



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 9/11/2017

Ald. Nik Kovac District: 3

Staff reviewer: Tim Askin

PTS #114319

CCF #170549

Property 2623 N. WAHL AV. North Point North Historic District

Owner/Applicant JEFFREY LESWING & KRISTI HW Jeff and Kristi Leswing
2623 N WAHL AVE 2623 N. Wahl Ave.
MILWAUKEE WI 53211 Milwaukee, WI 53211

Proposal Retroactive approval of replacing gutters and downspouts in copper. Retroactive approval of terracing of the front lawn with compost socks. Retroactive approval of rebuilding stairs and walkway in bluestone and the installation of stone retaining walls along driveways on each side of the property.

History This is a highly prominent Germanic-influenced architectural design featured in multiple books over the years, including our own Ethnic Housing tour pamphlet. Architect Carl Barkhausen designed it in 1902 for Dr. James Bach.

Staff comments Some years ago, the applicant terraced the berm (c. 2014) and this was observed this year when active construction violations were observed at the property. The gutters and downspouts are acceptable as completed. They are submitted for your review simply because they were included on the same application as the landscaping. Other issues with unapproved work such as roof repairs, lighting, and refinishing of decorative rails, have been processed as after-the-fact staff approvals.

Applicant is currently using the terraced front yard as a victory garden. Staff would like to make it clear that given the low-lying plants that appear to be very leafy varieties of vegetables, that there is no objection to the use of the front lawn for the purpose. The food plants function as adequate ground cover that blends in with the streetscape. The only objection is to the terracing itself, the front retaining wall, and the compost socks, which do not meet the North Point North guidelines nor the citywide guidelines

North Point North: Guidelines for Streetscapes

The streetscapes in North Point North are visually cohesive because of the intact building stock and the retention of period street and landscaping features... 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 are 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.

(over)

Staff comments (cont.)

Terracing is prohibited in the citywide preservation guidelines published in *Living with History* in 1997. It is prohibited because it interferes with the cohesive streetscape established by the continuous roll of berms along the street face.

The Commission should note the issue of a partially terraced front lawn will return to the Commission next month. Any decision here would likely set a precedent that will have effects as soon as next month.

Recommendation

Recommend HPC Denial of terracing. Recommend approval of downspouts.

Conditions

Previous HPC action

Previous Council action