

Garden Homes Homeowner Initiative
Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Meeting of July 7, 2021
General Comments and Project Overview

Overview

A developer is purchasing and renovating 10 properties in the Garden Homes historic district as part of a larger project of roughly 30 homes in the greater neighborhood. As Garden Homes was large development under one architect with many reused design features and the current project scopes are highly similar, staff has chosen to review them primarily as a group. Most staff concerns affect all or a majority of the 10 properties.

Further, the federal funding that the city is providing for this project comes with very explicit requirements of what work may be done and how it may be done. It was executed by the City and Wisconsin Historical Society in 2016.

Programmatic Agreement

The Programmatic Agreement (PA) between the City of Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) makes the city the responsible entity for carrying out the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant Program and its subprograms under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The PA defines the conditions in which activities under this program may affect historic properties, which require review by WHS. Repair and replacement in-kind generally do not require such review.

Exterior

Roofing

Garden Homes is the only area of the city where HPC has explicit roof color standards, because the original specifications are fully known. After staff discussions with the architect, roofing shall be limited to the following product lines and colors:

1. CertainTeed Landmark: Cottage Red or Hunter Green
2. Owens-Corning Oakridge: Chateau Green

Other products may be negotiated with HPC staff if it becomes necessary. Adjacent properties should alternate in color, unless pre-selected tenants have a preference.

Windows

1. Most windows are non-original or in hopeless disrepair. Several homes have two or fewer original windows. Only one or two houses appear to have over 60% salvageable original windows. This will be called out individually where applicable.
2. Many homes of these have a gable peak window at one end that appears to be original. This window should be retained rather than replaced with a vent, as is shown in drawings. Such a

gable peak window itself may be replaced with a new window and does not have to be operable.

3. Replacement windows shall comply with the terms of the 2016 HUD/WHS/City of Milwaukee Programmatic Agreement such that new windows will be “non-adverse.” This will require the use of SDLs with spacer bars.
4. Metal-clad and fiberglass windows should be permitted, despite local guidelines, for the cost-effectiveness of this project under current lumber prices.
5. Negotiate specific window products with HPC staff and WHS.
6. No glass block on street-facing elevations; use bars for street-facing basement windows. Any glass block shall be recessed 1”-2” from exterior surface of the foundation wall.

Masonry

1. New mortar must match the original mortar in terms of color, texture, grain size, joint width, and joint finish/profile. Type N mortar should be sufficient. No over-cutting of the joints is permitted. Remove decomposed mortar back into the wall 2.5 times the height of the joint before repointing. When installing new flashing at a masonry feature, the flashing must be stepped or cut into the mortar joints. The bricks may not be cut to install flashing at an angle. New brick must match as closely as possible the color texture, size, and finish of the original brick. Under no circumstances shall unpainted masonry be painted, be given a waterproofing treatment, or cleaned by abrasive means.
2. It is unlikely that original joint profiles survive on any chimneys. Work may therefore be standardized to struck/concave joints.
3. No tinting of mortar shall be required.
4. Stucco repairs per NPS Preservation Brief 22 <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/22-stucco.htm>

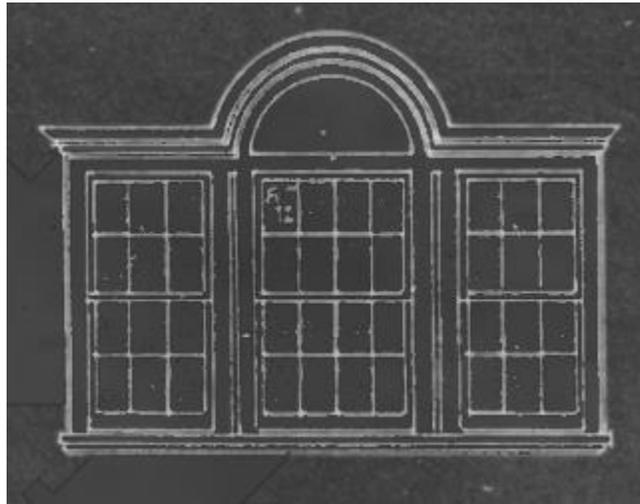
Siding

At the beginning, all of the Garden Homes were stucco clad. It has not survived in many cases, including in these 10 properties. Many of these homes already have secondary siding. Various examples throughout the neighborhood show that stucco was not always removed when putting on new siding. This cannot be determined without removing the existing siding. It has been discussed with multiple developers over the years that non-stucco siding would probably be approvable for a large-scale project. Nonetheless, for the record, it is the preference of staff, based on the local designation guidelines that stucco should be returned to all 10. Unfortunately, we do not believe this is realistic based on cost. Re-installation of proper stucco, without the seams of EIFS or hardboard panel systems is significantly more expensive than a lap siding installation.

There are a few select properties where the stucco will be retained, restored, or repaired, but it is not the majority of the proposals. The Commission may choose to make an exception to the stucco requirement where secondary siding is already present or the majority of the stucco is absent. Use HardiePlank Lap Smooth, LP Smartside Smooth, real wood clapboards, or any hardboard smooth finish lap siding product with a 4” - 6” reveal that is substantially equivalent to the two named synthetic siding products. Any existing aluminum or vinyl siding can be repaired to match existing conditions, although it would be preferable to eliminate any artificially textured siding where it exists.

In consideration of the allowance of clad windows and interior alterations that our subject to further negotiation between project proponents, Wisconsin Historical Society, and HPC staff, an additional detail restoration should be required. On 6D models (6 of 10 properties), the pseudo-Palladian window arch hood should be recreated. Of the subject properties, 4481 N 25th Street has the detail somewhat intact and it can be measured so that it can be scaled to the surviving drawings for reproduction. (It is unclear if any original drawings exist in the correct scale.)

Project proponents are encouraged to create a cast of an original and replicate it in modern materials, as achieving this detail wood is complex. The stucco of the infill of the arch area may use precast stucco panels to achieve the stucco effect on any otherwise lap-sided house. On houses where stucco restoration is occurring, the stucco within the arch must match the texture of the other stucco.



Garages

It is notable that the project documents do not address garages. Most of the subject properties have garages; however, it is notable that there are no original garages in Garden Homes. Most post-date the dissolution of the cooperative structure of the development. As no requests have been made, we cannot technically authorize demolitions, however, staff is putting on the record here that garage demolition would be acceptable at all of these properties.

Interior

The PA includes extensive requirements for review of interior alterations, many of which are proposed for the Garden Homes Homeowner Initiative. Local regulations do not include these interior alterations, but they are relevant to the overall discussion. The responsibility for reviewing and forwarding these projects to WHS falls to staff. For informational purposes, the following comments are a summary of the most significant interior alterations proposed by the applicant. The Commission may choose to comment, but members are advised that they cannot directly dictate any particular conditions regarding the interior work. It is not a complete record of all proposed work, nor a complete record of all proposals which may require WHS review or subsequent discussion between the applicant and staff.

Foundations

It is expected that many of the properties will need foundation evaluation/repair. This is outlined as substantially exempt in the Programmatic Agreement and staff is willing to defer to the terms of agreement and building code requirements without further elaboration.

Walls

All of the houses propose the demolition of existing interior walls and the construction of new walls. Removal and replacement of entire wall surfaces as well as reconstruction of walls is subject to WHS review.

Existing walls being retained will be stripped to bare studs.

Ceilings

Ceilings will be stripped to bare studs.

Kitchens and Bathrooms

All of the houses propose remodeling of these rooms. The kitchens in particular will all be relocated. The bathrooms will not generally be relocated, however the proposal calls for adding a new bathroom on the first floor of the houses, as well as alterations to existing bathrooms' windows and doors. Relocation and/or alteration of windows and doors have the potential to affect the subject properties.

Floors

Floors will be replaced throughout the houses.

Stairs

All of the houses propose demolishing stairs between the basement and first floors and replacing them with new stairs.

Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing Systems

All of the houses propose removal of existing electrical, ductwork, mechanical units, HVAC equipment, and plumbing. Upgraded systems, also including compliant smoke, CO detectors, bathroom exhaust, plumbing, and wall/ceiling insulation will be installed. Removal of original electrical fixtures and installation of new electrical fixtures is subject to WHS review. Although staff cannot presently confirm whether existing electrical fixtures are original, due to lack of interior accessibility, possibility of removal of original electrical fixtures is likely.

TA/JD