

CITY OF SAINT PAUL
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF MEMORANDUM

FILE: HPC Guidelines Discussion – Porches and Decks

DATE OF MEETING: August 12, 2019

STAFF REPORT: George Gause

Chapter 73-Heritage Preservation Commission: Sec. 73.06 ‘Review of Permits’

(c) All decisions of the heritage preservation commission with respect to this section shall be in accordance with the approved program for the preservation of each heritage preservation site.

(e) The heritage preservation commission, upon receipt of the application for permit and plans, shall determine if the work to be performed pursuant to the permit adversely affects the program for the preservation and architectural control of the heritage preservation site or district.

(i) Before approving any permit application required under paragraph (d) of this section to be approved by the heritage preservation commission, the commission shall make findings based on the program for the preservation and architectural control for the heritage preservation site in regard to the following:

(1) In the case of a proposed alteration or addition to an existing building, that such alteration or addition will not materially impair the architectural or historic value of the building and shall make written findings considering the existing structures and existing exterior appearance, building height, building width, depth or other dimensions, roof style, type of building materials, ornamentation, paving and setback.

A. DESCRIPTION:

Currently, each historic district and site have separate guidelines (*Preservation Program for the Preservation and Architectural Control*). These guidelines have inconsistencies and omissions. During the Chapter 73 update meeting in May 2018 and in the listening sessions this fall the guidelines were stated as a concern. We received comments such as:

- Guidelines are not clear with unrealistic expectations which hurt residents.*
- More flexibility on window replacement-consider energy efficiency.*
- Consider modern materials and building options, including energy efficiency.*
- More dynamic and creative new construction.*
- Work that cannot be seen should be allowed.*
- Take into consideration costs.*

B. PURPOSE:

This is the initial discussions of a much larger process which will include outreach to residents, architects, contractors, elected officials and others, formation of a steering committee with different representatives from different user groups and a series of public meeting to discuss what will come forward for a vote.

This year we will set aside time to discuss topic areas in the guidelines each month.

Commissioners should focus their deliberations on three areas:

1. Providing simple clear language
2. What changes should we consider
3. Issues with past applications

C. OUTCOME GOAL:

The long-term goal for this process is to establish a new Legislative Code Chapter 74 that addresses issues that have been brought up by residents of the heritage districts:

- Equitable for all residents
- Sustainability opportunities
- Easy to understand
- Simple to use

D. AUGUST TOPIC-Porches and Decks

Chapter 73.04 Power and duties of the commission.

Review of permits. The 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.

Department of Safety and Inspection: When is a permit required.

Decks and platforms that do not act as landings outside an exterior door, are not more than 30" above grade and not attached to a structure with frost footings. Decks greater than 24" above grade must meet zoning setbacks.

Dayton's Bluff

Decks. Decks should be constructed only at the rear of the building or where most inconspicuous. Railings, steps and other deck details should be compatible with the architectural character of the building.

Enclosure. Unenclosed front porches should not be permanently enclosed.

Hill

Porches and steps which are appropriate to the building and its development should be retained. Porches and additions reflecting later styles of architecture are often important to the building's historical integrity and, whenever possible, should be retained. Porches and steps removed from the building should be reconstructed, using photographic documentation and historical research, to be compatible in design and detail with the period and style of the building. In replacing porch railings, it is important to maintain the original spacing, section and profile of the balustrades.

Deck and fire stair additions may be acceptable in some cases, but should be kept to the rear of buildings where they will be the most inconspicuous and detract the least from the historical context. The detailing of decks and exterior stairs should be compatible with the period and style of the building.

Irvine Park

Porches, steps, cornices and applies architectural features. Porches and steps which are appropriate to the building and its development should be retained. Porches and additions reflecting later styles of architecture are often important to the building's historical integrity and, if so, should be retained. Porches, steps and doorways which have been removed should be restored, if possible, through photo documentation and historical research.

Limestone Properties

Deck and fire stair additions and new balconies may be acceptable in some cases but should be kept to the rear of buildings where they will be the most inconspicuous and detract the least from the historical context. The detailing of decks and exterior stairs should be compatible with the period and style of the building.

Porches were a significant part of a house in the nineteenth century and reflected the social development of the US. Porches should be considered one of the most significant architectural features of a building and treated as such.

Porches and steps which are historic or appropriate to the building and its development should be retained. Porches and additions reflecting later styles of architecture are often important to the building's historical evolution and should be

retained. Infilling of porches should be avoided. The treatment of historic materials of porches should follow the guidelines for masonry or wood trim above.

Reconstruction: If porches and steps removed from the building are to be reconstructed, the new work must be based upon photographic documentation, physical evidence, and historical research. Simple designs should be used if evidence is lacking in order to avoid speculation. A professional can help create a design that is compatible in design and detail with the period and style of the building. In replacing porch railings, it is important to maintain the original spacing, section and profile of the balustrades.

Summit Avenue West

Porches and steps which are appropriate to the building and its development should be maintained or restored. Porches and steps removed from the building should be reconstructed to be compatible in design and detail with the period and style of the building. In general, front porches should not be enclosed and precast steps should be avoided.

Deck and firestair additions may be acceptable in some cases, but should be kept to the rear of buildings where they will be the most inconspicuous and detract the least from the historical context. The detailing of decks and exterior stairs should be compatible with the period and style of the building.