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7 December 2024

Katie Pereny, Secretary  
Historic District Commission  
City of Mackinac Island  
P.O. Box 455  
Mackinac Island, MI 49757

Re: **MAIN DOCK PILINGS REPLACEMENT**  
Design Review

Dear Ms. Pereny:

I have reviewed the proposed major structural rebuilding of the Main Dock in the Market and Main Historic District.

Find attached the Design Review for the above referenced proposed project.

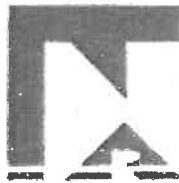
Should you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

RICHARD NEUMANN ARCHITECT

Rick Neumann

- c. Dennis Dombroski, City of Mackinac Island  
David Lipovsky, City of Mackinac Island  
Erin Evashevski, Evashevski Law Office



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7 December 2024

## **DESIGN REVIEW**

### **MAIN DOCK PILINGS REPLACEMENT**

7271 Main Street

Market and Main Historic District  
Mackinac Island, Michigan

## **INTRODUCTION**

The proposed project is the Phase 2 major renovation of the Arnold Ferry Main Dock, at 7271 Main Street, in the Market and Main Historic District. The Arnold Ferry Main Dock is a Contributing structure in the district. Extensive new work, completed in two phases, to place new pilings and shore up and stabilize the dock would include installation of 32 rows, or bents, of steel pilings and beams underneath, new wood floor joists, and steel decking with concrete surfacing at the harbor end of the structure. No work is proposed for the two terminal buildings.

This design review is based on City Code Sec. 10-161 "Design Review Standards and Guidelines", of Article V. "Historic District", of the City of Mackinac Island Ordinance No. 443, adopted October 21, 2009. The review standards are those of the Department of the Interior entitled "The United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation" and "Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings", as set forth in 36 CFR, part 67, as well as the factors set forth in City Code Sec. 10-161(b).

Materials submitted for Review consist of photographs of existing conditions, drawings consisting of site and floor plans and details, by Soils & Structures, dated 12 November 2024.

## **REVIEW**

The Standards for review are the following:

**Standard 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."*

The Main Dock would continue in use as the community's original ferry transport structure. However, short of undertaking the proposed project the Dock would succumb to functional obsolescence because of its increasingly inadequate structural integrity.

**Standard 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 building shall be avoided."*

As preservation of the dock is a continual periodic undertaking to repair and replace deteriorated pilings, it is the process of maintenance and the retention of the structure as an operating facility, that is the historic value, not necessarily maintenance of the actual original fabric. Existing wood pilings would be left in place, and a new wood piling would be installed at the outside end of each new structural bent (or row) of piles. As such, the historic character of the dock would be retained and preserved.

**Standard 3** - *"Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historic development such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken."*

The proposed enhancement of the dock's structural capacity is for the purpose of meeting new needs created by the use of larger cruise ships now desiring to use the harbor facility. As it has in the past, the dock must adapt to changing needs to continue to be Mackinac Island's primary connection to the mainland. Such changes would not create a false sense of historic development, or be the addition of conjectural elements, but rather the present day record of its time, place and use.

**Standard 4** - *"Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved."*

Various past changes to the dock structure and its buildings which have acquired historic significance in their own right would be preserved.

**Standard 5** - *"Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved."*

The distinctive features of the Main Dock, consisting of the two terminal buildings and the dock structure itself, would be preserved.

**Standard 6** - *"Deteriorated historical 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. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence, or structures."*

Deteriorated historical features consist of the many weathered and structurally inadequate wood pilings. These include those which are now deteriorated, and those which were previously repaired by "tabling", a structurally inadequate treatment providing little lateral support. Most of these wood pilings are no longer structurally adequate to provide the vertical and horizontal load-carrying capacity now required to be serviceable in the current maritime visitor economy.

As such, the severity of deterioration and unserviceability requires replacement rather than repair.

While new pilings are proposed to be steel their visual presence would be screened / hidden to some extent by leaving the old wood pilings in place, and by setting new wood pilings at the ends of each bent, or row, of new steel pilings.

**Standard 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."*

This standard is not applicable.

**Standard 8 -** *"Significant archaeological resources shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken."*

While archaeological resources might exist in the bottomlands under and near the Main Dock, disturbance of these has happened many times over the centuries, as piling placement has occurred. So while the likelihood of encountering archaeological resources are slim, scrutiny and care should be taken during the project's duration.

**Standard 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 and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment."*

The addition of new steel pilings and beams would negatively affect the historic wood pilings that characterize the dock's appearance. But the new would be added along side the old, maintaining some continuity of character. And certainly the new work would be differentiated from the old, being a completely different material.

**Standard 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."*

In theory, the new steel pilings could be removed in the future, but it would be extremely unlikely. Long term, retention of the existing wood pilings is problematic since as they will continue to deteriorate, and will eventually fail and succumb to the elements, slowly disappearing from the scene. So the essential form and integrity of the original wood dock would be impaired - by the initial installation of modern steel pilings, and by the subsequent disappearance of the historic wood pilings over time.

**Standards Under Code Sec. 10 161(b)**

In reviewing applications, the Commission shall also consider all of the following:

**(1) - *"The historic or architectural value and significance of the resource and its relationship to the historic value of the surrounding area."***

The historic and architectural value and significance of the Main Dock as a historic resource on Mackinac Island cannot be overstated - ferry travel to and from the Island is a quintessential rite of passage for islanders and visitors alike. It is an essential presence to the Island experience. And so preservation of the dock and its buildings should be a very high priority. While the proposed work departs from historic repair techniques, it would usher in the next era in the Dock's continuing service to the community.

**(2) - *"The relationship of any architectural features of the resource to the rest of the resource and to the surrounding area."***

The relationship of wood pilings and beams, to the larger dock structure is important. Placing new wood pilings at locations around the perimeter of the dock would maintain a semblance of continuity in its evolution as a structure. and help preserve its character. to portray the historic ambiance of the maritime experience.

**(3) - *"The general compatibility of the design, arrangement, texture and materials proposed to be used."***

New steel pilings and beams underneath would preserve the Dock's function, and new wood pilings around the perimeter would preserve the Dock's historic appearance, making the proposed project a compatible undertaking.

**(4) - *"Other factors, such as aesthetic value, that the Commission finds relevant."***

The aesthetic value of the Dock as a historic resource would be maintained.

**CONCLUSION**

The proposed placement of new steel and wood pilings, steel beams, wood joists, steel decking, and concrete paving at the harbor end one-third of the Main Dock would largely meet the Standards for review. While new steel pilings would be visible, new wood pilings around the perimeter of the work area would somewhat screen them, to create an appropriate historic appearance.

**END OF REVIEW**

