



## Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

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**HPC meeting date: 3/13/2023**

**Ald. Milele Coggs**

**Staff reviewer: Tim Askin**

**PTS #115252 CCF #221654**

**Property** 111 W. BROWN ST. Brewers Hill

**Owner/  
Applicant** Mr. Yves LaPierre Jason McBrady & Kellyn Munson  
City of Milwaukee - Real Estate Grantees  
809 N. Broadway, 2nd Floor  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

**Proposal** Materials revision for new single-family home. Applicants request to use fiber cement lap siding and fiberglass windows. The Commission previously required natural wood clapboards and non-clad wood windows.

**Staff  
comments** For the longest time HPC has only approved real wood clapboards for construction of new primary buildings and for garages that had a significant street presence. Fiber cement clapboards have been approved for alley-facing garages with the requirement that the trim be natural wood.

Staff were able to find three clapboard products that are available in a smooth finish. Per our prior policy on new garages and in line with Chicago's results, only smooth finishes merit consideration.

- Allura Lap Siding, 0.3125 inch (5/16). Inherent color or pre-primed for paint
- Hardie Plank Lap Siding, .0312 inch (~5/16"). Inherent color or pre-primed for paint
- Nichiha Savannah Smooth, 0.5" (1/2"). Primed for paint only

Some of the pre-colored fiber cement clapboard products have a history of efflorescence problems. It is not clear if this has been solved. This is less of an issue with the paintable boards and the Commission should consider requiring paintable boards if I making the policy change towards allowing fiber cement clapboards.

The applicants reference a 2017 City of Chicago survey of local regulations on historic district infill. In a survey of 24 other cities, all but one allowed smooth fiber cement siding for new construction. When we have required natural wood siding for new construction in Brewers Hill, we have been overturned on appeal to council several times. It would therefore appear that the time has arrived to accept smooth, non-colored fiber cement siding as an option in new construction.

Windows are a different issue. The HPC has long held that wood windows are unmatched in detail. It is well known that many wood details have not yet successfully replicated in modern materials. Non-clad windows are the correct answer for new construction because of this possibility for detail, particularly when designing in a historicist manner.

Applicants note that their preferred fiberglass windows do not require a storm window. While this is technically accurate, storm windows have always existed primarily to be a sacrificial layer. Storms have also been part of the city's architectural for most of its existence. Additionally screens are required in most rooms by state and city buildings and typically included pre-installed with new windows, nullifying much of the aesthetic effect of skipping a storm window.

On rare occasion, the Commission has found aluminum-clad or entirely metal windows to be satisfactory, although primarily in commercial projects and more modern designs. Fiberglass windows are not yet a product we have seen in person or previously approved. Staff believes more information is needed, particularly 1) their comparative appearance in section when installed 2) paintability 3) availability of trim details.

**Recommendation** Recommend HPC Approval of change to fiber cement siding, but requiring trim to be natural wood as has been our previous policy when approving fiber cement.

Recommend denial or HOLD on windows or further details and samples.

**Conditions**

**Previous HPC  
action**

**Previous Council  
action**