



Legislation Text

File #: BC 19-007, **Version:** 1

DATE: December 5, 2019

TO: Members of the Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission

FROM: Mikayla Schmidt, Interim City Planner

Certificate of Appropriateness for Staircase Replacement - McClaughry Block

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED:

The Heritage Preservation Commission is requested to review an application for the replacement of a staircase on the McClaughry Block building (425-429 Division Street).

BACKGROUND:

Paul Smith, owner of the building, has requested the HPC's approval of the replacement of the side staircase on the south facade of the building facing 5th Street East. The new staircase will mimic the existing staircase very closely, but with safety and weather resistance in mind.

As previously discussed at the September 19, 2019 meeting, the staircase remodel involves changes to the building's exterior appearance. The applicant's insurance company has deemed the current staircase unsafe and not functional. The current cedar treads have rotted and the stairs have been tied shut. Another unacceptable issue is the stairs have become a runway for children and young adults.

The proposal includes using treated wood supports on reinforced steel girders with Trex decking and maintenance free aluminum decorative railings. Review of historic photographs reveal the staircase has been reconstructed several times. The photo from 1978 shows a metal tubular railing.

The staircase has not yet received formal review from the Building Inspections Division. Mr. Smith has submitted his application for building permit and will be working closely with the division to meet code requirements. It should be noted that due to the staircase still needing formal review, the design could change, but will need to remain closely aligned with what is presented to the HPC.

ANALYSIS:

Approval Criteria

The heritage preservation commission shall consider the following in evaluating an application for a certificate of appropriateness for a zoning certificate and/or building permit. Criterion (1) below must be met and criteria (2) through (5) shall be considered:

- (1) That it fully complies with all applicable requirements of this Land Development Code (LDC);

- (2) That the proposed action is in harmony with the intent of the H-O district;
- (3) That the proposed action would complement other structures within the H-O district;
- (4) That the proposed action is consistent with the Downtown Preservation Design Guidelines; and
- (5) In the case of removal or demolition, that the structure could not be rehabilitated and used for a conforming purpose with reasonable efforts or whether the structure is without substantial historic or architectural significance.

FINDINGS:

1. The project complies with the LDC.
2. The project meets the HO District goal to “Promote the preservation and continued use of historic sites and structures.”
3. The proposed action would complement other structures. The building across the street has renovated and improved the exterior fire escape.
4. The maintenance proposal is consistent with the Downtown Preservation Design Guidelines in terms of methods and materials; however, the guidelines are silent on composite decking.
5. Removal of the structure is recommended by both the applicant’s insurance company and by the building official. Reconstruction of the existing stairway as is would not meet building code. The existing stairway is not original.

OPTIONS:

Approval of project as requested.
Approval with conditions or changes.
Denial of Certificate of Appropriateness.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the staircase replacement project as proposed by the building owner.