

Department of Planning and Zoning

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TO: Design Advisory Board
FROM: Scott Gustin
DATE: February 23, 2016
RE: 16-0550CA, 12 Isham Street

Zone: RM Ward: 2C
Owner/Representative: Brian Cina

Request: Install vinyl replacement windows

OVERVIEW:

The applicant is seeking approval to install 8 vinyl replacement windows – 2 each in 2 bedrooms (4) and four basement windows. All of the existing windows are vinyl, except for the basement windows which are wood. No permits (zoning or building) have been issued for the vinyl windows in place.

The home is not included in the Vermont State Register of Historic Places but its contemporaries along Isham Street are (6, 16, 18, 23, 26 Isham Street, etc.). The subject home dates to 1910. Most of the neighboring homes were constructed within 5 years of this date. Building forms vary within the neighborhood. The subject home is one of several “foursquare” structures. Although not listed, the home at 12 Isham Street is eligible for inclusion, and is, therefore, subject to the standards of Sec. 5.4.8, *Historic Buildings and Sites*. Per the standards of Sec. 5.4.8 and established precedent, replacement windows should be wooden or clad wooden units.

The applicant asserts that the building is not historically significant – that is has lost too much of its integrity. Staff asserts that the building, although altered over time, remains substantially intact and is subject to the historic preservation standards of Sec. 5.4.8. This application is administrative; however, a recommendation by the Design Advisory Board is sought.

ARTICLE 5: CITYWIDE GENERAL STANDARDS

Sec. 5.4.8, Historic Buildings and Sites

(a) Applicability

1. The building is 50 years old or older.

The building at 12 Isham Street was constructed in 1910 and is more than 50 years old.

2. The building or site is deemed to possess significance in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the city, state, or nation in history, architecture, archeology, technology, and culture because one or more of the following conditions is present:

A. Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history; or,

B. Association with the lives of persons significant in the past; or,

- C. *Embodiment of distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or representation of the work of a master, or possession of high artistic values, or representation of a significant or distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or,*
- D. *Maintenance of an exceptionally high degree of integrity, original site orientation and virtually all character defining elements intact; or,*
- E. *Yielding, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory.*

The home at 12 Isham Street, a foursquare in the Burlington vernacular, continues to embody the distinctive boxy foursquare form with symmetrically placed roof dormers, slate roof, massing, and scale. Whether the original siding is present under the vinyl siding is unclear. The building is representative of homes constructed in Burlington during this period and reflects materials, forms, and styles associated with residential construction at the time.

3. The building or site possess a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

See item 2 above. There have been alterations to the home, including siding, PT lumber front and side entries, and the vinyl replacement windows. It bears noting that none of these alterations are documented in the permit record. In spite of these alterations, the home at 12 Isham Street continues to retain a significant degree of historic integrity. The home's design, location, setting, and association remain intact. Review under the standards of Sec. 5.4.8 will ensure continued integrity, whereas without it, incremental changes may continue until such integrity is lost.

(b) Standards and Guidelines

- 1. *A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.*

The building at 12 Isham Street was constructed as a residence. It was likely built as a single family home and then converted to a duplex, although there is no pertinent documentation. In any event, it will continue to be used as a residence.

- 2. *The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.*

The home at 12 Isham Street, a foursquare in the Burlington vernacular, continues to embody distinctive characteristics such as the roof dormers, slate roof, massing, and scale. These features relate to particular construction forms and styles associated with residential construction in Burlington near the turn of the 20th century. Much of the historic character of the home remains in spite of alterations (vinyl siding and PT lumber entries) that have taken place. The existing vinyl windows are another alteration; however, they are plainly without applicable permits and not "grandfathered" as the other alterations may be. The vinyl windows are likely an enforceable zoning violation, and remedy may be pursued. To bless the vinyl windows and allow replacement with new vinyl windows would be a substantial step towards loss of the home's historic character. Such action would be inconsistent with this standard.

- 3. *Each property will 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 elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.*

No conjectural alterations are proposed. There is no attempt to fabricate faux historic elements.

4. *Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.*

No such changes are included in this proposal.

5. *Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.*

The existing vinyl windows are inconsistent with this standard. Allowing them to be replaced with new vinyl windows is equally inconsistent. Replacement of wooden windows in this structure with vinyl would not have been approved previously, nor should it be approved now. Installation of vinyl windows is inconsistent with this standard and with long-standing precedent for replacement windows.

6. *Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials recognizing that new technologies may provide an appropriate alternative in order to adapt to ever changing conditions and provide for an efficient contemporary use. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.*

The vinyl windows to be replaced are not deteriorated. Their replacement is triggered by egress requirements. The wooden basement windows to be replaced with vinyl are clearly in need of some maintenance; however, the application does not assert deterioration. The application notes that the proposed vinyl basement windows would improve ventilation and appearance. How that would be achieved is unclear.

Precedent for replacing windows under the standards of Sec. 5.4.8 calls for wooden or clad wooden replacement windows. Casement windows (such as for egress) are to be simulated double-hung units. The proposed use of vinyl units is inconsistent with this standard and with precedent.

7. *Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.*

No such treatment is included in this proposal.

8. *Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.*

There are no known archeological resources on the property.

9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale, and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*

Approval of the proposed vinyl windows would validate the loss of wooden window materials. As such, the proposed work would significantly erode the historic integrity of the home at 12 Isham Street. The existing vinyl windows have no permits. Their replacement with new vinyl windows is to be considered as if the original windows had not yet been replaced. Installation of vinyl windows runs contrary to this criterion.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will 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.

See #9 above.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Denial of the proposed vinyl windows. Wooden or clad wooden replacement window units would be acceptable.