

RE: PTS #102016; 926 N. 34th Street

In follow up to the HPC meeting held on April 20, 2015, I would like to comment on some issues raised and attach a scale diagram of the intended location of the skylights, as requested. In addition is a photo that more precisely shows the line of visibility from the street to roof, where the skylights would be. The roof diagram is flat, and does not reflect the pitch or proportional angle of the roof, as it would be seen from the street. It does show the size of the skylights relative to the roof dimensions and where they are meant to go, however.

I do believe however, that the primary reason for my request was lost in other issues before it could be addressed. These were to more effectively manage light, ventilation, cooling and heating in my attic through statutorily approved means by the state. Installation of skylights would be consistent with current prevailing Wisconsin law that prevents local restrictions on solar or wind applications [Chapter 66.0401 (1)(m)]

Appearance from the street was also considered when I requested them. They would be placed to best possibly abate all the listed problems as well as limit visibility. They are to be located on the south rear face of the roof, slightly past the mid-point closest to the back yard. Once installed, the attic could then be fully finished—which according to Zillow adds approximately \$25,000 additional value to a property in this area.

They are far back from the sidewalk, leaving a very angle of visibility. On N. 34th Street, the south face of the roof is only seen heading north—with the longest line of sight being on the west side of the street. (There is no view of the roof heading either south on 34th or east on Kilbourn). It is also worth noting that all the photos previously provided were taken when there was no foliage on any of the trees. Now, the east end of the roof is obstructed from Kilbourn by a tree.

Measured on the west sidewalk, the rear portion of the roof does not come into view until the southern edge of the alley past the VCY building (the white wall in the attached photo). From that point heading north, *all* view of the roof ends by the mid-point of the bay window on the house at 921 N. 34th St. The photo shows the full length of this distance between the alley and that point, or the entire line of sight where the skylights might be seen. It was measured at exactly 44 feet, 6 inches—45 feet to round up. (Five 6'2" sections of sidewalk from the tree heading north, and two other larger sections to the alley going south). At best, the level of visibility from the street elevation can be described as minimal—less if those driving or walking by are not looking up as they do so.

It is also important that while some portion of the skylights might be visible for those 45 feet or so on N. 34th, they are not being requested for installation on a *primary* façade. They will also be positioned approximately 40' above the main sidewalk elevation; so much less likely to be seen by casual observation. Based on history of previous COA approvals (Ex: COA #60657, 3308 W. Kilbourn, granted specifically to accommodate *interior remodeling*; COA #49672 at 2252 N.

Summit Ave—adding a window due to *interior bathroom remodeling*; COA #57452 at 2857 N. Lake Drive, unit 2—reducing window heights to accommodate *interior kitchen remodeling*) I believe that if these were windows I was requesting for a secondary façade, they would most likely be approved. Remodeling any attic is contingent upon its comfort and livability, and it seems that there is little difference between this request and the others already approved.

Issues raised regarding skylight leakage were also my main concern. After significant research, I found that this as an “unavoidable” problem was largely outdated and based upon older skylight models and/or incorrect installation. Wasco skylights come with a warranty against leakage between the roof deck and window for ten years and against seal leakage for 20 years. (See attached). They will be installed by a professional contractor, and will likely last as long as the roof, possibly longer.

For comparison, my neighbors at 927 N 33rd Street have had their skylights since 1989 (26 years, and approved by this commission, along with window additions and changes). They have never leaked, nor have they ever required any maintenance during that time. Weighing all of the advantages that skylights will offer—including the definitive, documented *increase* in property value—against unlikely potential problems, the reasons for installing them are compelling and I could find no significant downside to them.

Authority over the *exterior* of a property can at times severely restrict the best advantage that an owner can make to the *interior* of a property. These create jurisdictional points of convergence. As seen by previous COA’s, accommodations regarding windows, additions, and many other changes have been approved for precisely these reasons.

If the issue narrows to windows v skylights, then the standard is unequal in that the reasons for both requests are generally the same. Uneven application of HPC guidelines relative to alterations requested for the same purposes cannot be considered equitable when the result forecloses remodeling an entire section of a home greatly disadvantages many owners.

I am an avid proponent of historic preservation, but also understand that absent owning a specific, individually designated property that carries inherent and *disclosed* restrictions with its purchase, *individual property owners within a historic district* must be allowed to love their older homes, and not feel oppressed by them. Never being able to maximize the inherent advantages of beautiful, older homes is a burden, not a joy. A homeowner so restricted that they are unable to fulfill the *vision* they’ve had for their property is not motivated to ever plan, create or DO any longer. Decisions that infringe on the homeowner’s *interior rights* are counter-productive and likely to lead to results not wanted or desired in the overall scheme of historic preservation. For example, homeowners taking exactly no action whatsoever.

Thank you,

Maggie McCracken