

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

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FILE NAME: 1890 Summit Avenue  
DATE OF APPLICATION: July 2, 2014  
APPLICANT: Bill Marzolf  
OWNER: Bill Marzolf  
DATE OF PUBLIC HEARING: July 24, 2014  
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District  
CATEGORY: Contributing  
CLASSIFICATION: Building permit  
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Christine Boulware, John Beaty  
DATE: July 17, 2014

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**A. SITE DESCRIPTION:** Built in 1926, the Gilbertson House at 1890 Summit Avenue is a two-story, rendered (stuccoed) frame house with a side gabled, asphalt shingled roof, and it faces north toward Summit Avenue. Its Colonial Revival details include lunette attic windows, cornice returns, a frieze board on the full front and rear elevations, six-over-one windows, a blind fanlight and dentilled frieze above the front door, sidelights beside the door, and a one-bay, open-gabled front porch with Tuscan columns. The three-bay façade is symmetrical, and the brick foundation matches the brick steps leading to the porch. A semi-exterior brick chimney rises up through the ridge on the left (east) side of the building. There is a shed porch / wing on the east side of the rear and a rear detached garage accessed via the alley.

The single-stall garage is front-gabled, but shares other details with the house such as a stucco exterior, cornice returns, a frieze under the eaves, and brick above grade. There are concrete block walls below grade and a concrete parking slab. The house and garage are categorized as contributing to the Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District.

**B. PROPOSED CHANGES:** The applicant is proposing to demolish the contributing single-stall garage and construct a new three-stall garage (768 s.f.). Additionally, there will be a 10'-6" by 24'-0" parking pad to the east of the new garage.

**C. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:**

**SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION**

1. *A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*
2. *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
3. *Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*
4. *Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*
5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.*

*Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

- 7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*
- 8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*
- 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
- 10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

### **SUMMIT AVENUE WEST DISTRICT GUIDELINES**

#### **General Principles:**

- 1. All work should be of a character and quality that maintains the distinguishing features of the building and the environment. The removal or alteration of distinctive architectural features should be avoided.*
- 2. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. In the event of replacement, new materials should match the original in composition, design, color, texture and appearance. Duplication of original design based on physical or pictorial evidence is preferable to using conjectural of "period" designs or using parts of other buildings.*
- 3. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship characteristic of structures or a period should be treated with sensitivity.*
- 4. Buildings should be used for their originally intended purpose or compatible uses which require minimum alteration of the building and its site.*
- 5. In general, buildings should be restored to their original appearance. However, alterations to buildings since their construction are sometimes significant because they reflect the history of the building and neighborhood. This significance should be respected, and restoration to an "original" appearance may not be desirable in some cases. All buildings should be recognized as products of their own time and not be altered to resemble buildings from an earlier era.*
- 6. Whenever possible, new additions or alterations to structures should be done in such a manner that if such additions or 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 Summit Avenue West District is to maintain the scale and quality of design of the district. The Summit Avenue West 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 Scale: *New construction should conform to the massing, volume, height, facade proportions and scale of existing surrounding structures. The scale of the spaces between buildings and the rhythm of buildings to open space should also be carefully considered. New houses should be at least 25 feet high and relate to the height of existing adjacent houses.*

*New college buildings should relate to nearby contributing college buildings; new college buildings with a smaller setback from Summit should have a correspondingly lower height.*

*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 along Summit and by the way these materials are 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 materials and details of new construction should relate to the materials and details of existing nearby buildings.*

*Most buildings on Summit are built of high-quality materials, often with brick or stucco walls and asphalt or tile roofs. Most brick is red and tile roofs are either red or green. Vinyl, metal or hardboard siding is acceptable only for accessory structures which are not visible from Summit. Imitative materials such as artificial stone and artificial brick veneer should not be used. Materials will be reviewed to determine their appropriate use in relation to the overall design of the structure.*

*The materials and details of new college buildings should relate to the materials and details of nearby contributing college buildings. The Macalester College campus has buildings predominantly of red brick with concrete or sandstone trim. The [University] of St. Thomas presents cream-colored Kasota stone buildings to the Summit Avenue streetscape.*

*The color of materials should relate to surrounding structures and the area as well as to the style of the 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 of new construction should complement existing adjacent structures as well.*

*Roofs:* *There is a great variety of roof treatment along Summit, but gable and hipped roofs are most common. The skyline or profile of new construction should relate to the predominant roof shape of existing nearby buildings.*

*The recommended roof pitch for gable roofs is 9:12 and in general the minimum appropriate pitch is 8:12. Highly visible secondary structure roofs should match the roof pitch of the main structure. A 6:12 pitch may be acceptable in some cases for secondary 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 should be compatible with that of existing nearby buildings. Facade openings of the same general size as those in nearby buildings are encouraged. 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 bronze-toned aluminum is acceptable. Mill finish (silver) aluminum should be avoided.*

*Porches and Decks: Front entrance ways should be articulated with a suitable design element to provide a transitional zone between the public outdoors and the private interior, and should be appropriate in detail to the size and style of the building. If front porches are constructed, they should generally not be enclosed.*

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

### Site

*Setback – Siting: New buildings should generally face Summit Avenue and be sited at a distance not more than 5% out-of-line from the front yard setback of existing adjacent buildings. Setbacks greater than those of adjacent buildings may be allowed in some cases.*

*Landscaping: The streetscape can be divided into three visual areas: public, semipublic, and private. Public space is provided by the publicly owned sidewalks, boulevards, streets, and medians. Semipublic space includes front yards and side yards on corners. While privately owned, this space is open to view by passers-by. Private space is generally that which lies behind the front face of the building. Buildings, landscaping elements in front yards, and boulevard trees provide a "wall of enclosure" for the street "room." Generally, landscaping which respects the street as a public room is encouraged. Boulevard trees mark a separation between the automobile corridor and the rest of the streetscape, and should be maintained. Front yard enclosures such as hedges or walls are not common along west Summit. When they are used, they should permit visual penetration of the semipublic space. Low hedges or limestone retaining walls and visually open fences, such as wrought iron, are preferred. Chain link fences, while visually transparent, should not be used in front yards or in the front half of side yards. Privacy fences, timber retaining walls, and high hedges are also inappropriate in front yards.*

*Garages and Parking: Parking spaces should not be located in front yards. Residential parking spaces should be located in rear yards. If an alley is adjacent to a dwelling, any new garage should be located off the alley.*

*Institutional parking lots should ideally be located behind buildings where they would not be visible from Summit Avenue. When this is not possible, parking lots should be set back at least as far as the building facades and screened from view from Summit by landscaping such as hedges, brick walls, and changes of grade that sink the parking from view. Shade trees should be planted between parking lots and the street, and plant materials should relate to the traditional character of the district. The scale, level of light output, and design of parking lot lighting should be compatible with the 16 foot high lantern style lights along Summit Avenue.*

### **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.*

**D. FINDINGS:**

1. On March 1, 1990, the Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District was established under Ordinance No.17716, § 1. 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. The house and garage are categorized as contributing to the Summit Avenue West Historic District. The character of the house and garage is Colonial Revival in style. The garage is original to the property and was constructed during the period of significance (1921); although the garage door has been replaced, the building retains its historic details.
3. The garage is currently in poor condition as it has had many years of deferred maintenance. The roof has areas of rot on the sheathing and along the eaves, the block walls have several notable cracks, and the south side of the slab has cracked and heaved. According to the applicant, a large cottonwood tree adjacent to the garage was recently removed, as the root system extended under the garage and was structurally compromising the building.

**Findings concerning the demolition of the existing historic garage:**

4. In the case of the proposed demolition of a building, prior to approval of said demolition (Section 73.07(9)(b) & Sec. 74.39), the commission *shall make written findings on the following:*
  - a. *The architectural and historical merit of the building.* The historic garage retains a good degree of historic integrity and is a good example of an early auto garage with details matching and complimenting those on the house. It was constructed with the main house during the period of significance for the Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District, but also exhibits a lack of maintenance.
  - b. *The effect of the demolition on surrounding buildings.* The demolition of the contributing garage will have a negative impact on the property and the Program for Preservation in the Summit Avenue West Historic District. As these early auto garages disappear, the early physical history showing the relationship of the auto to domestic construction in the district is erased.
  - c. *The effect of any proposed new construction on the remainder of the building (in case of partial demolition) and on surrounding buildings.* The proposed new construction would result in the loss of character-defining features and historic materials. The proposed garage conservatively recalls the details of the house, but is not as detailed as the historic garage. If appropriately detailed, the new construction will not have a negative effect on the surrounding buildings.
  - d. *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 maintains some function as a single-stall garage for the residence. The proposed construction would increase the parking to three stalls plus a parking pad. To improve the existing garage would require a large investment because of its poor condition and deferred maintenance. The applicant has stated that because of structural damage caused the root system of the tree, repair is cost prohibitive. The proposed garage would provide multi-vehicle parking and storage.

5. The guideline states (Sec. 74.36(a)(1), "The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible." The proposal would result in the loss of a contributing garage. The garage retains historic integrity, is a good example of an early auto garage, but it is in poor condition as evidenced in photographs supplied by the applicant
6. The loss of a contributing garage will have an adverse impact on the Program for the Preservation and architectural control of the Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District (Leg. Code §73.06 (e)). However, the proposal to demolish the garage at 1890 Summit may now be necessary due to lack of maintenance and possible structural damage.

**Findings concerning the proposed new construction:**

7. The proposed new three-stall garage is one-story and has a large footprint for a secondary structure compared to the existing historic garage (Sec. 74.37(b)). The new construction will nearly fill the entire alley frontage with parking (except side set-backs), if the added parking pad is included. A garage this size is not traditional for single-family homes constructed during the period of significance, but other non-historic examples exist on the north side of the alley.
8. The proposed materials of the new construction relate to those of the main house, but the proposed garage is not as detailed as the existing historic garage (Sec. 74.37(c) & (d)). Windows are not shown on the plans. The frieze board appears smaller than the original garage, and there is no brick foundation detail. The roof shape is compatible with the house and original garage.
9. The location of the proposed construction is at the alley, and its setbacks are consistent with neighboring garages and comp with the guideline (Sec. 74.37(e)(3)).
10. The construction of the three-stall garage will not adversely impact the Program for the Preservation and architectural control of the Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District (Leg. Code §73.06 (e)) so long as the conditions are met.

**E. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Based on the findings, staff recommends approval of the building permit application to demolish the single-stall garage and construct a new three-stall garage and parking pad provided the following conditions are met:

1. The historic garage shall be documented with photographs prior to demolition. The photos shall be submitted to staff.
2. A brick detail matching that just above grade on the house shall be added above grade on all elevations of the garage.
3. All final materials and details shall be submitted to HPC staff for final review and approval.
4. Any revisions to the approved plans must be reviewed and approved by staff and/or the HPC.

5. The HPC stamped approved construction drawings remain on site for the duration of the construction project.

**F. ATTACHMENTS**

1. HPC Design Review Application
2. Materials submitted by the applicant
3. Photos
4. Drawings, 11" x 17"