



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 11/6/2017
Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4
Staff reviewer: Tim Askin
PTS #114375 CCF #170666

Property 3107 W. KILBOURN AV.

Owner/Applicant BRIAN SCOTTY
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Proposal Install one light fixture to highlight house on the east side of the front lawn.

Staff comments This is part of a large project from Near West Side Partners called "Brighter Near West Side" and includes providing neighborhood property owners with steeply discounted lighting for an increased perception of security. This includes the house accent lights in this proposal as well the potential for replacement porch fixtures. Amongst other areas, the program will be available to the entirety of the Concordia district during the initial phase and will likely be expanded to the McKinley/Cold Spring historic district.

The group has worked extensively with staff to find fixtures that could be purchased at a bulk rate and be sensitive to the character of the district.

Porch fixtures have been selected for both Queen Anne and Craftsman style buildings and each homeowner will only be offered fixtures appropriate to the style of their building. Additional fixtures remain to be selected for Colonial style properties and for potential expansion of the project area to include McKinley Boulevard.

Staff also succeeded in discouraging the program from offering any carriage lampposts and going strictly with porch or lawn fixtures. Replacement of historic fixtures will not be permitted under this program. These are planned for staff approval under the ordinary process as minor alterations, but no applications to use the porch fixtures have yet been received.

This is the first of four pending applications for house accent lighting. Approximately five more applications are expected in the near future. Amongst the four applications, both types of staff-approved accent lighting fixtures are proposed.

The initial proposal involved requiring an entire block face to participate with some sort of light fixture. This raised some concern about the effect on the historic districts as a whole, but this requirement has been removed having been found to be impractical. Properties may now participate individually.

The citywide landscape guidelines reference lights similar to these, but only allow for foundation lights (see slides with LWH pages). The lights in this program are generally 20+ feet out into the front yard. They are arranged such that they will be hidden by existing plantings or new plantings of one of four proposed species.

The house accent lighting is presented to the Commission as several policy questions.

1. Whether to allow such lighting that has the potential to change the character of two entire historic districts.
2. Whether these kinds of lighting projects should be subject to staff approval when they are districtwide programs.
3. What sort of screening plants should be allowed, four are proposed.
4. Whether to grant staff the ability to approve new fixtures and plants to be included in the program

The fixtures to be used for this lighting have the support of staff if the program is approved. Staff believes not all of the screening plants are ideal. Staff recommends the elimination of lemongrass from the program as it would look quite awkward in the middle of a Concordia lawn unless incorporated into a full professionally designed landscape plan. The lemongrass could be acceptable adjacent to the foundations or next to walkways. Staff would like to see a few native species included in the plant selection.

In October, Ald. Bauman and preservation staff conducted a site visit for demonstration of lighting options at two properties on State Street in Concordia. After seeing the effects in person, staff now recommends approval, with two additional conditions regarding the amount of light and where the lights should be focused.

Recommendation

Recommend HPC Approval

Conditions

If the program and/or this site are approved, the following

1. Inclusion of some native species in the screening plant selection
2. Elimination of the lemongrass as an option
3. Provide and guarantee landscape restoration after trenches are dug for hardwiring the fixtures.
4. Limit illumination options to 400 lumens or fewer in a soft white color tone.
5. Lighting should be focused on architectural features, not anything in the landscape.

Previous HPC action

Held over from September meeting.

Previous Council action