



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 1/13/2025

Staff reviewer: Andrew Stern

Ald. Bauman

CCF # 241145

Property	1119 E. Knapp St.	First Ward Triangle Historic District
Owner/Applicant	Slayed Development One Daniel Slade 1660 N. Prospect Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53202	Steven Brandenburg 1628 N. Astor St. Milwaukee, WI 53202

Proposal

The applicant is seeking after-the-fact approval for installation of HVAC equipment, concrete work, and rebuilding two entry stairways. In 2024, the concrete stairs and sidewalk to the east of the house were reconstructed. The new footprint for the concrete sidewalk was expanded to the west to the house. Two air conditioner condenser units were also installed on the new concrete pad just to the east of the house. The stairs and rails for both the front entry and side entry were also reconstructed. None of this work was permitted or received a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Staff comments

The Charles Forsythe House was designed by architect Howland Russel and constructed in around 1885. The house was an impeccable example of Queen Anne residential architecture. The house has an asymmetrical massing, clapboard siding with sawn and incised ornament and shingling on the front, decorative stickwork and large one-over-one windows with a distinctive square and triangle stained glass design in the upper sash, and paired entry doors with stained glass windows.

The present owner purchased the property in May 2021. The owner has been before HPC for previous proposals, including adding porch alterations, adding an accessible entrance, and new concrete work on the east side yard. In April 2024, a complaint was received about new windows at the property. Order violations were sent to the property address and to the property owner in May 2024 for removal of both entry porches and work done without a COA. Photos provided by the inspector indicated a large scale construction project underway without permits or without approval of a COA. Work done without permits or COAs includes the removal of nearly all of the original windows and replacement with Jeld Wen aluminum clad one-over-one windows, removal of the stairways, concrete work, in-kind replacement cedar clapboard siding, and HVAC work. A COA was subsequently approved by staff for the replacement siding and for rehabilitation of the paired entry doors. The replacement windows were denied at September HPC, though no subsequent plan for replacement with wood windows has been presented to staff at this time.

In 2022, the applicant was approved for a COA for a new concrete walkway with stamped concrete border to match the ashlar pattern stone. The concrete work that was completed in 2024 does not match what was previously approved and was constructed past the expiration date of the 2022 COA. The 2024 work does not contain the stamped pattern. Staff recommends the stamped pattern be added per what was previously approved.

The drawings provided for both sets of entry steps closely match the design of the historic porch shown in a 1976 photo. The porches are currently partially constructed but the as-constructed porches do not match the architectural plan provided. At December HPC, it was also noted that the quality of wood appeared deficient and there were numerous knots in the material. Staff recommends the porches be built with wood smooth and free of knots and to the specifications of the plans provided.

The AC condenser units would not have been approved at their present location unless it was determined that they could not be located behind the house. The applicant has not provided any code restrictions that would prevent the units from being located behind the house and staff was unable to find any. HPC was inclined to require their relocation and staff recommends the units be relocated to behind the house. If there are restrictions that prohibit their location there, staff recommends opaque screening be added around the units at their present location.

Recommendation

Recommend HPC Approval with Conditions

Conditions

1. All finish wood must be smooth and free of knots and must be painted or treated with an opaque stain upon completion. Note: when new, bare wood is left exposed to the exterior elements for a period of only a week or two, the life the of the paint job subsequently applied to it will be decreased. The use of a decay-resistant wood for is required for porch areas. Using western white pine or Ponderosa pine is “at your own risk” because this wood has no natural decay resistance and can deteriorate in some exterior settings in just a few years.
2. Relocation of the air conditioner units to behind the house. If this is not possible due to code restrictions, an opaque wood fence or vegetation installed around the air conditioner condenser units at their present location to screen from the right of way.
3. Installation of a stamped concrete border around the concrete walkway/patio per the 2022 approved COA (file #220537).

Previous HPC action**Previous Council action**