



STAFF REPORT

Historic Preservation Commission

April 3, 2024
HPCA-24-00022

Case Number: HPCA-24-00022

Property Address: 401 NW 32nd Street

District: Edgemere Park Historic District

Applicant: Henri Bailey
401 NW 32nd Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73118

Owner: Henri Bailey
401 NW 32nd Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73118

A. CASE ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

2. Install a path from back door to street (required).

B. BACKGROUND

1. Project Description

The proposed path has already been installed but must be reviewed as if it had not.

2. Location

Project site is located on the north side of NW 32nd Street, on the northwest corner of NW 32nd Street and N Hudson Avenue.

3. Site History

Date of Construction: 1930

Zoned Historic Preservation/Historical Landmark: 1977

National Register Listing: 1980

Description from National Register Nomination Intensive Level Survey: n/a

Additional Information:

The 1932 edition of the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps illustrates a 1-story brick-veneered frame duplex dwelling, with 1-story front porch centered on the front south façade. A 2-story frame "autohouse" with stables is indicated on the north easternmost property line with the front face back nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the property depth from the front property line. All structures have shingle roofs.

4. Existing Conditions

The property appears to be in good condition and the landscaping is well-maintained.

5. Previous Actions

None.

C. ITEMS IN COMPLIANCE

*Unless noted below in Section D., Issues and Considerations, all other case items of this proposal comply with the Design and Sustainability Standards and Guidelines for Oklahoma City Historic Districts, and with all relevant sections of the Oklahoma City Municipal Code, 2020.**

None.

D. ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

This proposal may not comply with the Design and Sustainability Standards and Guidelines for Oklahoma City Historic Districts, and with all relevant sections of the Oklahoma City Municipal Code, 2020 as referenced below:*

1. Item 2, Install a path from back door to street (required).

- a. Description: The applicant proposes to install a curving path from the back door of the duplex unit to the street. The path is approximately 25 feet long and consists of stone edging and flagstone pavers. The applicant does not propose the use of concrete in the installation. The yard slopes down approximately four (4) feet from the dwelling to the street. The path follows the natural slope by using a series of steps to gradually descend/ascend the slope. The applicant proposes the use of creeping thyme in the negative space between the flagstone pavers.
- b. References: *Design and Sustainability Standards and Guidelines for Oklahoma City Historic Districts*

2.3 Sidewalks, Driveways, Parking Lots, Curbs and Vacant Sites

Policy: *Sidewalks, driveways and off-street parking should not interrupt the historic continuity of landscaped front or corner side yards. Historic concrete sidewalks and walkways should be preserved and repaired with concrete that is consistent in pattern, size, texture and color. Historic concrete driveways should be preserved and new driveways should be of concrete rather than asphalt.*

Design Justification: Historically, the consistency and repetition of sidewalk and driveway spacing, placement, dimension and materials create a rhythm to the street. Retaining the specific rhythm of a street is important to preserve historic character. Oklahoma City's historic districts and properties have strong visual elements of grey colored concrete for sidewalks, walkways, some streets and curbs.

Sustainability Justification: Existing historic concrete sidewalks, steps and driveways represent embodied energy and should be preserved. Concrete is a long-lasting sustainable material, reflects solar heat and light and should be repaired or replaced as needed with new concrete to match. New driveways should be of similar design, pattern, texture, dimensions and color as the historic driveway. The use of permeable paving for non-historic and new driveways, sidewalks and parking areas is encouraged because it helps to reduce water run-off.

- 2.3.7: All sidewalks, driveways, and curbs visible from the public right-of-

way shall be constructed to maintain the continuity of materials and character present in the district.

- 2.3.8: Private sidewalks and driveways must be constructed of concrete except where historical precedent demonstrates the previous existence of brick, stone or other materials, which may be considered appropriate for replacement.

2.5 Landscape & Landscape Elements

Design Justification: Just as the site, context and environment are critical to the character of a historic building, property and district, the landscape is also an important character-defining feature of a historic property. Original or historic landscape elements may be important character-defining features of a historic property and should be preserved. Added landscape features are more appropriate in back or side yards.

- 2.5.1: Maintain existing historic landscape and landscape features to preserve the historic district setting.
- 2.5.8: Maintain existing, successful drainage patterns to minimize run-off, which can contain herbicides and pesticides, introducing them into the waste water system.
- 2.5.12: The introduction of new materials visible from the public right-of-way will likely be sustainability considerations and require administrative review.
- 2.5.35: Significant alteration of the topography of a property through extensive grading, removal or alteration of rolled terraces and similar character-defining features, filling or excavating, is not permitted.
- 2.5.37: It is not appropriate to alter the overall character of historic districts by substantially reducing the ratio of open space to built space on any site through new construction, additions or introduction of surface paving or other hardscape features.
- 2.5.38: Landscape elements such as stone or masonry edging materials for raised planting beds shall not exceed 18 inches in height in front or side yards and shall match or complement the design, scale and details of such elements historically found within the historic district.

2.7 Plants and Planting Recommendations

- 2.7.4: Selection of new trees and plantings should reflect the historic landscape design appropriate for the historic property and building.
- 2.7.5 Landscaping should be appropriate to the historic building and neighborhood and enhance the building and its surroundings.
- 2.7.8: Selection of new landscape stock should take into consideration local seasonal extremes. Native plants better tolerate local conditions and usually require less supplemental watering.

- 2.7.15: An alternative to turf in yards is drought-tolerant landscaping. Alternatives for lawn areas can include any combination of hardy, low-growing ground-covers (clover, ivy, mondo grass, thyme, sedum), juniper shrubs, yucca, ornamental grasses, butterfly gardens, water-permeable paths of pea gravel, water gardens, wildflowers, and decorative rocks.
- c. Considerations: The Standards and Guidelines indicate that the visible landscape of a district and property is an important character-defining feature of the properties, blocks, and the districts. Maintaining existing historic landscapes preserves the setting of the historic district. The proposal appears to straddle the line between what would be considered to be a sidewalk and what would be considered to be a landscaping element. The introduction of alternative sidewalk materials appears to be consistent with other homes in the Edgemere Historic District, especially those within the perimeter of the park. Many homes have brick sidewalks set in concrete. Flagstone seems to be a less common material for sidewalks, but it can easily be found in retaining walls and other landscape components in the vicinity. The garage apartment on the subject property utilizes flagstones in the flowerbeds near the street.

The proposed path does not replace the existing sidewalk, it does however, introduce landscape materials that form a curving path which leads from the rear of the duplex to the street. Although the path serves the purpose of a sidewalk, the impermanence of the landscape elements suggest that, in this instance, the path may be considered as a landscape feature.

The Standards and Guidelines address alternatives to turf to create drought-tolerant landscaping. Several of those alternatives have been utilized in this proposal including the use of hardy, low-growing ground covers, creating a water-permeable path, and the use of decorative rocks. The proposed flagstone path will be installed using natural materials that are not intended to be permanent in nature and could easily be removed in the future.

d. Recommended Specific Findings:

1. That historic landscapes are character defining features of a property, block, and district;
2. That the landscape elements do not exceed 18 inches in height and complement the design, scale and details of such elements historically found within the historic district;
3. That the proposed path utilizes materials, stones and flagstone pavers, that are consistent with sidewalk and landscaping materials found throughout the historic district; and
4. That alternatives to turf, including the use of use of hardy, low-growing ground covers, creating a water-permeable path, and the use of decorative rocks, are supported by the Standards and Guidelines.

E. HPCA-24-00022 STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. Approve Item 2, Install a path from back door to street with Unique Circumstances**

with the specific findings that the proposed work will not have an adverse effect on the historic character of the district or property; that the following **unique circumstances** exist; that the items do not strictly comply with all relevant Standards and Guidelines or are not addressed by them, but are nonetheless consistent with the spirit and intent of the Standards and Guidelines and are in compliance with the relevant sections of the Municipal Code, 2020*, as referenced in the Staff Report.

Specific Findings:

1. That historic landscapes are character defining features of a property, block, and district;
2. That the landscape elements do not exceed 18 inches in height and complement the design, scale and details of such elements historically found within the historic district;
3. That the proposed path utilizes materials, stones and flagstone pavers, that are consistent with sidewalk and landscaping materials found throughout the historic district; and
4. That alternatives to turf, including the use of use of hardy, low-growing ground covers, creating a water-permeable path, and the use of decorative rocks, are supported by the Standards and Guidelines.

Unique Circumstance:

1. That the landscape elements are impermanent.

Note: Staff recommendation does not constitute Commission action.

**Relevant Sections of Chapter 59 the Oklahoma City Municipal Code governing HP/HL Districts are: §59.3300.1-5; §59.4150.4; §59.4250; §59.7250.1-4; §59.7300.1-7; §59.12200.1-4; §59.13300.1-6.*

Copies of the Standards/Guidelines and Relevant Sections of the Oklahoma City Municipal Code, 2020, are available online at www.okc.gov/planning/hp/index.html ; at Planning Department offices located at 420 W. Main, 9th floor, and each HP Commission Meeting.

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