored with crisp edges (from pressed brick) to the spotted and more irregular brick from industrial and commercial buildings. At the time the district was in its highest period of development, such brick would not have been socially acceptable. In fact, an article was written about how cream city brick had fallen out of favor. By the 1930s and 1940s with building materials in short supply, a resurgence of interest in cream city brick occurred, using reclaimed brick from demolished buildings. In the developing neighborhoods to the north like Shorewood you can see houses with this material.

New Construction Guidelines look at four elements to inform decision making when an infill building is being proposed.

1. **SITING** The proposed building is sited in a traditional manner with space for a front lawn, rear yard and room for a side driveway with parking at the rear. Setback uses the city's formula and cannot be closer than 24 feet from the front property line. The major portion of the building is at the front of the lot and "accessory" portions are set behind. Other setbacks along the street were shown in the application for the new house at 2381 N. Terrace.

There are some differences here. Most entrances in North Point North are located in conjunction with a front porch that extends out from the body of the house. Porches give houses a sense of movement and allow for sheltered activity at the front of the house. In this case the entrance is recessed 5 feet 8 inches into the body of the house and there is no corresponding projecting roof.

2. **SCALE** The scale of the house (height, width) is more or less compatible with other houses in the district. The roof ridge is 31 feet from grade and the top of the chimney 3 feet 4 inches taller than the ridge. The dimensions of the main portion of the house are 42 feet wide by 24 feet deep. Other sections of the house are shorter in height, narrower in width and retain their appearance as dependencies.

3. **FORM** The form of the house appears to be lower to the ground than other properties due to its lack of vertical emphasis. This is visually created by having the roof ridge parallel to the street, the use of wall dormers with shed roofs that bring the eye down to the façade and the lack of a significant foundation that grounds it to its site. It might be better for the house to have a front gable and possibly the chimney at the front.

4. **MATERIALS** In contrast to most of the houses in the district, the use of reclaimed cream city brick, modified wood cladding at the porch, and standing seam zinc lend a rustic and even industrial character to the building. Most of the houses have a uniform surface of either the same color brick, brick in the same color tones or shingles that create a textured but uniform surface. Reclaimed brick can be either highly uniform in appearance or rough and spotted, depending on the use of the building the bricks were cladding (industrial, commercial, residential). The concrete foundation is parged, leaving it less finished than other houses in the district. The use of steel windows likewise emphasizes an industrial character. Grouping the windows together on the façade does not give enough of the sense of verticality needed. In addition, there is an inconsistency in the design of the windows. There are some windows showing just a single pane, doors with one light instead of multiple lights to coordinate with the front windows, and large single pane sliders

instead of French doors. Side walls clad in standing seam zinc is not characteristic of the district and neither is the standing seam zinc roofing.

Recommendation

The design needs more work to make it compatible with its surroundings. This is not to say it should copy what is there but have better rhythm with the street with more elements projecting and receding and utilizing verticality. The owner is committed to sustainability but there can be different materials and designs more appropriate to this district. Refer back to staff.

Conditions

Previous HPC action

Previous Council action