

**CITY OF SAINT PAUL  
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

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FILE NAME: 1874 Summit Avenue  
DATE OF APPLICATION:  
APPLICANT:  
OWNER:  
DATE OF PUBLIC HEARING:  
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District  
CATEGORY: Contributing  
CLASSIFICATION: Building Permit  
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Amy Spong  
DATE:

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**A. SITE DESCRIPTION:** The G.A. Ashton House is a two and one-half story Jacobean Tudor Revival style residence that was constructed in 1928 during the Summit Avenue West Historic District's period of significance. The architects were Ralph Mather & Alan Fleischbein who also were commissioned to design homes during a similar time period at 1770, 1855, 1959, 2225, 2233, 2265 Summit as well as other buildings in Saint Paul. Walls are mainly stucco with mock half-timbering and red brick and windows have round and segmented arches and are 6 over 6 double-hung, in-swing divided-light casements and diamond-lead glass windows. The pitched roof has variegated slate tiles. A flat roofed porte cochere with driveway from Summit Avenue is on the west side and there is an original 3-stall attached rear garage and the slate was restored to the garage shed roof by previous owners.

The house and garage are categorized as contributing to the Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District.

**B. PROPOSED CHANGES:** The applicant proposes the following alterations to the property:

**North (front) Elevation:** no changes proposed except for removal of awning/canopy hardware.

**West (side) Elevation:**

1. Remove a 1990's bay window and original entry door and construct a new bow window with diamond-paned casements for the kitchen.
2. Remove awning/canopy hardware over the porte cochere. Keep door access to roof terrace.
3. Infill the northern most garage bay with a new mudroom. A non-operable garage door with windows will be installed on the exterior.
4. Relocate and raise a second floor window.

**South (rear) Elevations:**

5. Remove an early but non-original addition at the garage and construct a new 15.5' by 21.5' garage bay addition. The original window from the garage will be relocated and reused on the south elevation.
6. Remove a non-historic outdoor grill and chimney and entrance canopy and door and construct a one-story family room addition that measures approximately 13' by 15'. This new addition will cover the four dining room windows, however two will be maintained and two will become French doors.
7. Remove an early canopy and original door that accesses the roof terrace over the garage.

8. Construct a bump-out on the second floor over the family room addition that includes roof access with a metal railing.
9. Enlarge a window well.
10. At the southeast corner an original screened porch (which was turned into a year-round space) will be further enclosed to allow for library shelves along the interior walls. Transom diamond-paned windows are proposed with solid panels to match the trim color.

**Site Improvements:**

11. A complete landscape plan was not submitted during this Pre-Application review.
12. The non-historic gazebo at the rear corner will be removed and a new garden shed will be designed and constructed but no plans were submitted yet.
13. General site circulation will remain the same and includes sidewalk access to the front door, driveway access under the porte cochere and access to garage bays on the west elevation.

**C. BACKGROUND:**

Staff met with the architects twice (March 24<sup>th</sup> and June 2<sup>nd</sup>) prior to the Pre-Application submittal. They also hired Charlene Roise of Hess, Roise and Company to complete historical research which is included in the submittal. Staff also conducted additional research on other Mather & Fleischbein houses on Summit and elsewhere. The new owners also have the original drawings and those are included with the applicant's submittal.

**D. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:**

**SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR 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.*

**Summit Avenue West District Guidelines**

**Sec. 74.36. - Restoration and rehabilitation.**

(a) General Principles:

- (1) All work should be of a character and quality that maintains the distinguishing features of the building and the environment. The removal or alteration of distinctive architectural features should be avoided.
- (2) Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. In the event of replacement, new materials should match the original in composition, design, color, texture and appearance. Duplication of original design based on physical or pictorial evidence is preferable to using conjectural of "period" designs or using parts of other buildings.
- (3) Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship characteristic of structures of a period should be treated sensitively.
- (4) Buildings should be used for their originally intended purpose or compatible uses which require minimum alteration of the building and its site.
- (5) In general, buildings should be restored to their original appearance. However, alterations to buildings since their construction are sometimes significant because they reflect the history of the building and neighborhood. This significance should be respected and restoration to an "original" appearance may not be desirable in some cases. All buildings should be recognized as products of their own time and not be altered to resemble buildings from an earlier era.
- (6) Whenever possible, new additions or alterations to structures should be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired.

(b) Walls and Foundations:

- (1) Deteriorated surface materials should be replaced with material used in original construction or with materials that resemble the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Imitative materials, such as artificial stone and artificial brick veneer, should not be used.
- (2) Original masonry and mortar should be retained whenever possible without the application of any surface treatment. Masonry should be cleaned only when necessary to halt deterioration and always with the gentlest method possible, such as low pressure water and soft natural bristle brushes. Brick and stone surfaces should not be sandblasted. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Chemical cleaning products which could have an adverse chemical reaction with the masonry material should not be used.
- (3) Original mortar joint size and profile should be retained and replacement mortar should match the original mortar in color and texture. Materials and ingredient proportions similar to the original mortar should be used when repointing, with replacement mortar softer than the masonry units and no harder than the historic mortar. This will create a bond similar to the

original and is necessary to prevent damage to the masonry units. Repointing with mortar of high Portland cement content often creates a bond stronger than is appropriate for the original building materials, possibly resulting in cracking or other damage. Mortar joints should be carefully washed after set-up to retain the neatness of the joint lines and keep extraneous mortar off of masonry surfaces.

(4) The original color and texture of masonry surfaces should be retained. While unpainted masonry surfaces should not be painted, paint should not be indiscriminately removed from masonry surfaces because some brick surfaces were originally meant to be painted. Color is a significant design element, and paint colors should be appropriate to the period and style of the structure. Building permits are not required for painting and, although the heritage preservation commission may review and comment on paint color, paint color is not subject to heritage preservation commission approval.

(c) Roofs and Chimneys:

(1)

(d) Windows and Doors:

(1) Existing window and door openings should be retained. New window and door openings should not be introduced into principal elevations. Enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit stock window sash or new stock door sizes should not be done. The size of window panes or sash should not be altered. Such changes destroy the scale and proportion of the building.

(2) Window sash, glass, lintels, sills, architraves, doors, pediments, hoods, steps and all hardware should be retained. Discarding original doors and door hardware, when they can be repaired and reused in place, should be avoided.

(3) The stylistic period(s) a building represents should be respected. If replacement of window sash or doors is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the material, design and hardware of the older window sash or door. Inappropriate new window and door features such as aluminum storm and screen window combinations, plastic or metal strip awnings, or fake shutters that disturb the character and appearance of the building should not be used. Combination storm windows should have wood frames or be painted to match trim colors.

(e) Exterior Architectural Features:

(1) Porches and steps which are appropriate to the building and its development should be maintained or restored. Porches and steps removed from the building should be reconstructed to be compatible in design and detail with the period and style of the building. In general, front porches should not be enclosed and precast steps should be avoided.

(2) Decorative architectural features such as cornices, brackets, railings and those around front doors and windows should be preserved. New material used to repair or replace, where necessary, deteriorated architectural features of wood, iron, cast iron, terra-cotta, tile and brick should match the original as closely as possible.

(3) Shutters should not be used on buildings not designed for them. If used, they should be large enough to cover the entire window area, should be functional and operable, and should not look as if they were simply flat-mounted on the wall.

(4) Deck and firestair additions may be acceptable in some cases, but should be kept to the rear of buildings where they will be the most inconspicuous and detract the least from the historical context. The detailing of decks and exterior stairs should be compatible with the period and style of the building.

(Ord. No. 17116, § 2(2), 3-1-90)

**Sec. 74.37. - New construction.**

(a) General Principles: The basic principle for new construction in the Summit Avenue West District is to maintain the scale and quality of design of the district. The Summit Avenue West District is architecturally diverse within an overall pattern of harmony and continuity. These guidelines for new construction focus on general rather than specific design elements in order to encourage architectural innovation and quality design while maintaining the harmony and continuity of the district. New construction should be compatible with the size, scale, massing, height, rhythm, setback, color, material, building elements, site design, and character of surrounding structures and the area.

(b) Massing and Scale: New construction should conform to the massing, volume, height, facade proportions and scale of existing surrounding structures. The scale of the spaces between buildings and the rhythm of buildings to open space should also be carefully considered. New houses should be at least twenty-five (25) feet high and relate to the height of existing adjacent houses. New college buildings should relate to nearby contributing college buildings; new college buildings with a smaller setback from Summit should have a correspondingly lower height.

(c) Materials and Details:

(1) Variety in the use of architectural materials and details adds to the intimacy and visual delight of the district. But there is also an overall thread of continuity provided by the range of materials commonly used along Summit and by the way these materials are used. This thread of continuity is threatened by the introduction of new industrial materials and the aggressive exposure of earlier materials such as concrete block, metal framing and glass. The materials and details of new construction should relate to the materials and details of existing nearby buildings.

(2) Most buildings on Summit are built of high-quality materials, often with brick or stucco walls and asphalt or tile roofs. Most brick is red and tile roofs are either red or green. Vinyl, metal or hardboard siding is acceptable only for accessory structures which are not visible from Summit. Imitative materials such as artificial stone and artificial brick veneer should not be used. Materials will be reviewed to determine their appropriate use in relation to the overall design of the structure.

(3) The materials and details of new college buildings should relate to the materials and details of nearby contributing college buildings. The Macalester College campus has buildings predominantly of red brick with concrete or sandstone trim. The College of St. Thomas presents cream-colored Kasota stone buildings to the Summit Avenue streetscape.

(4) The color of materials should relate to surrounding structures and the area as well as to the style of the structure. Building permits are not required for painting and, although the heritage preservation commission may review and comment on paint color, paint color is not subject to heritage preservation commission approval.

(d) Building Elements: Individual elements of a building should be integrated into its composition for a balanced and complete design. These elements of new construction should complement existing adjacent structures as well.

(1) Roofs. There is a great variety of roof treatments along Summit, but gable and hipped roofs are most common. The skyline or profile of new construction should relate to the predominant roof shape of existing nearby buildings.

The recommended pitch for gable roofs is 9:12 (rise-to-run ratio) and in general the minimum appropriate pitch is 8:12. Highly visible secondary structure roofs should match the roof pitch of the main structure. A 6:12 pitch may be acceptable in some cases for secondary structures which are not visible from the street.

Roof hardware such as skylights, vents and metal pipe chimneys should not be placed on the front roof plane.

(2) Windows and doors. The proportion, size, rhythm and detailing of windows and doors should be compatible with that of existing nearby buildings. Facade openings of the same general size as those in nearby buildings are encouraged. Sliding windows, awning windows and horizontally oriented muntins are not common in the district and are generally unacceptable. Vertical muntins and muntin grids may be acceptable when compatible with the period and style of the building. Sliding glass doors should not be used where they would be visible from the street.

Although not usually improving the appearance of a building, the use of metal windows or doors need not necessarily ruin it. The important thing is that they should look like part of the building and not like the raw metal appliances. Appropriately colored bronze-toned aluminum is acceptable. Mill finish (silver) aluminum should be avoided.

(3) Porches and decks. Front entrance ways should be articulated with a suitable design element to provide a transitional zone between the public outdoors and the private interior, and should be appropriate in detail to the size and style of the building. If front porches are constructed, they should generally not be enclosed.

Decks should be kept to the rear of the buildings, should be visually refined, and should be integrated into the overall building design. A raised deck protruding from a single wall usually appears disjointed from the total design and is generally unacceptable.

(e) Site:

(1) Setback siting. New buildings should generally face Summit Avenue and be sited at a distance not more than five (5) percent out-of-line from the front yard setback of existing adjacent buildings. Setbacks greater than those of adjacent buildings may be allowed in some cases.

(2) Landscaping. The streetscape can be divided into three (3) visual areas: public, semipublic and private. Public space is provided by the publicly owned sidewalks, boulevards, streets and medians. Semipublic space includes front yards and side yards on corners. While privately owned, this space is open to view by passersby. Private space is generally that which lies behind the front face of the building. Buildings, landscaping elements in front yards and boulevard trees provide a "wall of enclosure" for the street "room." Generally, landscaping which respects the street as a public room is encouraged. Boulevard trees mark a separation between the automobile corridor and the rest of the streetscape and should be maintained. Front yard enclosures such as hedges or walls are not common along west Summit. When they are used, they should permit visual penetration of the semipublic space. Low hedges or limestone retaining walls and visually open fences, such as wrought iron, are preferred. Chain link fences, while visually transparent, should not be used in front yards or in the front half of side yards. Privacy fences, timber retaining walls and high hedges are also inappropriate in front yards.

(3) Garages and parking. Parking spaces should not be located in front yards. Residential parking spaces should be located in rear yards. If an alley is adjacent to a dwelling, any new garage should be located off the alley.

**E. FINDINGS:**

1. On March 1, 1990, the Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District was established under Ordinance No.17716, § 1. The Heritage Preservation Commission shall protect the architectural character of heritage preservation sites through review and approval or denial of applications for city permits for exterior work within designated heritage preservation sites §73.04.(4).
2. The site is located within the Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District and is classified as contributing to the architectural and historical character of the District. In addition, there are several Mather & Fleischbein designed homes within the District and their body of work is important to preserve.
3. On March 1, 1990, the Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District was established under Ordinance No.17716, § 1. The Heritage Preservation Commission shall protect the architectural character of heritage preservation sites through review and approval or denial of applications for city permits for exterior work within designated heritage preservation sites §73.04.(4).
4. The two main Standards that apply to the new bow window, garage addition, family room/master bedroom additions and enclosing the rear porch are *“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”* and *“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.”*

**a. Bow Window:** The new bow window will result in the loss of an original entry door but it is located on a secondary elevation and is not considered a character-defining feature. The remaining area of the new bow window is located where an alteration in the 1990's has already taken place. The extension of the garage shed roof over the bow window may not clearly differentiate the old. Staff would encourage further exploration to differentiate the original shed roof and bracket location with the new bow window.

**b. Garage Addition:** In addition to the two main Standards above the Summit West guidelines states that is an alley is present any new garage should be located off the alley, however, the original garage was not orientate at the alley and was attached to the house, despite City codes that didn't allow for attached garages at the time of construction (based on permit records, *Hess Roise*). The garage is setback from the original garage and is differentiated by referencing details present in the porte cochere, but the garage is also compatible with the massing, size scale and architectural features which complies.

**c. Family/Master Addition:** This addition “fills in” the corner of the L-shaped original plan and results in the removal or covering of a 1990's canopy and door and original set of dining room windows. The addition in on a secondary elevation and will not be seen from Summit Avenue. Two of the four dining room windows will be maintained inside.

The master bedroom addition results in the removal of an original door which provides access to the roof terrace over the garage. There are two historic wood posts that are present on the original drawings and actually four were still extant from 1993 photos in the HPC file. The two remaining appear to need some repair and the two removed should be reinstalled. Staff is concerned that the new bump-out addition and balcony replaces the existing roof terrace and even results in the loss of access. The applicant should explore maintaining the historic access and use of this terrace, including restoring all four decorative wood posts which are a unique

feature that has partially survived.

**d. Rear Porch Alteration:** Enclosing a porch from open screens as it was historically, with solid panels doesn't necessarily meet the intent of the guidelines, however, 1) this porch is at the rear of the property, 2) the original porch has already been altered, and 3) the panel and trim detail will better recall the detailing and proportions of the original screen porch. Staff advised not to use stucco but rather painted wood to better recall this corner as a porch.

5. **Materials and Details.** In general, the proposed materials are compatible with the property and will not have a negative impact. Upon application for public hearing and permits, detailed plans and sections will be needed.
6. **Awning hardware.** There is little information regarding how long the awning hardware has been in place except that they are not on the original drawings. There are no available historic images of this property, however, the applicant submitted an historic image of another Mather & Fleischbein house at 1959 Summit where architectural fabrics were part of the original or early design intent. Staff requests additional information prior to determining that the removal of the hardware is appropriate. Staff can only recall one other similar terrace awning that is still extant on a Mediterranean Revival style on Summit Avenue that is still installed seasonally and would encourage the applicant to consider installing an awning here if appropriate.
7. **Site Improvements and Shed.** Schematic plans were not submitted for the proposed shed however, will likely not have a negative impact on location in the rear yard. The existing gazebo is not a historic structure and if removed is acceptable. Final landscape plans for any structures or hardscaping will need to be submitted for final review.
8. The construction of the three-stall garage will not adversely impact the Program for the Preservation and architectural control of the Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District (Leg. Code §73.06 (e)) so long as the conditions are met.

**F. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Based on the findings, staff recommends approval of the building permit application provided the following conditions are met:

1. All final materials and details shall be submitted to HPC staff for final review and approval.
2. Any revisions to the approved plans must be reviewed and approved by staff and/or the HPC.
3. The HPC stamped approved construction drawings remain on site for the duration of the construction project.

**G. ATTACHMENTS**

1. HPC Design Review Application
2. Materials submitted by the applicant
3. Photos
4. Drawings, 11" x 17"