



## Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

**HPC meeting date: 9/11/2017**  
**Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4**  
**Staff reviewer: Tim Askin**  
**CCF # 170667 PTS #114376**

**Property** 2812 W. STATE ST. Concordia Historic District

**Owner/Applicant** TIFFANY L GREER Tiffany Greer  
1942 N 20TH ST 2812 W. State St.  
MILWAUKEE WI 53205 Milwaukee, WI 53208  
Phone: (414) 982-0763

**Proposal** Install two light fixtures on the front lawn to highlight the house at 22 feet from the front of the house. They will be hidden by one of four species of pre-selected plants.

**Staff comments** This one of four test cases for a neighborhood project by Near West Side Partners. The project is called "Brighter Near West Side" and includes providing neighborhood property owners with heavily subsidized lighting (permitting, fixtures, and labor) for an increased perception of security. Lighting options include the house accent lights as in this proposal and 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 Park (McKinley Boulevard) historic district.

The proponents have worked extensively with staff to find fixtures that could be purchased at a bulk rate, be moderately priced, and be sensitive to the character of the district.

Porch fixtures have been selected for both Queen Anne and Craftsman style buildings. 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 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. Porch fixtures are planned for staff approval under the ordinary process as minor alterations. No applications to use the porch fixtures have yet been received.

This is the third 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.

(cont.)

**Staff comments (cont.)**

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. Whether to approve this program for staff approvals
4. What sort of screening plants should be allowed, four are proposed.
5. Whether to grant staff the ability to approve new fixtures and plants to be included in the program

Staff takes a neutral position on the house accent lighting component to the program as a whole, but has comments on specific features if it is to be approved.

One letter of support has been received for one of the other properties proposing this type of lighting tonight.

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.

**Recommendation**

No recommendation

**Conditions**

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

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.

**Previous HPC action****Previous Council action**