CITY OF SAINT PAUL
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

FILE NAME: 596 Laurel Avenue
DATE OF APPLICATION: June 5, 2014
APPLICANT: Josh Hanson, JJH Homes Corp
OWNER: same
DATE OF PUBLIC HEARING: June 26, 2014
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Hill Historic District
CATEGORY: New Construction
CLASSIFICATION: Building Permit
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Christine Boulware
DATE: June 20, 2014

A. SITE DESCRIPTION:

The property at 596 Laurel Avenue is presently a 5,714 square foot lot that is 40 feet wide and approximately 142 feet deep. The lot is flanked by 600 Laurel Avenue to the east and 590 Laurel Avenue to the west. The building at 600 Laurel is a two-story Georgian Revival style residence with a bell cast hipped roof made up of large intersecting gables. The residence at 590 Laurel is a two- and one-half story Colonial Revival style with box-like massing and clapboard siding. The roof is hipped with gables and bracketed overhanging eaves. Fenestration has regular placement on the front elevation and irregular on the sides.

The Building Permit Index Card for 596 Laurel lists a permit was issued May 4, 1904 for the construction of a two-story building that was 27 feet wide, 34 feet long, and 31 feet tall. The 1925 Sanborn Insurance Maps shows the lot still occupied by a two-story, single-family home with a full-length open front porch. There is no current inventory form for the property so it can be assumed that the residence was demolished prior to the historic survey conducted in the early 1980s when the Hill Historic District was established by ordinance. Aerial photographs indicate the residence was demolished between 1974 and 1985.

B. PROPOSED CHANGES:

The applicant is proposing to construct a two-story, single-family home with a two-stall, detached garage accessed from the alley. The footprint of the main residence is approximately 30 feet wide by 54 feet long and the height is approximately 34 feet tall. An open, full front porch is proposed. Garage plans were not provided and will be reviewed administratively.

The new residence will have a 6:12 pitch, hip-and-ridge roof, dark gray asphalt shingles. Fenestration is both grouped and irregular in placement. Most of the windows are double-hung with a three-over-one division or piano style with two-lights. Composite trim and siding, in both four and six inch exposure, is proposed along with aluminum soffit and fascia. A pergola is shown projecting from the rear elevation.

C. BACKGROUND:

HPC staff met with the property owner on May 22, 2014 to discuss the proposal. The context of the neighboring houses was discussed as well as setbacks, materials and details. Concern was stated regarding width of the residence and the ability to have appropriately scaled eaves project into the required side yard setbacks. The window sizes and random placement on the side elevations were also discussed.

D. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:

Hill Historic District Design Review Guidelines

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 artificial 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.

<u>Site</u>
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.

Landscaping. Typically, open space in the Historic Hill District is divided into public, semipublic, semiprivate and private space. The public space of the street and sidewalk is often distinguished from the semipublic space of the front yard by a change in grade, a low hedge or a visually open fence.

The buildings, landscaping elements in front yards, and boulevard trees together provide a "wall of enclosure" for the street "room". Generally, landscaping which respects the street as a public room is encouraged. Enclosures which allow visual penetration of semipublic spaces, such as wrought-iron fences, painted picket fences, low hedges or limestone retaining walls, are characteristic of most of the Historic Hill area. This approach to landscaping and fences is encouraged in contrast to complete enclosure of semipublic space by an opaque fence, a tall "weathered wood" fence or tall hedge rows. Cyclone fence should not be used in front yards or in the front half of side yards. Landscape timber should not be used for retaining walls in front yards.

For the intimate space of a shallow setback, ground covers and low shrubs will provide more visual interest and require less maintenance than grass. When lots are left vacant, as green space or parking area, a visual hole in the street "wall" may result. Landscape treatment can eliminate this potential problem by providing a wall of enclosure from the street. Boulevard trees mark a separation between the automobile corridor and the rest of the streetscape, and should be maintained.

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.

Public Infrastructure
The traditional pattern of public streets, curbs, boulevards, and sidewalks in the area should be maintained. Distinctive features of public spaces in the area, such as brick alleys, stone slab sidewalks, granite curbs, and the early twentieth century lantern style street lights, should be preserved. The same style should be used when new street lights are installed. New street furniture such as benches, bus shelters, telephone booths, kiosks, sign standards, trash containers, planters and fences should be compatible with the character of the district.
Brick alleys and stone slab sidewalks generally should be maintained and repaired as necessary with original materials; asphalt and concrete patches should not be used. When concrete tile public sidewalks need to be replaced, new poured concrete sidewalks should be the same width as the exiting sidewalks and should be scored in a 2 foot square or 18 inch square pattern to resemble the old tiles; expansion joints should match the scoring. Handicap ramps should be installed on the inside of curbs as part of the poured concrete sidewalk; where there is granite curbing, a section should be lowered for the ramp.
Electric, telephone and cable TV lines should be placed underground or along alleys, and meters should be placed where inconspicuous.

E. FINDINGS:

1. The lot is vacant and there is no historic fabric to be removed or altered as part of this proposal.

2. The proposed two-story, single family residence has four-square and craftsman detailing and proportions. The proposal is differentiated from the historic residences along this block in materials, footprint and fenestration placement and size on the non-primary elevations. While this is not discouraged under the Secretary of the Interior's Standards or the Hill Historic District design review guidelines, the whole of the design should be compatible with the established character of the street and historic district.

3. Massing and Height: The proposed new construction is similar in *massing and volume* to the adjacent residences, compatible with other residences in the neighborhood, and generally conforms to the *scale of existing adjacent structures*. The proposed height is compatible with that of the neighboring houses, and consistent with the proposed design and roof style.

4. Rhythm and Directional Emphasis: There is a very strong established rhythm on the block face, as the majority of the houses all have open, full width, one-story front porches. This rhythm is continued by the proposed full, one-story, open porch. The placement and divisions in the windows, and porch design and proportions continue the established rhythm and directional emphasis of the block.

5. Materials and Details*:* For the most part, the *materials and details* proposed visually *relate to the materials and details of existing nearby buildings.* Not all materials and details were specified and addressed below by building element.

6. Materials and Detail: Paint. Paint and stain colors were not specified; materials and details where colors/finishes are inherent in the product will require review. The guideline states, "*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."* The proposed colors and finishes of the exterior of the house and garage will have an impact on the surrounding historic district. The guideline states, "[While the] *Heritage Preservation Commission may review and comment on paint color, paint color is not subject to Heritage Preservation Commission approval."* There should not be any raw wood or translucent stains.

7. Building Elements*:* ***Roof.*** The 6:12 roof pitch is shallower than the predominant roof pitches in the area, but is appropriate for the four-square style. The hip-and-ridge roof *relates to the predominant roof shape of* several of the *adjacent buildings* and complies with the guideline. The installation of dark gray asphalt shingles is permissible on new construction. These details were not shown on the plan, and the guideline states *skylights, vents, and metal pipe chimneys should not be placed on the front roof plane.* A hipped dormer breaks up the roof plane and is a consistent feature along the block. If installed, a continuous ridge vent may obviate the need for additional vent placement.

8. Building Elements*:* ***Doors and Windows.*** The doors and windows on the front elevation are compatible in *proportion, size and rhythm with that of existing adjacent buildings.* The guidelines state "*Wooden double-hung windows are traditional in the Historic Hill District and should be the first choice when selecting new windows."* The proposed windows are Marvin Integrity series which have a thinner profile that that of a historic wood sash, and would not be appropriate for installation in a historic building, but should be suitable for this new construction proposal. The square and horizontally oriented windows do not follow the traditional vertical emphasis of the Hill Historic district, but individually and grouped relate to historic piano windows and comply with the guideline which states that *individual windows can sometimes be*

square or horizontal if the rest of the building conveys the appropriate directional emphasis.

Windows on the side elevations are sparse, are smaller in size/proportion and irregularly placed. Minor revisions to proportions and placement could help these elevations comply with the guildline.

Paired, sliding glass doors are indicated on the rear elevation *where they* are not *visible from the street* and comply with the guideline.

Basement windows were not shown on the elevations, but are on the basement plan. There are individual windows on the side (east and west) elevations. Final window details and any egress wells will need to be reviewed and approved.

9. Materials and details were not provided for the doors. The front door is craftsman in design which is appropriate for the style and proportion of the new construction. A final door and window schedule as well as materials scheduled will need to be submitted to determine compliance with the guidelines.

10. Building Elements: Porches and Decks. The guidelines state that "*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 proposed full-width, open front porch is compatible with the strong established rhythm of full-front open porches nearby. The open *porch treatment relates to the porch treatment of existing adjacent structures,* as the railing balustrade is open and the roof is supported with columns. The columns visually carry the weight of the porch to grade, but they also interrupt the horizontal line of the porch floor which isn't traditional detail and should be addressed along with porch materials and details such as flooring, skirting, treads, risers, and balustrade. The whole porch is raised and at an elevation that appears to be consistent with its neighbors. The balustrade is simple in design.

A pergola is shown on the rear elevation where the paired, sliding glass doors and rear entry are located, but a stoop and/or deck are not shown that would access these doors. Plans for how these entry points will be accessed will need to be required for review and approval. The pergola is *integrated into the overall building.*

11. The foundation is not detailed, but should be concrete masonry units with a rock-faced finish above grade and of a limestone color relating to the historic limestone foundations in the district.

12. *Setback.* A site plan or survey was not submitted for review and will be required. Not enough information is available to determine if the setback of the new residence and garage are compatible with that of neighboring buildings.

13. *Garages and Parking.* The applicant has indicated his intention to construct a two-stall garage at the rear of the lot and facing the alley. The design and materials of the garage were not submitted for review. Staff will review the garage administratively.

14. *Public Infrastructure.* There are no *brick alleys, stone slab sidewalks, granite curbs* or other historic public infrastructure at this site.

15. The guideline that states, *"electric, telephone and cable TV lines should be placed underground or along alleys, and meters should be placed where inconspicuous"* should be

followed when utilities are installed at the property. Air conditioning units should be located at the rear of the property or screened by a fence in the rear portion of the side yard. Gas fireplace vents should not be located on primary elevations and should be low-profile and painted/finished to match the surrounding material.

16. ***Siding and Trim.*** The LP siding is of both 4 and 6 inch exposures; the corner boards and window and door trim are 6 inch exposures. Historically significant buildings in the district typically have narrow siding. The proportions and pattern of the siding and trim recall the division of materials and details evident on early 20th century residences, including the four-square style. The LP siding and trim should have a smooth texture.

The aluminum fascia and soffit were not described or details, but should have a smooth texture.

17. The proposal to construct a new single-family residence will not adversely affect the program for preservation and architectural control of the Hill Historic District (Leg. Code 73.06 (e)) so long as the conditions are met.

F. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the findings staff recommends approval of the building permit application provided the following condition(s) are met:

1. The horizontal band of porch flooring and trim shall be uninterrupted by the column elements. Revised drawings and materials and details shall be submitted to staff for final review and approval.

2. The stair treads and risers at the front porch shall be solid wood.

3. The proportion and placement of windows on the side elevations shall be altered to better relate to the massing and solid-to-void ratio of the elevations. The applicant shall work with staff to address these details.

4. All CMU block used above grade on the house and garage shall be rock-faced or split-faced, and in a limestone color.

5. The garage plans and details shall be submitted to HPC staff for review and approval.

6. A final door and window schedule shall be submitted to HPC staff for final review and approval.

7. All materials shall be painted or stained within one year of permit issuance. There shall be no materials left raw and any stains or finishes applied to the exterior shall be opaque.

8. All final materials, colors and details shall be submitted to the HPC and/or staff for final review and approval.

9. Any revisions to the approved plans shall be reviewed and approved by the HPC and/or staff.

10. The HPC stamped approved plans shall remain on site for the duration of the project.