



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

APPLICATION: SR-2020-0001

AGENDA ITEM: AR-3

PREPARED BY: John Mayer
Senior Planner

MEETING DATE: July 29, 2020

TITLE: Special Review – Rear yard Deck
141 North Magnolia Avenue
Monrovia, CA 91016

APPLICANT: Brian Dorsey and Heather Huggins
141 North Magnolia Avenue
Monrovia, CA 91016

REQUEST: Special Review of proposed modifications to an existing nonconforming deck in the rear yard of a Craftsman style home that is proposed for Landmark Designation.

BACKGROUND: Brian Dorsey and Heather Huggins submitted a proposal to designate their two-story Craftsman style house at 141 North Magnolia Avenue as a local historic landmark, and apply for a Mills Act Contract. During the course of review, staff discovered that a previous owner built a covered deck addition to the back of the home without building permits. The current owners want to keep the deck, make some minor modifications to it, and obtain the necessary permits to approve it. The unpermitted deck must be legalized before the Commission makes a recommendation to the City Council regarding the Historic Landmark designation. The deck will not be included in any proposed work program under a Mills Act Contract for the property.

Unpermitted work is treated as “new construction”; therefore, the deck will need to comply with current Zoning and Building Code requirements. Since the subject property is considered a “Potential Historic Landmark¹”, Monrovia Municipal Code (MMC) Section 17.40.110(A) requires that the Commission first review this alteration in order to ensure it has not compromised the significance of the potential landmark and to address issues of appropriateness.



Figure 1. The Craftsman style house located at 141 North Magnolia Avenue is listed as a “Potential Historic Landmark.”

¹ The subject property (141 North Magnolia Avenue) is on a list of properties in the City that were deemed to have historic value and are considered “Potential Historic Landmarks” pursuant to City Council Resolution No. 95-15.

The potential historic landmark at 141 North Magnolia Avenue is a one-and-a-half-story Craftsman bungalow that was constructed in 1912. It has retained its original design features including: low-pitched gable rooflines, broad overhanging eaves, wood-shingled exterior walls, broad front entry porch, extensive use of field stone, and a unique central pop-up second story (Airplane Bungalow). The rear deck addition was built at an unknown date; however, its lack of Craftsman architectural treatments indicate that it is not original to the home. The addition of decks to the back of existing houses did not become common until the mid-20th century as a means of defining outdoor gathering spaces.

DISCUSSION: Pursuant to Monrovia Municipal Code (MMC) Section 17.40.110(A), any alteration or demolition to be conducted at potential Historic Landmarks and potential Historic Districts shall be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) prior to commencing any such work. The HPC shall assist and guide the property owner(s) of potential Historic Landmarks and potential Historic Districts with regard to proposed alterations on an advisory basis with the intention of finding solutions and directing the owner toward designation and/or appropriate changes that safeguard the resource.

Project Description

The owners are proposing to legalize an 865 square foot wood deck. The structure is attached to the rear side of the house, spanning its width, and extending out into the rear yard. The underpinnings of the deck are screened with lattice panels. The surface of the deck aligns with the first floor of the house, just above the foundation. The handrails feature stylized balusters. A majority of the deck area is covered with a flat and a slanted roof all supported by decorative posts and beams. The City's Building Official inspected the deck and found it to be structurally sound. The most notable Building Code issue is the handrail, which will need a series of additional balusters.



Figure 2. West elevation as seen from the rear yard.



Figure 3. South elevation as seen from the driveway.

Proposed Modifications

The owners plan to make a few modifications to the deck. Attachments “A” and “B” provide images of the current deck and a very rough mockup of the proposed changes. The owners provided these mockup drawings to illustrate the general direction they want to go before preparing more detailed plans for the permits. The changes include a flat arbor-style roof which would be attached to new posts and beams, instead of the home's exterior wall. A lattice wall would also be removed (See Figure 4 on page 3). The owners are seeking a cleaner look with the trellis roof and simple posts and beams. The owners contend that the deck's roof should

be supported by the new posts rather than the house. The current deck beams would be removed from the home's exterior, and repaired with matching wood shake materials.

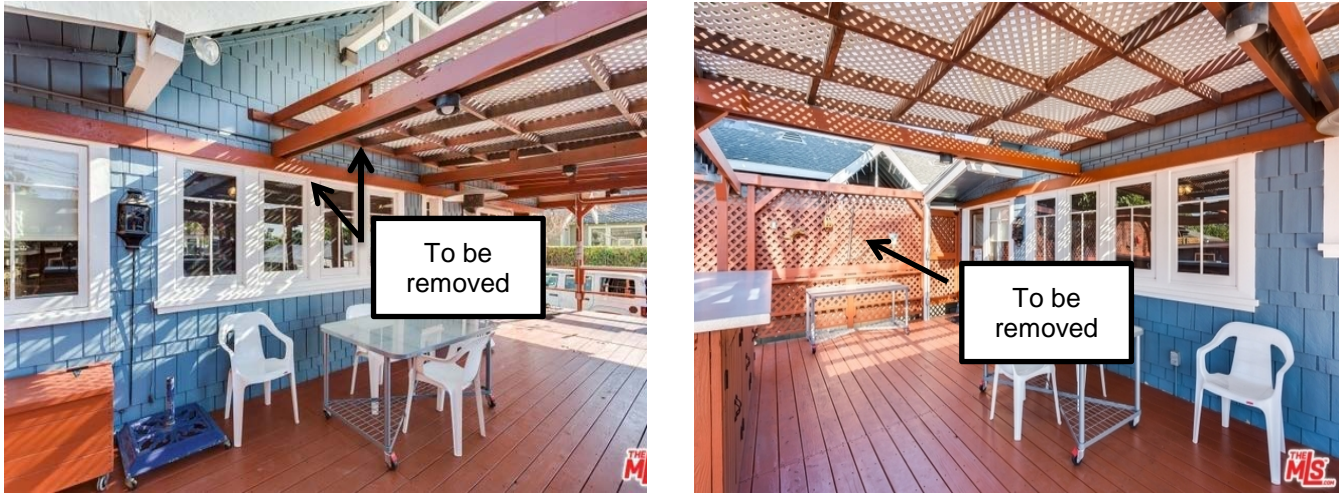


Figure 4. The deck's current roof is attached to the home's exterior wall. Those roof beams would be removed; the exterior wall will be repaired. The owner proposes to install a flat arbor-style roof, attached to the home's exposed beams. A trellis wall would also be removed from the deck (right photo).

The owners will also need to address some zoning issues with respect to setbacks. Currently, there is a three foot distance between the deck and the side property line to the north; the code requires five feet. The owner would need to apply for a "Minor Exception" which could allow new construction to be in-line with the house provided there's a hardship. In this case, there is

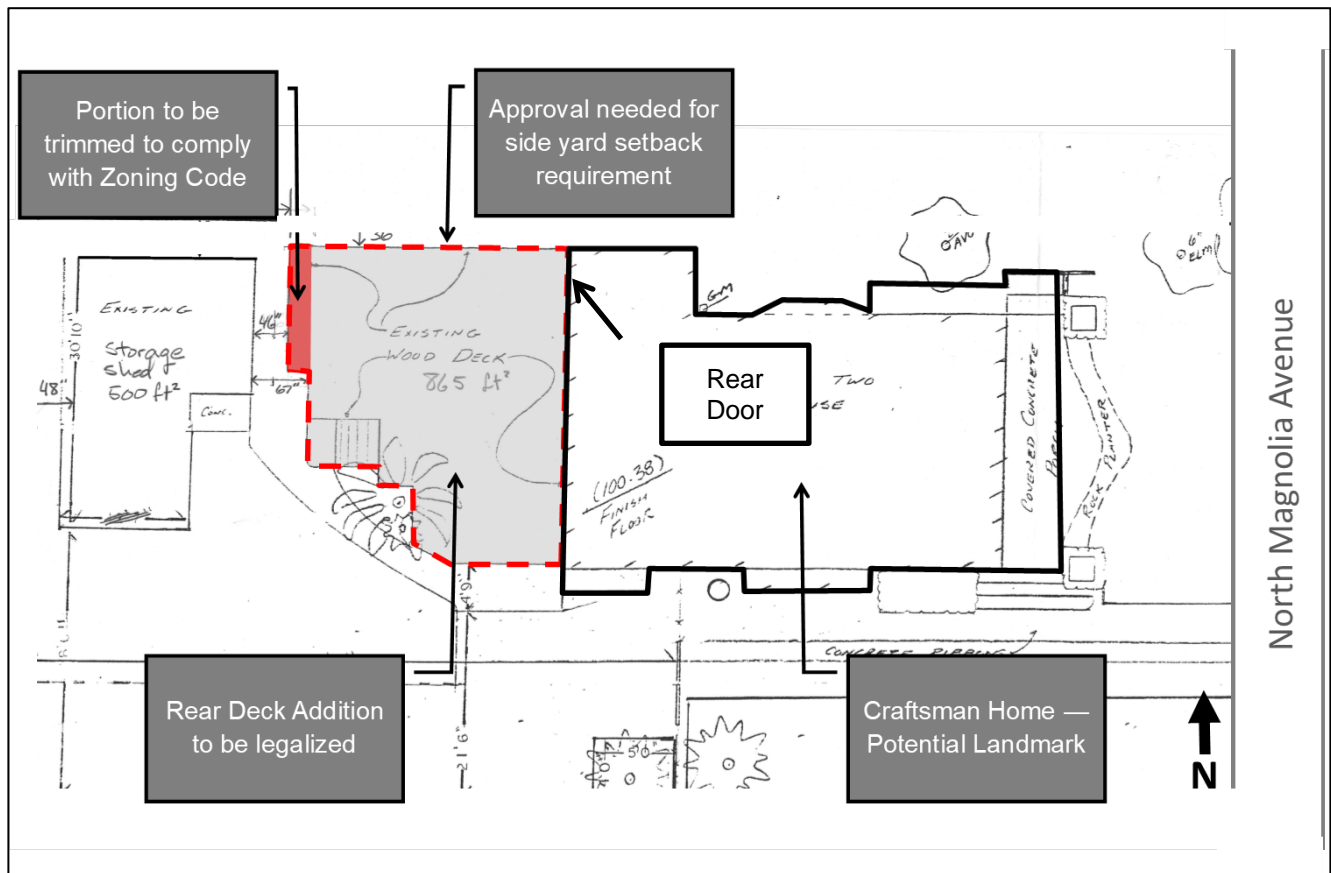


Figure 5. Current Site Plan of 141 N. Magnolia Avenue. The applicant will be making some modifications to the rear deck in order to comply with current Zoning requirements.

a door that opens out onto the deck. Setting the deck in five feet would take away that door's landing. In addition, the deck does not meet a six foot separation requirement from the storage shed. Although the deck would be trimmed back 21 inches to comply with a rear yard setback requirement, a second minor exception will be needed to allow a narrower separation between the deck and storage shed.

Appropriateness Review

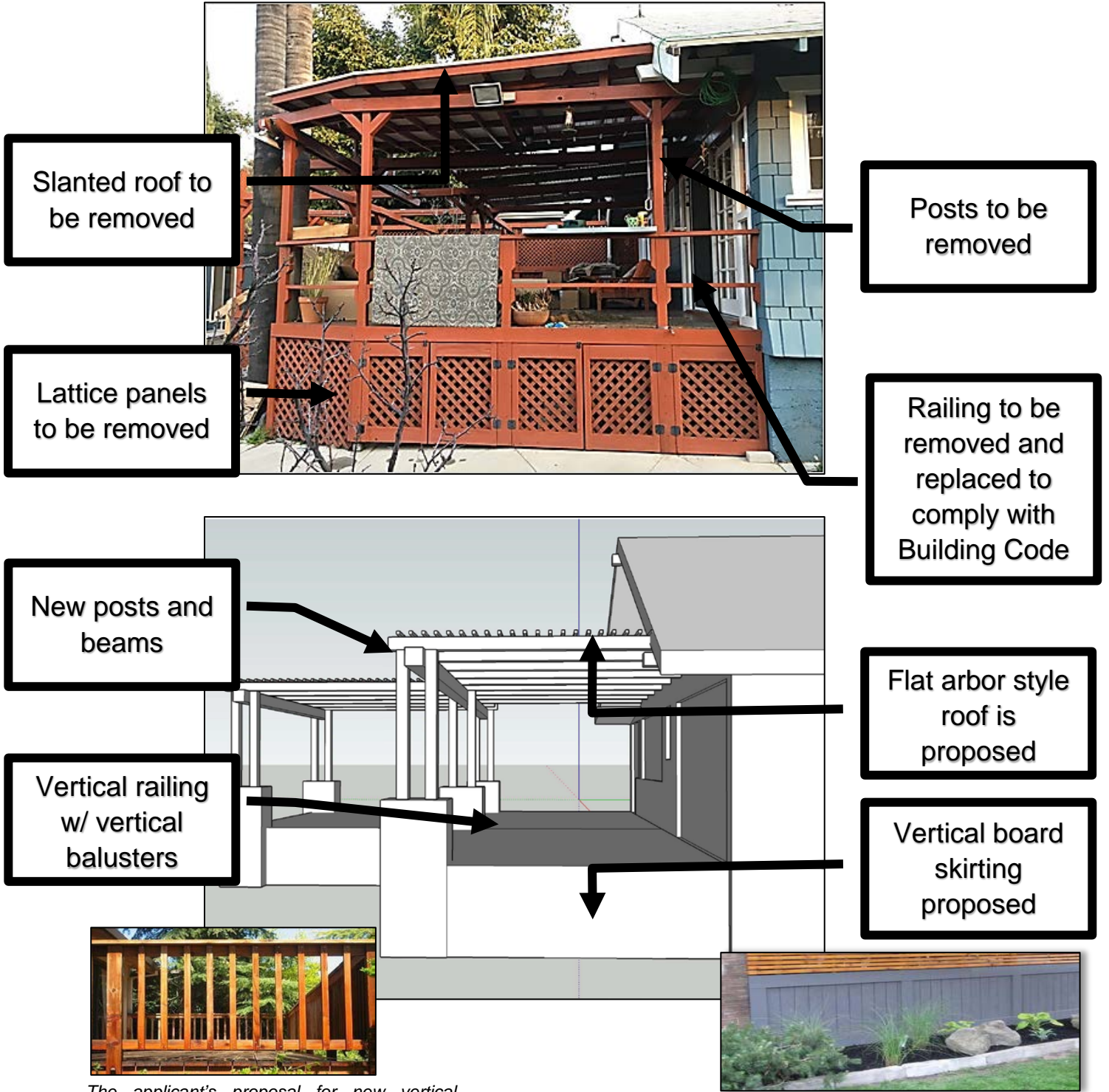
The purpose of the Special Review application is to allow the Commission to "assist and guide" the property owner with proposed alterations on an advisory basis to find solutions and direct the owner toward appropriate changes that will safeguard the character of the structure and not disqualify it from City Landmark status in the future. Given that the proposal is subject to Minor Exception requests from the Zoning Code's setback and building separation requirements, the Development Review Committee (DRC) will have final approval authority over this project. The determination of the Commission will become part of the public record that will be forwarded on the DRC. The DRC will consider the Commission's design review comments, and focus its evaluation on the project's effect on the historic character of the house and impacts on the neighboring properties.

The front and side of the Craftsman home at 141 North Magnolia Avenue will still be clearly visible from the street. The deck addition is located on the rear (west) elevation and does not extend beyond the sides of the home. Staff believes that the proposed modifications will improve the overall design aesthetic. By attaching the new flat arbor-style roof to new posts and the home's existing exposed beams, damage to the dwelling's exterior walls will be minimized. The flat arbor-style roof will be a much simpler and cleaner in appearance so as to not detract from the home's Craftsman's style.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the HPC provide advisory review comments of the after-the-fact construction of the rear deck addition, along with the owners' proposed modifications, determine whether any changes are needed to safeguard the potential landmark, and recommend approval to the Development Review Committee.

ATTACHMENT "A"

South (Side) Elevation. The applicants are proposing to remove the deck's slanted roof (top photo) and replace it with a flat arbor-style roof (bottom photo). *Note: The drawings are conceptual in nature and are intended only to show the proposed trellised roof over the deck and the locations of posts and beams.*



Slanted roof to be removed

Posts to be removed

Lattice panels to be removed

Railing to be removed and replaced to comply with Building Code

New posts and beams

Flat arbor style roof is proposed

Vertical railing w/ vertical balusters

Vertical board skirting proposed



The applicant's proposal for new vertical balusters would be similar to the example shown in this photo.



The applicant's proposal for vertical board skirting would be similar to the example shown in this photo.

ATTACHMENT "B"

East (Rear) Elevation. The applicants are proposing to remove the deck's two roofs and replace them with a flat arbor-style roof with new posts and beams. A portion of the deck will remain uncovered. *Note: A drawing error shows a trellis roof to the left (bottom photo); however, that portion of the deck would remain uncovered as it is today (top photo).*

