

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

February 11, 2019

PREPARED FOR THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION



Project Name & Address: 428 North Livingston Street

Application Type(s): Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior alterations on a landmark site

Legistar File ID # [54459](#)

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Date Prepared: February 4, 2019

Summary

Project Applicant/Contact: James McFadden – McFadden & Company

Requested Action: The Applicant is requesting that the Landmarks Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior alterations to remove two individual fixtures on flanking columns and replace them with a single hanging light fixture centered over the entrance.

Background Information

Parcel Location/Information: The landmark site is located at 428 North Livingston Street.

Relevant State Statute Section:

Wisc SS 62.23(7)(em)2m. In the repair or replacement of a property that is designated as a historic landmark or included within a historic district or neighborhood conservation district under this paragraph, a city shall allow an owner to use materials that are similar in design, color, scale, architectural appearance, and other visual qualities.

Relevant Ordinance Sections:

- 41.18 STANDARDS FOR GRANTING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS.** A certificate of appropriateness shall be granted only if the proposed project complies with this chapter, including all of the following standards that apply.
- (1) New construction or exterior alteration. The Landmarks Commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for exterior alteration or construction only if:
 - (a) In the case of exterior alteration to a designated landmark, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
 - (b) In the case of exterior alteration or construction of a structure on a landmark site, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
 - (c) In the case of exterior alteration or construction on any property located in a historic district, the proposed exterior alteration or construction meets the adopted standards and guidelines for that district.
 - (d) In the case of any exterior alteration or construction for which a certificate of appropriateness is required, the proposed work will not frustrate the public interest expressed in this ordinance for protecting, promoting, conserving, and using the City's historic resources.

Secretary of the Interior's 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.

Analysis and Conclusion

The applicant is requesting an amendment to the previously issued Certificate of Appropriateness for the Davies House to incorporate a pendant light over the main entry in lieu of lighting on the columns that flank the entry. On June 9, 2017, the Landmarks Commission approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for several changes, which included replacement of the original wood columns with fiberglass columns, and to retain the lighting on each of the columns. When the applicant attempted to drill holes in the columns, the column began to crack. The applicant is requesting to not reinstall the lighting on the columns as it is problematic to modify fiberglass, and instead would like to hang a period-appropriate pendant light over the entry.

A discussion of the relevant ordinance section of Chapter 41.18 follows:

41.18(a)

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. The use of the Davies House is not being changed. Several changes to the distinctive materials of the structure have occurred previously and the applicant is proposing further change.
2. The previously approved work corrected several previous changes which had detracted from the overall character of the structure. One of the elements that had remained, though, was the historic location of lighting on the pillars flanking the primary entrance.

3. The proposed replacement light fixture is period appropriate and relatively simple, but obviously new. It will not create a false sense of history.
4. The location of lighting on the columns was a historic detail, but the style of the fixtures appears to have changed over time.
5. Georgian style homes emphasize symmetry, which is why many of these buildings feature a pair of lights flanking the entryway. To remove the paired light figures for a single, centrally located light would further diminish the historic integrity of the property.
6. While staff had recommended retaining the wood columns and only replacing the capitals and bases, the applicant requested to use fiberglass columns with the assurance that the project would retain the look of the originals as based upon historic photographs. Upon installation, it appears that the fiberglass columns will not allow for reinstallation of light fixtures on them, so the applicant is requesting to install a new light fixture in a different location.
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. This exterior alteration will remove all evidence of paired light fixtures flanking the entrance. However, the new light fixture is period appropriate and yet differentiated, so it will be in keeping with the Georgian character of the building but not create a false sense of history.
10. The proposed changes will not affect the essential form of the property, but this change further diminishes the historic integrity of the property.

The landmarks nomination states, "The Joseph and Emlen Davies house was built in 1907. It is of significance as one of the best and most representative examples of the period at the turn-of-the-last century when Victorian design was transitioning into the more historically correct period revival styles, in this case Georgian Revival." The nomination also states, "The Davies House includes a Victorian emphasis on decoration, including ... a neo-classical exterior design reflecting the Georgian Revival."

41.18(1)(d) instructs the Landmarks Commission to determine if the alteration request frustrates the public interest expressed in this ordinance for protecting, promoting, conserving, and using the City's historic resources. Alterations to designated landmark buildings and sites should be carefully evaluated to ensure appropriate treatment of the landmark and the retention of architectural, cultural or historic significance. In this case the location of the lighting is not the most prominent feature of the property, but it would improve the integrity of the property to retain the feature.

Recommendation

Staff believes that the Landmarks Commission granted this project a Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA) based upon the applicant's assurance that the replacement columns would replicate the historic appearance of the entryway. The standing CoA specified: "The corner pilasters and front columns will have ionic capitals and will have fiberglass columns; the column diameter will be matched; the light fixtures may remain on the face of the columns." The applicant is unable to comply with these terms because the replacement material for the columns will not allow for modification. The Landmarks Commission will need to decide if the applicant needs to comply with the standing CoA, which will probably require a different building material for the columns, or if the proposed new light fixture is an acceptable change to the previously approved plans and issue a new CoA.