CITY OF SAINT PAUL
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

FILE NAME: 536 Holly Avenue
DATE OF APPLICATION: June 3, 2013
APPLICANT: Josh Columb, Vertical Grain Builders LLC
OWNER: John & Connie Cook
DATE OF HEARING: June 27, 2013 Laid over to August 8, 2013
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Hill Historic District
CATEGORY: Contributing
CLASSIFICATION: building permit
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Christine Boulware
DATE: June 20, 2013 REVISED August 6, 2013

A. SITE DESCRIPTION:

The D.S. Sperry house at 536 Holly Avenue is a two-and-one-half story residence designed by architect H.E. Hand and constructed in 1886. The building is Neo-Classical in style with a rectangular plan. The foundation is limestone. The asymmetrical design has rounded, one-story porch at the front elevation with classical details such as four Doric columns, a double-row of dentils and two pilasters. The main, saltbox roof is intersected by a front, high-pitched gable roof. There are a variety of window types: oval in the gable, rectangular double-hung with divided-lights, picture window with transom and fixed, and multi-light windows on the west elevation at the stair landing. The eaves are shallow with brackets, dentils and mouldings. The original lap-siding with mitered corners and decorative details are concealed by cement shingle siding.

There is a driveway on the east side of the house that leads to the existing, one-stall auto garage at the rear of the lot. The permit index card for this property is missing and staff did not locate the original building permit, but the garage is shown on the 1903-1925 Sanborn Map which dates it to the Period of Significance. The garage design is complimentary to that of the house and has “wagon wheel” muntin patterns in the six fixed windows on the side elevations. The property is sited on two lots and is categorized as contributing to the Hill Historic District.

B. PROPOSED CHANGES:

The applicant proposes to remove the one-stall garage and construct a one-and-one-half story, two-and-one-half stall garage with an attached covered patio and freestanding fireplace at the rear of the lot. There is no alley at this property and the garage would be accessed by the existing driveway.

C. BACKGROUND

Based on the discussion and testimony at the June 27, HPC public hearing, the owner submitted the following additional information for the HPC to consider:

- Letter from BKBM Engineers addressing the structural condition of the garage
- Comparable Projects – Basis for Precedence
- Study of the Reuse of the Existing Garage and Implications
  - Scenario A – incorporation of the existing garage in situ
  - Scenario B – reuse of the garage façade projecting from the front
  - Scenario C – reuse of the garage façade with no projection
- Interior Photos of the Garage
- Revised Front Elevation Plan – with new gable detail

The owner also submitted 3 scenario plans that include:

Scenario A – The incorporation of the garage, as it is currently sited, into the new garage creates a situation where the existing deck and garage are in the drive path of backing out of the middle garage stall and a much larger portion of the rear yard is impervious surface. This would maintain more of the existing garage, but the east elevation would require reconstruction and not much original material would be retained.

Scenario B & Scenario C both maintain the existing garage façade and incorporates it into the new garage design. Scenario B shows the existing façade projecting approximately 1 foot. Scenario C shows the historic façade in line with the new façade. These scenarios would allow the original garage façade to be seen from the street while allowing for the new garage with a more manageable turn radius and less impervious surface. Very little original material would be retained.

D. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:

Hill Historic District Design Review Guidelines

Restoration and Rehabilitation

General Principles:

1. *Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for a property which requires minimal alteration of the building, structure, or site and its environment, or to use a property for its originally intended purpose.*
2. *The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure, or site and its environment shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.*
3. *All buildings, structures, and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.*
4. *Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure, or site and its environment. Theses changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected.*
5. *Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize a building, structure, or site shall be treated with sensitivity.*
6. *Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, whenever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historic, physical, or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures.*
7. *The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials shall not be undertaken.*
8. *Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve archaeological resources affected by, or adjacent to any project.*
9. *Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property, neighborhood, or environment.*
10. *Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to structures shall be done in such a manner that if such alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired.*

New Construction

General Principles: *The basic principle for new construction in the Historic Hill District is to maintain the district's scale and quality of design. The Historic Hill District is architecturally diverse within an overall pattern of harmony and continuity. These guidelines for new construction focus on general rather than specific design elements in order to encourage architectural innovation and quality design while maintaining the harmony and continuity of the district. New construction should be compatible with the size, scale, massing, height, rhythm, setback, color, material, building elements, site design, and character of surrounding structures and the area.*

Massing and Height: *New construction should conform to the massing, volume, height and scale of existing adjacent structures. Typical residential structures in the Historic Hill District are 25 to 40 feet high. The height of new construction should be no lower than the average height of all buildings on both block faces; measurements should be made from street level to the highest point of the roofs. (This guideline does not supersede the City's Zoning Code height limitations.)*

Rhythm and Directional Emphasis: *The existence of uniform narrow lots in the Historic Hill naturally sets up a strong rhythm of buildings to open space. Historically any structure built on more than one lot used vertical facade elements to maintain and vary the overall rhythm of the street rather than interrupting the rhythm with a long monotonous facade. The directional expression of new construction should relate to that of existing adjacent structures.*

Materials and Details: *Variety in the use of architectural materials and details adds to the intimacy and visual delight of the district. But there is also an overall thread of continuity provided by the range of materials commonly used by turn-of-the-century builders and by the way these materials were used. This thread of continuity is threatened by the introduction of new industrial materials and the aggressive exposure of earlier materials such as concrete block, metal framing, and glass. The purpose of this section is to encourage the proper use of appropriate materials and details.*

The materials and details of new construction should relate to the materials and details of existing nearby buildings.

Preferred roof materials are cedar shingles, slate and tile; asphalt shingles which match the approximate color and texture of the preferred materials are acceptable substitutes. Imitative materials such as asphalt siding, wood-textured metal or vinyl siding, artificial stone, and artificia brick veneer should not be used. Smooth four-inch lap vinyl, metal, or hardboard siding, when well installed and carefully detailed, may be acceptable in some cases. Materials, including their colors, will be reviewed to determine their appropriate use in relation to the overall design of the structure as well as to surrounding structures.

Color is a significant design element, and paint colors should relate to surrounding structures and the area as well as to the style of the new structure. Building permits are not required for painting and, although the Heritage Preservation Commission may review and comment on paint color, paint color is not subject to Heritage Preservation Commission approval.

Building Elements: *Individual elements of a building should be integrated into its composition for a balanced and complete design. These elements for new construction should compliment existing adjacent structures as well.*

Roofs. *There is a great variety of roof treatment in the Historic Hill District, but gable and hip roofs are most common. The skyline or profile of new construction should relate to the predominant roof shape of existing adjacent buildings.*

Most houses in the Historic Hill District have a roof pitch of between 9:12 and 12:12 (rise-to-run ratio). Highly visible secondary structure roofs should match the roof pitch of the main structure, and generally should have a rise-to-run ratio of at least 9:12. A roof pitch of at least 8:12 should be used if it is somewhat visible from the street, and a 6:12 pitch may be acceptable in some cases for structures which are not visible from the street.

Roof hardware such as skylights, vents, and metal pipe chimneys should not be placed on the front roof plane.

Windows and Doors. *The proportion, size, rhythm and detailing of windows and doors in new construction should be compatible with that of existing adjacent buildings. Most windows on the Hill have a vertical orientation, with a proportion of between 2:1 and 3:1 (height to width) common. Individual windows can sometimes be square or horizontal if the rest of the building conveys the appropriate directional emphasis. Facade openings of the same general size as those in adjacent buildings are encouraged.*

Wooden double-hung windows are traditional in the Historic Hill District and should be the first choice when selecting new windows. Paired casement windows, although not historically common, will often prove acceptable because of their vertical orientation. Sliding windows, awning windows, and horizontally oriented muntins are not common in the district and are generally unacceptable. Vertical muntins and muntin grids may be acceptable when compatible with the period and style of the building. Sliding glass doors should not be used where they would be visible from the street.

Although not usually improving the appearance of a building, the use of metal windows or doors need not necessarily ruin it. The important thing is that they should look like part of the building and not like raw metal appliances. Appropriately colored or bronze-toned aluminum is acceptable. Mill finish (sliver) aluminum should be avoided.

Porches and Decks: *In general, houses in the Historic Hill District have roofed front porches, while in most modern construction the front porch has disappeared. Front porches provide a transitional zone between open and closed space which unites a building and its site, semiprivate spaces which help to define the spatial hierarchy of the district. They are a consistent visual element in the district and often introduce rhythmic variation, clarify scale or provide vertical facade elements. The porch treatment of new structures should relate to the porch treatment of existing adjacent structures. If a porch is not built, the transition from private to public space should be articulated with some other suitable design element.*

Open porches are preferable, but screened or glassed-in porches may be acceptable if well detailed. Most, but not all, porches on the Hill are one story high. Along some streets where a strong continuity of porch size or porch roof line exists, it may be preferable to duplicate these formal elements in new construction. The vertical elements supporting the porch roof are important. They should carry the visual as well as the actual weight of the porch roof. The spacing of new balustrades should reflect the solid-to-void relationships of adjacent railings and porches. Generally, a solid-to-void proportion between 1:2 and 1:3 is common in the Historic Hill.

Decks should be kept to the rear of buildings, should be visually refined, and should be integrated into overall building design. A raised deck protruding from a single wall usually appears disjointed from the total design and is generally unacceptable.

Site

Setback. *New buildings should be sited at a distance not more than 5% out-of-line from the setback of existing adjacent buildings. Setbacks greater than those of adjacent buildings may be allowed in some cases. Reduced setbacks may be acceptable at corners. This happens quite often in the Historic Hill area and can lend delightful variation to the street.*

Garages and Parking. *If an alley is adjacent to the dwelling, any new garage should be located off the alley. Where alleys do not exist, garages facing the street or driveway curb cuts may be acceptable. Garage doors should not face the street. If this is found necessary, single garage doors should be used to avoid the horizontal orientation of two-car garage doors.*

Parking spaces should not be located in front yards. Residential parking spaces should be located in rear yards. Parking lots for commercial uses should be to the side or rear of commercial structures and have a minimum number of curb cuts. All parking spaces should be adequately screened from the street and sidewalk by landscaping. The scale of parking lots should be minimized and the visual sweep of pavement should be broken up by use of planted areas. The scale, level of light output, and design of parking lot lighting should be compatible with the character of the district.

Demolition
Proposals for demolishing structures, while reviewed with special care by the Heritage Preservation Commission, are not necessarily in conflict with district guidelines. When reviewing proposals for demolition of structures within the district, the Heritage Preservation Commission refers to Section 73.06(1)(2) of the Saint Paul Legislative Code which states the following:

In the case of the proposed demolition of a building, prior to approval of said demolition, the commission shall make written findings on the following: the architectural and historical merit of the building, the effect of the demolition on surrounding buildings, the effect of any proposed new construction on the remainder of the building (in case of partial demolition) and on surrounding buildings, and the economic value or usefulness of the building as it now exists or if altered or modified in comparison with the value or usefulness of any proposed structures designated to replace the present building or buildings.

E. FINDINGS:

1. The property is located in both the National Register and local Hill Historic Districts and is classified as contributing.
2. On April 2, 1991, the Historic Hill Heritage Preservation District was established under Ordinance No. 17815, § 3(II). The Heritage Preservation Commission shall protect the architectural character of heritage preservation sites through review and approval or denial of applications for city permits for exterior work within designated heritage preservation sites §73.04.(4).
3. The HPC laid over a decision at the June 27, 2013 Hearing to allow for the owner to submit additional information. The owner, Concepcion Cervantes Cook, signed a request for continuance of HPC File #13-026 on July 17, 2013. The request was granted at the July 25 th public hearing.
4. The General Principles' 1 and 2 are most applicable when considering review to demolish a contributing garage/accessory structure. They state: "*Every <u>reasonable</u> effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for a property which requires minimal alteration of the building, structure, or site and its environment, or to use a property for its originally intended purpose"* AND "*The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure, or site and its environment shall not be destroyed."*

Demolition: In the case of the proposed demolition of a building, prior to approval of said demolition, the commission shall make written findings on the following:

5. *The architectural and historical merit of the building*. The accessory structure is considered contributing to the character of the property and Hill Historic District given it was built during the Period of Significance for the Historic District, however, a lack of a permit index card limits the ability to fully research the period of construction, builder and architect that might be related to the structure. The historic garage retains a good degree of integrity with the original frieze, trim and windows but the wood lap siding is covered by non-historic siding. The garage is not accessible by a public alley, not located on a corner and is set near the back of the lot and therefore is only somewhat visible from a public Right of Way.

   The south east corner of the garage and the structural integrity has been compromised by damage caused by a fallen tree. New information provided in the garage evaluation conducted by BKBM Engineers identifies: 1) A partial collapse of the south east corner framing and overhang; 2) Damage to the roof boards and shingles on the west side; 3) Severe/complete cracking of four rafters on the west side; 4) Slight shifting of the wood walls at the foundation; and 5) Horizontal shift at the top of the south wall resulting in approximately 9" lean toward the west. The engineer's opinion was that "the load capacity and stability of the framing has been compromised by the impact." They recommend that complete reconstruction or significant structural repairs would be necessary to address the items noted.

6. *The effect of the demolition on surrounding buildings*. The garage does exhibit quality architectural detailing but would its removal would not directly impact any adjacent historic structures. The context for this particular block of traditionally scaled and designed accessory structures has been compromised (owner submitted nearby new and larger garages that have been constructed). If the garage was structurally sound enough to move elsewhere on the property then the structure would continue to be contributing to the historic district.
7. *The effect of any proposed new construction…on surrounding buildings.* The proposed garage is similar in size and detail to neighboring garages. The materials and details of the proposed garage would complement the architectural details of the house. An addition onto the current garage would be difficult to undertake, as the access to the back of the property is limited and the structural stability is compromised. The revised elevation plan shows more detail in the gable end on the front elevation; this relates to the details on the existing garage.
8. *The economic value or usefulness of the building as it now exists or if altered or modified in comparison with the value or usefulness of any proposed structures designated to replace the present building or buildings.* As it exists, the building would require reconstruction or significant architectural repairs (BKBM letter) to become a usable one-stall garage. No cost estimates were provided for reconstruction or for the needed structural repairs. The proposed garage would add one-and-one-half stalls, over-head storage, and covered patio space. The 2013 Ramsey County estimated market value of the property is $364,400. It is likely the new garage will increase the value.
9. Based on the new information presented, the proposal to demolish the existing garage will not have an adverse effect on the Program for the Preservation and architectural control of the Hill Heritage Preservation District (Leg. Code §73.06 (e)).
10. <u>Massing and Height:</u> The proposed garage is *compatible with the size, scale, massing, height, rhythm, color, material and building elements of surrounding structures and the area.* Although large for a two-and-one-half stall garage, the scale, height and massing of the garage is similar to that of a historic carriage house or accessory structure and to the immediate adjacent structures. The proposed materials and design are complimentary to the residence and comply with the guideline.
11. <u>Rhythm and Directional Emphasis:</u> The proposed garage is sited behind the residence at the back of the lot. This is consistent with the relationship and rhythm of primary to

secondary structures on a lot in the historic district. The full width of the front elevation of the garage will be minimally visible due to the location of the garage and the distance between the properties.

12. Materials and Details: The *materials and details* of the proposed garage appear to *relate* to those of the residence in a more simplified design. Underneath the cement shingle siding on the house is a narrow, lap-siding with mitered corners. The plans list exposed foundation walls to match stone on the house, 4" Hardiplank smooth lap-siding, MiraTEC trim boards, carriage style garage doors, paneled service door and double-hung windows in the gable ends. These materials are not found on the residence, but the composite siding and trim is detailed appropriately and will have a similar appearance to the original siding and trim on the house. The materials and design of all elevations of the building are consistent and respond the quality of design recommended in the historic district guidelines. The low-pitched, standing seam, metal shed roof over the paver patio is not a traditional feature, but will be located behind the house and the column detail will match the Doric columns on the porch. The fireplace is proposed to be free-standing and will not remove or alter any historic material. The revised elevation plan of the garage, submitted on July 31st, incorporates more detail into the front gable.
13. Roofs. The intersecting gable roof shape is similar to the roof configuration of the house. Staff requested that the original 12/12 proposal be lowered to 10/12 to reduce the roof massing on the accessory building. The guidelines state there should be a roof pitch of at least 8:12 if the garage is somewhat visible which this is considered. It is a traditional roof shape for historic accessory buildings. The roofing materials relate to those of the residence and comply with the guideline.
14. Windows and Doors. The windows proposed are Marvin Ultimate Double-Hung. Details about window screens were not provided. New screens should be full-frame and flush-mount with a historic profile and either painted or baked enamel finish. The double-hung windows proposed have a three-over-one configuration and match some of the windows on the back of the house. The "wagon wheel" design that is on the original garage and on the house is not proposed on the new garage. The garage and service doors are of an appropriate style and complimentary to the design as well.
15. Setback & Siting. The siting of the garage at the rear of the yard is appropriate. There is no alley at this location; the garage will be accessed by a driveway from Holly Avenue. The garage and patio will be sited directly behind the house. This location complies with the guideline. The setbacks of the garage are consistent with the side yard setbacks of the house and the rear yard setback is consistent with adjacent accessory buildings and complies with the guideline.
16. Landscaping. Hardscaping will be reviewed administratively.
17. Garages and Parking. The garage doors will face the street and the parking is located at the rear of the property. The guidelines state that garage openings that face the street should be single-stall. With the lack of visibility of the garage doors and the use of the c arriage door design and proportions, the installation of an eighteen foot door will not negatively impact the property.
18. Public Infrastructure. The granite curb, retaining wall, sidewalk and driveway apron should be protected during construction as they are distinctive features of the public spaces in the area.
19. The proposal to construct a new garage will not adversely affect the Program for the Preservation and architectural control of the Historic Hill Heritage Preservation District (Leg. Code §73.06 (e)) so long as the conditions are met.

F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the findings above, staff recommends approval of the proposal provided the following conditions are met:

1. Window screen information shall be submitted to HPC staff for final review and approval

2. Foundation above grade shall have a rock-faced or split-faced finish or veneer and shall be a limestone color to match the house.
3. The siding and trim shall have a smooth texture.
4. All final materials, details and colors shall be reviewed and approved by HPC staff or the HPC.
5. The retaining walls, curb, sidewalk and driveway apron shall be protected during construction; if any damage occurs the applicant shall repair these areas with matching materials and details in compliance with the historic district guidelines. Before and after photos shall be submitted to staff for review.
6. Any revisions to the approved plans must be submitted to the HPC and/or staff for review.
7. The HPC stamped approved plans must be kept on site during the construction project.

G. ATTACHMENTS

1. Existing Conditions Evaluation by BKBM Engineers
2. Comparable Projects – Basis for Precedent
3. Study of the Reuse of the Existing Garage and Implications - Scenarios A, B & C
4. Interior photos of the garage
5. Revised Front Elevation Plan
6. Minutes from the 6/17/13 HPC Public Hearing