



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 10/9/2017
Ald. Nik Kovac District: 3
Staff reviewer: Tim Askin
PTS #114364 CCF #170767

Property	2655 N. LAKE DR. North Point North Historic District	North Point North Historic District
Owner/Applicant	MARC A HILL (current owners) TANYA HILL 2655 N LAKE DR MILWAUKEE WI 53211	Andy Schiesl (owner at time of work) Phone: (414) 731-3792 Gary Urban, Landscape Professional

Proposal Applicant conducted a landscaping plan consisting of new stairs from the sidewalk and inside the porch, bluestone pathway along the south side of the house, various new plantings along the foundation and stairs, several light fixtures in the planting areas, and a series of stepped planters. These may have been "curb appeal" upgrades related to the recent sale of the property. The applicants are no longer the owners of the property as of August 29, 2017; this was shortly after the filing of this application on August 21.

Railings on the berm and porch steps that were present in the 1990s were removed prior to 2007, which makes it an act of neither the applicants nor the current owner. Nonetheless, building code issues make them relevant to these proceedings.

Staff comments

The house is a fine, Jacobean Revival style structure with notable Germanic influences built in 1902 according to the designs of Milwaukee architects Herman Buemming and Gustav Dick.

Railings on the berm and porch steps were removed prior to 2007, which makes it an act of neither the applicants nor the current owner. Nonetheless, the act of repouring the steps triggers the code requirement of installing railings. These railings technically had to be replaced upon their removal as well. The new owners should be directed to install code-compliant railings before winter for their own safety. An appropriate railing could be approved by staff.

The work is professional and appropriate, but raises some concerns. First, the stepped planters along the stairs interfere with rolling berm and parklike effect of the street. They should be altered in some way to reduce the stepped effect. The work is professional and appropriate, but raises some concerns. Particular recommendations are outlined in the conditions section of this report. Second, Plan Exam and DPW staffs have confirmed that there is an encroachment issue with these beds. A permit from DPW will be required to retain the beds as is or to remove or alter them. Applying to Council for Special Privilege is not required for this type of encroachment for a single-family property.

The lighting for the path and the uplighting also raise questions. While the path lights are not specifically the kind called out as recommended against on p. 111 of Living with History, they do somewhat violate the spirit of the directive. The guidelines there also specifically recommend against lighting a front walk or foundation plantings with such modern fixtures.

The uplighting is limited and seems acceptable, generally being placed according to the guidelines reasonably close to the foundation with very limited visibility of the fixtures. After an evening site visit, staff is satisfied with uplighting, is simple and substantially less bright than the current West Side Proposal.

Staff comments (cont.)

There are several options for the Commission to consider for lighting component of the landscaping. Staff recommends the first two options.

A. Hold all lighting decisions until November until the policy issue is settled at that meeting.

B. Approve the limited uplighting, but require that the path lighting be eliminated along the front foundation plantings and the foot of the porch steps.

C. Eliminate all lighting

D. Approve lighting as is.

Recommendation

Staff recommends partial approval with conditions.

The following should be approved outright: the concrete work and bluestone path, the removal of shrubs along the foundation and porch stairs, the new foundation plantings and crabapple trees.

Conditions

1. Direct owners to work with staff to install an appropriate and code-compliant railing on both sets of stairs.

2. Obtain DPW permit for work in right of way. Permit is required to keep or remove the planting beds and to install railings on berm steps.

3. A. Remove planting beds installed on the berm

B. Slope them to match the berm more closely.

C. Reduce width of each by half to retain more of berm. Consider reuse of stones as border for a planting bed along the side of the path across the flat portion of front lawn.

4. Select an option for addressing the lighting in the landscaping

1) Hold all lighting decisions until November until the policy issue is settled at that meeting.

2) Approve the limited uplighting, but require that the path lighting be eliminated along the front foundation plantings and the foot of the porch steps.

3) Eliminate all lighting

4) Approve lighting as is

Previous HPC action**Previous Council action**