



# STAFF REPORT

## Historic Preservation Commission

February 22, 2021

HPCA-20-00154

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**Agenda Item:** VI.D.5..

**Case Number:** HPCA-20-00154

**Property Address:** 708 NW 18th Street

**District:** Mesta Park Historic District

**Owner:** Paula Morrow  
708 NW 18th Street  
Oklahoma City, OK 73103

### A. CASE ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

5. Construct pergola (elective); and
6. Install rock retaining wall/ planting bed (elective).

### B. BACKGROUND

#### 1. Project Description

The applicant proposes to construct a retaining wall/planting bed in the back yard and to install a pergola in place of a former carport.

#### 2. Location

Project site is located on the south side of NW 18<sup>th</sup> Street, mid-block between Lee and Shartel.

#### 3. Site History

*Date of Construction:* 1914

*Zoned Historic Preservation/Historical Landmark:* MP 1994

*National Register Listing:* MP 1983

#### *Additional Information:*

The 1952 edition of the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps illustrates a 2-story, brick-veneered, frame dwelling with 1-story front porch extending the entire width of the front (north) façade and a 1-story back porch spanning a little over half the width of the south façade. A 1-story frame “autohouse” is indicated in the southeast corner of the property with the front face back over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the property depth from the front property line. The primary dwelling is indicated with composition roofing, likely replacement shingles, while the garage remains illustrated with shingles, likely wood. The dwelling is illustrated as a standard sized rectangular form with a small projection on the west. The garage is set well away from the dwelling and on the south and east property lines abutting the alley.

#### 4. Existing Conditions

The dwelling has an extensive 1-story addition extending from the previous location of the rear porch. The addition extends from the rear of the house to the south property line and is longer than the house was originally. The addition includes an attached 2-car garage at the south end. A carport occupies what was the historic garage location. While the addition has a sloped roof, the carport has a flat, shed roof. The back yard is mostly paved.

## 5. Previous Actions

Previous applications for Historic Preservation Certificate of Appropriateness (HPCA) filed for this property include:

Case Number	Date	Owner	Decision
HPCA-20-00154	11/09/2020	Paula Morrow	Approved
1) Install driveway gate (elective); 2) Replace driveway (elective); 3) Replace retaining wall with new concrete retaining wall with no change to width or height (elective); and 4) Remove carport (elective).			

Other actions, such as variances, other approvals, citations could also be described here.

## 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 6, Install rock retaining wall/ planting bed (elective).

- a. Description: The applicant proposes alteration of an existing retaining wall from the abutting property that encroaches on the property. The alteration will install a rock veneer to create planting beds. The height of the retaining wall will be increased from 7 inches of concrete curb to 24-inch tall planters. No drawings have been provided. The proposed location is behind the rear wall of the house.
- b. References: *Design and Sustainability Standards and Guidelines for Oklahoma City Historic Districts*

### 2.5 Landscape & Landscape Elements

**Policy:** The term “landscape” comprises the exterior environment of a historic property. Landscape elements can be natural or constructed features, including decks, patios, landforms, site furniture, pools, fountains, terraces, sculptures, planters, trellises, pergolas, outdoor lighting and other features, which generally should be located out of public view. Landscape features should be restrained on the fronts of buildings to allow viewing of the “public face” of the property and maintain historic streetscapes.

- 2.5.3: Landscape elements in back yards, not visible from any street or adjacent property and less than six feet in height are not subject to review unless a building or other type of permit is required by the Municipal Code.
  - 2.5.10: Patios and other paved landscape elements in back yards should use permeable paving systems to minimize changes to drainage patterns and storm water run-off.
  - 2.5.11: Actions beyond maintenance have the potential to alter a site or building, which could affect their historic character.
  - 2.5.12: The introduction of new materials visible from the public right-of-way will likely be sustainability considerations and require administrative review.
  - 2.5.13 Landscape elements that are not visible from any public way and otherwise meet all relevant guidelines may be administratively approved.
  - 2.5.14: New retaining walls may be approved to preserve a natural or existing historic slope in the front and side yards only if an earlier retaining wall on the property can be documented.
  - 2.5.15: New retaining walls not to exceed two feet in height may be approved to preserve a natural or existing slope in back yards not visible from the public right of way.
  - 2.5.16: The height of a new retaining wall may not exceed the height of the slope it retains.
  - 2.5.17: A retaining wall in front or side yards visible from the public right of way shall be constructed of unpainted natural stone, brick or finished concrete that is compatible in texture, color and style to the main building or adjacent paving materials.
  - 2.5.18: A retaining wall constructed in side or back yards not visible from the public right of way may be constructed of alternative materials; i.e., concrete block, landscape block, landscape timbers, etc.
  - 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.
- c. Considerations: The proposed alteration of the existing retaining wall is likely only minimally visible from the public right of way at the street. It is located toward the rear of the site between the 2-story dwelling and the 2-story dwelling to the east. The width of the driveway provides the only view toward the existing retaining wall. As no drawings are provided, only the height, 24-inches, is known.
- d. Recommended Specific Findings:
1. That landscape features located in the back yard, not visible from the street or abutting properties, and less than 6-feet tall do not require review unless a permit

is required;

2. That visible landscape features must be fully illustrated and dimensioned for review;
3. That stone and masonry edging materials for raised planting beds shall match or complement the design, scale and details of similar components in the district.

**2. Item 5, Construct pergola (elective).**

- a. Description: The applicant proposes the construction of a 12' by 12' by 12' wood pergola at the south end of the driveway. The proposed location appears to be directly on the south property line and is indicated to be 5 feet from the east property line and 5 feet from the existing, non-historic, attached garage on the west. The "ceiling height" is 9 feet tall.
- b. References: *Design and Sustainability Standards and Guidelines for Oklahoma City Historic Districts*

**Section 2.5 Landscape & Landscape Elements**

- 2.5.19: Adding a pergola (see also 3.4, Pergola or Freestanding Trellis) to a back elevation can help shade an outdoor space and can offer some degree of shade to the interior, which means added energy efficiency. Do not add a pergola or trellis to a prominent elevation where none historically existed. Reconstruction of a missing pergola or trellis should be based on accurate evidence of the original design.
- 2.5.20: New pergolas, not visible from the public right of way, may be constructed in back yards, at rear elevations or at accessory structures.
- 2.5.21: New pergolas shall be compatible with the building to which they relate in proportion, size, scale and material.
- 2.5.22: New pergolas constructed as an attachment to a primary or accessory structure shall be reviewed as a building addition and shall not damage or obscure historic character defining features.
- 2.5.23: New pergolas shall not be constructed in such a manner that abutment or attachment to an existing structure will allow for the pooling of moisture against or the infiltration of moisture into an existing structure.
- 2.5.24: The bottom of the canopy of a new pergola shall not exceed eight (8) feet above the finished floor height of the structure to which it relates, and the overall height of a pergola should not exceed nine (9) feet and shall be compatible with the building to which it relates in proportion, size, scale and material.
- 2.5.25: Freestanding pergolas may have concrete floors; however, permeable flooring materials are recommended. Posts may be set in concrete.
- 2.5.26: Pergolas shall be constructed of wood or sustainable alternative materials that closely resemble wood and may have decorative functional

metal elements such as wrought iron where appropriate. Synthetic materials that do not closely replicate historic fabric, such as plastic and vinyl, are prohibited.

- 2.5.27: Pergolas with columns or walls constructed of permanent building materials such as brick, stucco, or stone shall be reviewed as new construction.

### 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.

- 2.3.20: Screen parking from streets and pedestrian areas by placing parking areas at the back of a property and behind primary structures. New parking areas for corner lots shall be located behind primary structures, set back as far as possible from side streets, and placed so as to be as inconspicuous as possible.

### 3.4 Pergola or Freestanding Trellis (See also 2.5, Landscape and Landscape Elements)

**Policy:** A pergola or freestanding trellis, as original historic building elements, are historically important features and should be retained and preserved. A trellis is a freestanding grid that is used to define or screen outdoor spaces.

**Design Justification:** As popular features for Bungalow, Craftsman and other early 20th century building styles, pergolas and freestanding trellis, contribute to the historic character of a building and convey its age and style.

**Sustainability Justification:** The use of a pergola or freestanding trellis helps to provide shade to a building and uses screening through vegetation rather than other materials.

- 3.4.1: Preserve and maintain original or historic pergolas and freestanding trellis. Ordinary maintenance and repair does not require review.
- 3.4.2: Up to 50% of an original or historic pergola or freestanding trellis may be repaired by replacement without review only if the alteration results in no change in materials, dimensions, design, configuration, texture, surface coatings or visual appearance.

- 3.4.3. Do not add a new pergola or freestanding trellis on a prominent (visible from the public right-of-way) elevation where none existed historically.
- 3.4.4: A missing pergola or freestanding trellis may be reconstructed if based on accurate evidence of original configuration, placement and detail as supported by historic photographs.

#### 4.4 Garages

**Design Justification:** The way in which a new garage relates to other historic buildings of a property is important in historic districts. A new garage directly affects the integrity of the property as a whole. For this reason, a new garage should not detract from the historic character of the property.

- 4.4.3: Construction of a new or replacement garage should follow the historic setback for a garage on the property or setback patterns of other garages in the streetscape or historic district.
- 4.4.5: Construction of a replacement garage shall approximate the original configuration, form, massing, style, placement and detail of the former garage as described by photographic or other documentation.
- 4.4.7: Design a new garage to be secondary to that of a property's main historic building.
- 4.4.9: Materials used for a new garage should reflect the property's historical development and the use and function of the garage. Materials used for the exterior facades of a garage were often different (and less costly) than those used for the primary building.

#### 4.5 Accessory Buildings

**Policy:** Accessory buildings could have been very modest, simple rectangular buildings such as barns, garages or outbuildings with one large opening for an overhead or sliding garage door or more ornate children's playhouse, workshops or carriage houses with materials and details that matched the main building. Garages are addressed separately in the preceding section within this chapter.

New accessory buildings are permitted where necessary, and they should have their own form. However, they should appear as secondary structures and not visually overwhelm or compete with the property's other historic buildings.

**Design Justification:** The way in which new accessory buildings relate to other historic buildings of a property is important in historic districts. A new accessory building directly affects the integrity of the property as a whole. Therefore, a new accessory building should not detract from the historic character of the property.

- 4.5.6: If documentation of a historical accessory building at the site is not available, the size, design and location of a new accessory building should be in keeping with other accessory buildings in the block and historic district.
- 4.5.7: Accessory buildings should be located in the back yard.

- 4.5.8: Design of new accessory buildings shall be secondary to that of the main historic building and should be secondary to the design of the property's historic garage.
- 4.5.9: Accessory buildings more than six feet tall should be compatible in size, scale, proportion, spacing, texture, setbacks, height, materials, color and detail to the main residential building. Additionally, new accessory buildings may relate to similar accessory buildings within the historic district.
- 4.5.10: Materials used at accessory buildings should reflect the use and function of the accessory building, and not necessarily that of the primary building. Materials used at exterior facades of accessory buildings were often different (simpler and less costly) than material used for the main building.
- 4.5.11: New accessory buildings shall follow the historic side and back yard setback patterns of other accessory buildings on the property, in the block or in the historic district.

#### 4.6 Exterior Materials at New Construction

**Policy:** Materials used in the construction of new buildings, additions, garages and other accessory buildings should be compatible in appearance and design with common building materials in the district, or typical of structures of the proposed style, type, age and location.

**Design Justification:** The form, materials and details of exterior walls and embellishments, as well as their scale, texture and variety, contribute to the overall character of the historic district.

- c. Considerations: The proposed pergola is intended for both leisure and parking. The structure exceeds the heights of administratively approvable pergolas and will be visible from the street, but wood materials and the design are typical of modern pergola kits. Though visible, the proposed pergola is not located on a prominent elevation of any structure. The proposed structure is located approximately where the historic garage could have been but tucked slightly to the west, allowing the dwelling to partially block the view of the structure. The location may be appropriate for a multi-task accessory structure as the spatial relationship between the historic portion of the dwelling and the proposed pergola is reminiscent of a dwelling/ garage relationship.
- d. Recommended Specific Findings:
  1. That the proposed pergola is visible from the public right of way;
  2. That the proposed pergola exceeds the height criteria for administrative approval;
  3. That the criteria do not support pergolas “on a prominent (visible from the public right of way) elevation where none existed historically;”
  4. That the proposed pergola will provide covered parking at a location that would previously have served as a garage;
  5. That the proposed pergola does not exceed the size criteria for garages.

**E. HPCA-20-00154 STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **Approve Item 5, construct pergola, 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 the proposed pergola is visible from the public right of way;
2. That the proposed pergola exceeds the height criteria for administrative approval;
3. That the criteria *do not* support pergolas “on a prominent (visible from the public right of way) elevation where none existed historically;”
4. That the proposed pergola will provide covered parking at a location that would previously have served as a garage;
5. That the proposed pergola does not exceed the size criteria for garages.

**Unique Circumstance:**

- 1) That the construction of a pergola in the approximate location of the historic garage provides a spatial relationship between the historic portion of the house and this structure that is appropriate to the historic orientation of the site.
2. **Approve Item 6, install rock planting be, with conditions** with the specific findings that the proposed work, with the **agreed-upon conditions**, will not have an adverse effect on the historic character of the district or property; 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 landscape features located in the back yard, not visible from the street or abutting properties, and less than 6-feet tall do not require review unless a permit is required;
- 2) That visible landscape features must be fully illustrated and dimensioned for review;
- 3) That stone and masonry edging materials for raised planting beds shall match or complement the design, scale and details of similar components in the district.

**Conditions(s):**

- 1) That the proposed alteration to the existing retaining wall will not be visible from the street.
- 2) That additional documentation of the design details be submitted to staff prior to release

of the Certificate of Appropriateness.

*Note: Staff recommendation does not constitute Commission action.*

*\*Relevant Sections of the 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 Municipal Code, 2020 are available online at [www.okc.gov/planning/hp/index.html](http://www.okc.gov/planning/hp/index.html) ; at Planning Department offices located at 420 W. Main, 9<sup>th</sup> floor, and each HP Commission Meeting.*

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