

**CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT  
HHR.1.24**

**DATE:** March 5, 2024  
**TO:** Planning Commission acting as the **Historic Landmarks Commission**  
**FROM:** Jennifer Dimsho, AICP, Associate Planner

**APPLICANT:** Huck Wilken  
**OWNER:** Bartlett House, LLC

**ZONING:** Apartment Residential (AR)  
**LOCATION:** 175 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street; 4N1W-3BA-3500  
**PROPOSAL:** Alteration of a designated landmark including window replacements, exterior fire escape repair, and a new mechanical unit

**SITE INFORMATION**

**Site Description:** The 1984 St. Helens Downtown Historic District nomination calls this property the Samuel Miles House. It is classified as a “Primary Significant” structure having been built in 1886 by Miles. It states that the building is in the style of “Victorian with Gothic detailing” and its use is apartments. It states that the 2.5-story building has undergone moderate alternations since its original construction. The nomination says the following changes occurred, “It has been re-sided with fire-retardant shingles; two dormer windows have been added to the east side of the roof; the window and door trim appear to have been replaced; and a later chimney has been added to the north end.”

Samuel Miles was deputy sheriff in 1860 and elected sheriff in 1862. He was the second sheriff of Columbia County. According to the CCMA, he and his wife Elizabeth were the parents of 10 children. You can see many of the children gathered on the porch in the 1911 Christmas photo included in the applicant’s application.

**Proposal:** The applicant is proposing replacement of the third story windows, modifications to the exterior fire escape, and a new mechanical unit (ductless heat pump) for the third floor. The applicant’s application package attached to this report includes a detailed description and photos of each window replacement, the modifications to the fire escape, and the location of the heat pump.

**PUBLIC HEARING & NOTICE**

Hearing dates are as follows:  
March 12, 2024, before the Planning Commission

Notice of this proposal was sent to surrounding property owners within 300 feet of the subject property on February 15, 2024, via first class mail. Notice was sent to agencies by mail or e-mail on the same date. Notice was published in the The Chronicle on February 28, 2024.

## AGENCY REFERRALS & COMMENTS

As of the date of this staff report, no relevant agency comments have been received.

## APPLICABLE CRITERIA, ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

### SHMC 17.36.040(3) Criteria for Alteration

In order to approve an application for the alteration of a designated landmark or historic resource of statewide significance, the commission must find that the proposal meets the following standards:

- (a) The purpose of the historic overlay district as set forth in [SHMC 17.36.005](#).
- (b) The provisions of the comprehensive plan.
- (c) A property shall 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.
- (d) The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal or relocation of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property shall be avoided.
- (e) A 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 elements from other historic properties, shall not be undertaken.
- (f) Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
- (g) Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
- (h) 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, where possible (including environmental considerations), materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
- (i) Chemical and physical treatments, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used.
- (j) Archeological resources shall be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
- (k) New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible in appearance with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
- (l) 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.

**Discussion:** (a) The purpose of this Chapter is noted under Section 17.36.005. As it relates to this proposal, the purpose of this chapter is to accomplish the *protection, enhancement, and perpetuation of improvements that represent or reflect elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history.*

**Finding:** The Commission can find that this review complies with the purpose of the historic district overlay as described in SHMC 17.36.005.

**(b)** The Comprehensive Plan includes a policy to “subject proposed remodeling of the City’s historic resources to design review to encourage preservation of the structure’s historical assets.” This is the review of an alteration to a City historic resource.

**Finding:** The Commission can find that this review process accomplishes the Comprehensive plan policy.

**(c)** This application does not change the use of the property from residential dwelling units.

**Finding:** The Commission can find that the historic use of the property is not changing.

**(d)** This criterion requires that the historic character of the property be preserved. No distinctive alterations that characterize the property are to be removed or altered. Historic photos indicate that the third floor was added in the 1920s, which means none of the third-floor windows are original to the 1908 construction. That said, although the windows vary in type (wood, vinyl, and aluminum), some of them could be ~100 years old. All windows proposed will involve the change to fiberglass, which is addressed under criterion (h).

There are three areas which will have a change in window size. On the west elevation, the applicant is proposing to replace one window with one that matches the original opening size from the 1920s. On this same elevation, the applicant is proposing to remove one wood casement window and fill it in to match the existing exterior siding. On the north elevation, the applicant is replacing a window with one of a larger size to meet fire egress requirements.

**Finding:** The Commission can find that the historic character of the property is preserved, provided that the alterations related to the window size do not characterize the property.

**(e)** The applicant is not proposing a change that would create a false sense of historical development or adding historical features from another historic home.

**Finding:** The Commission can find that the applicant is not proposing any changes that would create a false sense of historical development.

**(f)** This criterion requires that changes to a property that have acquired their own shall be retained and preserved. The windows on the third floor are not original, but some of them could be over 100 years old. The Commission could find that the third-floor windows have gained historical significance, given their age. The size of the window openings is being retained except for three areas described under section (d).

**Finding:** The Commission can find that the third-floor windows have gained historical significance, given their age. However, the Commission can also find that the proposal honors the original historic character of the property given compliance with criterion (h) regarding replacement windows.

**(g)** This criterion requires that any distinctive materials, finishes, and construction techniques which characterize a property are preserved.

**Finding:** The Commission can find that there are no changes to any distinctive materials, finishes, and construction techniques which characterize a property that are being removed.

**(h)** This criterion requires that 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, where possible (including environmental considerations), materials.

The applicant is proposing fiberglass window replacements in all cases. Plus, on the east and west elevation, the applicant is proposing a change in window design from split pane to simple double hung (no split panes). The second floor has simple double hung windows, but the first floor appears to have a mix of both, although it is unclear from the historic 1906 photo if the split pane windows are original.

**Findings:** First, the Commission must find that the severity of the deterioration requires replacement in all cases. Second, if the Commission agrees with the material replacement to fiberglass, the Commission must find that this material is an appropriate substitute given longevity and environmental considerations. If the Commission does not agree with the material substitute, the Commission should make a finding to determine what is the appropriate substitute material and why.

Lastly, the Commission can find either: 1) The change in design to double hung is appropriate because it is not a distinctive feature because and not part of the original construction of the home OR 2) The applicant shall replace the windows like-for-like to retain the design of the windows being replaced.

At a minimum, the Commission should include a condition about the replacement windows being white to match the existing and the historic windows.

**(i) Finding:** Although none are proposed, this is a recommended condition of approval.

**(j) Finding:** As there is no excavation proposed as part of this project, this is not relevant to this proposal.

**(k)** New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. This criterion most directly relates to the work on the fire escape and the mechanical unit. The fire escape is not original, but does provide a safety feature for the third floor dwelling unit(s). The main visual change to the fire escape proposed is adding back the missing 10' ladder from the second floor to the ground.

For the heat pump, the applicant is proposing that the unit is placed on the west side of the building, on the ground, which is not visible from the street. The supply lines will be installed on the interior of the building, reducing exterior visual impact. The applicant is also removing visual clutter of unused communication wires and boxes.

**Finding:** The Commission can find that modifications to the fire escape and installation of the mechanical unit and its supply lines will not destroy historic materials, features, or special relationships that characterize the property.

**(I)** New additions 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. It is recommended that the Commission include a condition of approval to ensure the fire escape repairs will minimize impact to the existing structure so that if removed in the future, the integrity of the historic property will be retained.

**Finding:** The Commission can find that the proposal preserves the integrity and form of the historic property, provided that the fire escape repairs will be undertaken to minimize new hardware connections to the exterior of the building/siding.

#### **SHMC 17.36.040(4)**

(4) Prior to alteration, current photographs and/or drawings of all elevations shall be provided to the city for its public records. Photographs and drawings shall be archival quality; proof of such shall be provided with the photographs and/or drawings.

**Finding:** Current digital photos (and hardcopies of the application package) have been included in the record for this HRR.

### **CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION**

Please note that the requirements of other City of St. Helens departments (e.g., Building, Engineering, and Administration) and other agencies (local, state and/or federal) may apply to this proposal. This **local land use approval** decision does not exempt and is not a substitute for those requirements.

Based upon the facts and findings herein, the City Planning Administrator recommends approval of this **Historic Resource Review** with the following conditions:

1. No damaging physical or chemical treatments are to be used as part of this project.
2. The fire escape repairs shall minimize new hardware connections to the exterior of the building/siding.
3. All window replacements shall be white to match existing and historic windows. << Any additional window requirements (regarding material, design, etc.) required by the Commission can be added to this condition if needed. >>

**Attachments:** *Plans (6 pages)*