

**CITY OF SAINT PAUL  
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

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FILE NAME: 321 Irvine Avenue  
DATE OF APPLICATION: June 19, 2014  
APPLICANT: Paula Schad  
ARCHITECT: David Salmela  
OWNER: Bruce Lilly & Paula Schad  
DATE OF PRE-APPLICATION REVIEW: July 10, 2014  
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Hill Historic District  
CATEGORY: New Construction  
CLASSIFICATION: Pre-Application Review  
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Amy Spong  
DATE: July 1, 2014

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**A. SITE DESCRIPTION:**

The property at 321 Irvine Avenue is a vacant lot with a 20% slope that is mostly wooded. Originally this lot was part of 322-24 Summit Avenue as most of the lots at the top of the hill on Summit extended all the way to Irvine Avenue. There was a two-story barn located on the 324 side but up at the edge of Irvine Avenue.

The National Register Nomination for the Hill Historic District describes the significance of Irvine Avenue: *"The area to the east of Ramsey Street comprises a wooded bluff which descends in terraces from the rear of the Summit Avenue residences to Pleasant Avenue. Located at an intermediate terrace is Irvine Avenue, a narrow, winding access road to the former servant's quarters, carriage houses, and service facilities for the residences above. The natural area along the terraces also serves to shield the residential district from the central business district below and has survived in a relatively unaltered state since the early days of settlement."*

**B. PROPOSED CHANGES:**

The applicant is proposing to construct a four-level, single-family residence with a tuck-under garage and detached workshop connected with a covered walkway. Footprints were provided for each separate level. The first garage level measures 24' by 32', the second level 24' by 40', the third level is the largest at 24' by 65' and the fourth level measures 24' by 55.' The workshop is two stories and connected to the main house by a walkway and measures 14' by 24.' The main entrance to the house is at the third level on the east elevation. This is accessed by a stairway from Irvine Avenue. The fourth level is set back from the main façade and will allow for a patio. At this early design stage, materials and details are not yet provided, however, areas for openings are noted on the submitted drawings. The architect is proposing some skylights, projecting bays and window screening on the west elevation.

**C. BACKGROUND:**

This lot was part of the Lightner-Young Double House at 322-24 Summit Avenue, designed by Cass Gilbert and James Knox Taylor in 1886 in the Romanesque Revival style. The lot split was reviewed by the HPC at their Business Meeting on June 14, 2007 and they recommended approval of the lot split with five findings. Lot split proposals are reviewed and approved by the planning administrator and there are several conditions that must be met as stipulated in Chapter 69 of the City's Legislative Code. A major variance was also required in order to build on a lot with a slope greater than 18%. The slope is 20% and the variance was granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals in 2009 with two conditions that site plan approval by the zoning administrator and design review approval by the Heritage Preservation Commission be obtained prior to construction or grading on the site. The single



-family house that was being proposed at the time of the lot split and variance request had a footprint of 2,080 square feet and was two stories with a basement. A one-story, attached double garage was also proposed with a footprint of 725 square feet.

HPC staff met at the front counter with each property owner separately and then with the architect, landscape architect and property owners on June 26, 2014 to discuss the proposal. The model of the proposed building was brought at that time.

#### **D. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSIDERATIONS:**

##### **Irvine Avenue Development Plan (2003)**

**Goal/Vision:** *Irvine Avenue should remain a low-density residential area due to the steep slopes and the narrow roadway. Seen from a distance—for example, from the High Bridge—the Irvine Avenue hillside should appear predominantly wooded with a few buildings peeking through the trees. On top, Summit Avenue rooflines should play with the tree-tops. Under the trees within the neighborhood, Irvine Avenue should appear as a wooded lane punctuated by buildings and retaining walls. Any new buildings should blend into the historic and natural character of the area. Garage doors should be downplayed architecturally so that the street doesn't end up looking like an alley. Construction should be engineered to take into account the stability and hydrology of the slopes.*

##### **Historic Character**

*12. The north side of Irvine Avenue is within the Historic Hill District. The guidelines for the historic district should include a policy on preserving Irvine Avenue's historic character as a lane of homes and carriage houses, recognizing how distinct the street is from most of Ramsey Hill—e.g., irregular spacing of buildings; wide variation in setbacks from the street; naturalistic landscaping instead of lawns; and carriage houses facing the street.*

#### **E. 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. These 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.*

#### 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.*

*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.*



*Electric, telephone and cable TV lines should be placed underground or along alleys, and meters should be placed where inconspicuous.*

### **THE MEETING FORMAT FOR PRE-APPLICATION REVIEWS**

*Typically, the HPC allows for 20-30 minutes for review of each project. The informal review format is as follows:*

- *Staff will make a brief presentation (5 minutes) identifying issues that should be addressed by the HPC.*
- *The applicant will make a brief presentation (5 minutes) describing the historic preservation design considerations pertaining to the project scope.*
- *The HPC will discuss the project and consider whether the project is consistent with the applicable design review guidelines and the SOI. While committee members may discuss the appropriateness of a design approach in addressing the guidelines or SOI, their role is not to design the project. Given the nature of some large rehabilitation projects, the HPC may suggest that the applicant retain a preservation architect.*
- *At the end of the review, the HPC Chairperson will summarize the issues that were identified, the position of the committee members, and list all recommendations for revisions. The summary includes majority as well as minority or split opinions. The summary should cite all applicable design guidelines and Standards.*

*Although the HPC works to provide comments that will result in a project that will be recommended for approval by the HPC, the discussion is preliminary and cannot predict the final recommendation of staff, public comment, and the decision of the full HPC during the Public Hearing Meeting.*

*It is assumed that one pre-application review will take place prior to a project being submitted for an HPC Public Hearing Meeting. On certain occasions, the HPC may recommend that an additional pre-application review take place. If another pre-application review is scheduled, then neighboring property owners may be notified of the review within at least 300 feet from the project site.*

### **F. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS:**

1. On April 2, 1991, the most recent expansion of 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).
2. *Comprehensive Plan Consideration.* In 2003, the City adopted the Irvine Avenue Development Plan as an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan. "This plan represents the community vision for the preservation of the Irvine Avenue hillside and for the reasonable, limited development of Irvine and Pleasant Avenue properties." Along with this plan the Zoning Code was amended to address development standards for construction on "Steep Slopes." The Irvine Avenue Plan and the Zoning Code have very specific development standards intended to ensure that parcels can be developed without damaging the long term stability of the slope and without adversely affecting surrounding properties. The proposed development will require site plan review which will ensure compliance with the Irvine Avenue Plan and Steep Slope standards.
3. The lot is vacant and no historic fabric will be removed or lost as part of this proposal, although there will likely be remnants of the original barn foundation close to Irvine Avenue. The natural character of the lot will be impacted with the construction of the house. The Irvine Avenue Development Plan states that tree preservation is important and the Zoning Code mandates the completion of a tree preservation plan. While some of these sites behind the Summit Avenue homes were terraced and used for gardens and formal landscapes, this particular site behind 322-24 Summit does not appear to have had any terracing



but remained mostly wooded.

**4. Historic Context.** Only two contributing structures, and several limestone retaining walls, remain along Irvine Avenue: 339-341 Irvine Avenue and the structure that is still part of the Lindsay-Weyerhauser property at 294 Summit Avenue. These are the two remaining structures for which to inform a compatible new design for the house at 321 Irvine Avenue. While not located within the District boundaries, the early houses that make up the south side of Irvine Avenue should also be referenced as they are similar to the few small houses that have been lost on the north side of Irvine Avenue. The Minnesota Historical Society collection has several images of Irvine Avenue from 1950.

The property at 339-341 Irvine Avenue is made up of an 1895 brick barn that has no setback from Irvine and measures 62' wide by 35' deep and 24' tall (although this reads more as three stories for a portion), with two additions in 1901 and 1915. The 1901 addition measures 16' wide by 40' deep and two-stories tall while the 1914 permit was for a stone retaining wall and garage addition that measures 13' tall but the width and depth are not legible on the permit copy. The permit lists A. H. Stem as the architect of the garage. All of these structures have flat roofs and little or no setback from Irvine Avenue. The windows are tall and narrow and individually spaced and the entries are marked by wood stairs to enter at the side near the facade. At some point the structures were painted white.

The building at the back of 294 Summit Avenue housed a swimming pool, an auto garage and a 1 ½ story portion that was likely a residence. At the writing of this staff report the original permits were not obtained, however, the structure is very consistent with the Georgian Revival style main house. The pool house has a low-sloping gabled roof and walls have wide wood-lap siding. The structure has a shallow setback from Irvine Avenue and is much wider than it is deep. The individually-spaced, small window openings on the second level are mostly 6-over-6 divided lights. The bluff is terraced behind.

The orientation of both of these structures with much of the massing is along Irvine Avenue was likely done to minimize impacts to the bluff.

**5.** The guidelines state: *“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.”* The proposed four-story, single family residence is of a contemporary nature and is differentiated from the historic structures along this block face. While this is not discouraged under the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for new construction, the whole of the design still needs to be compatible with the established character of the street and historic district as stated in the Hill District guidelines. This can be accomplished by evaluating the individual principles below.

**6. Massing and Height:** The exposed footprint of the new house is fairly consistent with the larger footprints of the two contributing historic structures, however, the house’s orientation is not consistent as the narrow portion fronts Irvine Avenue and the depth extends back and up the bluff. It is difficult to fully assess whether the new house’s massing is consistent in height. While the property is proposed at four levels, the fourth level is stepped back from the main façade, perceiving mostly a three-story structure with a rooftop patio. (One possible solution might be to shift the workshop closer to Irvine Avenue which would shift some of the massing closer to the street. This might also help to make the public entrance to the house more prominent as discussed under finding #6, *Porches and Decks.*)

**7. Rhythm and Directional Emphasis:** There is not a strong established rhythm on this block face as the one 1895 structure is vertically oriented and the 1914 garage addition as well as the Weyerhauser pool house is more horizontally oriented. The houses to the south of Irvine Avenue have a stronger rhythm with front porches, similar setbacks and gabled and hipped roofs.



**8. Materials and Details:** These elements are not fully designed as the project is in its early stages. The applicant stated they are considering “masonry” and stucco for exterior materials. Stucco is not found on the existing nearby historic structures and would likely not be an appropriate material.

**6. Building Elements.**

**Roof.** The roof is flat which is compatible with the historic structure at 339-341 Irvine Avenue but not with the smaller workers cottages on the south side of Irvine that have hips and gables.

**Doors and Windows.** These early plans show location and size of windows and doors but no additional details. The guidelines state “*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.*” Many of the façade windows have a vertical orientation however, they are very large and not consistent with the solid-to-void ratio of the historic structures or the guideline that states openings should be of the same general size.

**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.*” This side of the street does not have a strong continuity of porches or porch roof lines so these elements do not need to be duplicated, however, the guidelines state: “*If a porch is not built, the transition from private to public space should be articulated with some other suitable design element*” and the Irvine Avenue Development Plan states “*...front doors should be made inviting and prominent.*” The current proposal does not appear to achieve these guidelines as the main entrance is on the third level about half-way back on the east elevation.

New building elements being introduced are the bump-outs at the fourth level, the raised walkway connecting the main house with the workshop, large square openings, window screening and a plinth or freestanding chimney.

**10. Setback.** Some additional measurements are necessary in order to determine whether the proposed setback of the new residence and workshop are compatible and within 5% of neighboring (contributing) buildings. However, the Irvine Avenue Development Plan encourages additional off-street parking for new structures and the proposed 25' setback allows for an additional two parking spots (in addition to the garage) on the driveway.

**11. Garages and Parking.** The guidelines state: “*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.*” Given the bluff, there is no alley and single garage doors are proposed. The two upper floors are cantilevered over the first level garage doors and while the cantilever is not an appropriate traditional design element, the architect’s intent was to minimize the garage doors. This is consistent with the Irvine Avenue Development Plan which states: “*Garage doors shall be downplayed architecturally and front doors should be made inviting and prominent. While it is aesthetically desirable to put garage doors behind the front door or to the rear or the side of the house, these design alternatives can be impractical for steep lots without alleys and where pavement aggravates run-off problems.*” There may be other ways, however, to achieve this without a cantilever.

**12. Public Infrastructure.** There do not appear to be exposed *brick alleys, stone slab sidewalks, granite curbs* or other historic public infrastructure at this site that would be affected.



The guideline 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 and gas fireplace vents should not be located on primary elevations and should be low-profile and painted/finished to match the surrounding material.

**13.** This staff report does not address all requirements of the Irvine Avenue Development Plan or the Zoning Code for steep slope requirements and the preliminary findings do not obviate the need for meeting applicable building and zoning code requirements.