

April 29, 2025

CHAIR AND CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSIONERS
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness and adopt the proposed findings and conditions of approval thereto, to allow a 440-square-foot first floor addition and ground floor deck to the rear of an existing single-family residence. The property is a historically contributing structure within the Bluff Heights Historic District and is located at 371 Molino Avenue in the R-2-A Zone. (District 2).

APPLICANT: Stephanie Osorio
1750 Grand Avenue, Unit 106
Long Beach, CA 90804
(Application No. COAC2412-01)

THE REQUEST

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COAC2412-01) to allow a 440-square-foot addition and ground floor deck to the rear of an existing single-family residence. The proposed addition would add a primary bedroom and bathroom to result in four bedrooms and two bathrooms within the residence. The property, a historically contributing structure within Bluff Heights, is located at 371 Molino Avenue in the R-2-A Zone. (District 2).

BACKGROUND

The subject property is located on the east side of Molino Avenue between 4th Street to the north, and 3rd Street to the south (Attachment A – Vicinity Map). The building is located within the two-family residential district with standard lots (R-2-A) zone. The property measures 50 feet in width by 135 feet in length, is rectangular in shape and has a total area of 6,750 square feet. The neighborhood is a combination of single and multi-family buildings.

Currently, the property is developed with a single-story, approximately 1,334 square foot single family residence with a detached two-car garage. Built in the Craftsman architectural style, the property fronts Molino Avenue and is a Contributor to the Bluff Heights Historic District (Attachment B - Photography). Based on County records, the original primary residence and garage were constructed in 1919, within the Bluff Heights Historic District period of significance that took place between 1905 and 1950. The building exterior is relatively intact. Recent



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building permits have been issued for interior work, electrical panel service upgrade and installation of a ground mounted condenser.

The front of the existing residence is horizontal wood siding, vertical slats under the gable roofs, and exposed beams. The roofline features two front facing gables with a 4:12 roof pitch, long roof eaves, wooden fascia boards, exposed rafters and two cross gables along the driveway side of the building. There is a full-width front porch that is partially covered by the lower front gable and partially trellised. The porch piers are clad in cast stone and with tapered columns.

The two side elevations continue the exterior horizontal wood cladding and horizontal wood trim. Both sides have original historic windows which are a combination of both hung windows and casement style windows with some non-period windows. The north elevation has a bay projection that extends approximately one foot from the existing wall plane with two casement style windows. The south elevation (driveway side) has a covered side porch centered between two cross gables. The rear west elevation continues the exterior wood siding, vertical slat vent finish, two gable roofs and exposed beams. There are three wood windows: two fixed and one hung window. There is also an existing mudroom entry at the rear where the laundry is currently located.

ANALYSIS

The proposed project requires approval of the Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) due to the size of the addition that exceeds 250 square feet. For approval to be granted, the project must meet the Criteria for the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, the guidelines for additions within the Bluff Heights Historic District Design Guidelines and comply with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards (Rehabilitation, New Construction)*.

DISCUSSION

The proposed one-story addition is proposed to the rear elevation of building (Attachment C – Plans). Currently there are three rear facing roof gables at the rear elevation: A primary roof which covers the majority of the existing structure and is the tallest and will remain unchanged in this project. The addition will mimic the two lower gables in size and scale and extend them toward the rear. The addition will also align with the existing building wall which is set back 5 feet 4 inches. Due to the addition extending the lower roof gables, and side setback alignment the addition will not be visible from the public right of way. View of the proposed ground floor wood deck will be obstructed by the existing dwelling. The addition will match the overall height of the existing building with varying heights (12'-10", 13' 5" and 14'-9"). The addition will be at a distance of approximately 70 feet from the front property line.

The following table demonstrates the compliance of the proposed project with the City's residential development standards in the R-2-A zoning district per Long Beach Municipal Code (LBMC) Chapter 21.31, Table 31-2A.

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Table 1 – Code Compliance

Development Feature	Residential Development Standards	Existing	Proposed	Meets Requirements
Units Allowed	2 units	1 unit	1 unit	Yes
Front Setback	15 feet	20 feet	No Change	Yes
Side Setback	4 feet	5 feet -4 inches and 12 feet 6 inches	No Change	Yes
Rear Setback*	20 feet	36 feet – 5 inches	No Change	Yes
Lot Coverage	Maximum of 60%	28.82%	31.20%	Yes
Building Height Limit	25 feet - 2 Story (from grade to midpoint of roof slope)	17 feet – 1 Story (from grade to ridge)	No Change	Yes
Parking	2-car garage	2-car garage	No Change	Yes

Project Design

Overall, the addition is in compliance with the guidelines for the Bluff Heights Historic District and compatible with the architectural style. The addition is proposed to the rear of the building, continues the line of the existing building and is lower in height than the existing primary roof line of 17 feet. Wood siding will continue to be used in the building addition, and a combination of hung and casement windows are proposed which complements the existing window types found on the building. No changes to the character defining features are proposed to the existing dwelling.

Two windows, Window E (Fixed Window) and Window F (Double Hung), on the north elevation are proposed to be frosted glass. These windows are located at the new primary bathroom. Window F of the primary bathroom is proposed on the window schedule to be a Fiberglass material and located in the proposed shower. The Planning Bureau's substitute materials memo from 2022 establishes more detail on the application of guidelines as it relates to when substitute materials can be used (Attachment D – Substitute Materials Memo, Report and Presentations). Two study sessions regarding substitute materials were conducted with the Cultural Heritage Commission on February 22, 2022, and March 30th, 2022. The item was presented to inform the CHC on policies from other cities, substitute materials and their application to historic properties. On April 26th, 2022, the CHC received and filed a memo regarding the interpretation and implementation of the Historic District Design Guidelines, Historic District Ordinances and Architectural Style Guides relating to substitutes materials on

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existing contributing structures, non-contributors and new construction memo providing staff direction on how to implement updated procedures on allowing for the use of substitute window and siding materials in certain circumstances. The final substitute materials memo was informed by both Commission comments and public comments.

A relevant page from the Substitute Materials memo is Shown in Figure 1:

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Detached New Construction

"Detached New Construction" refers to new structures including accessory structures such as garages and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) which are accessory in nature to the primary residence on a property. State law (California Government Code Sections 65852.2 and 65852.22) requires that ADUs must be ministerially approved.

Window and siding materials for detached new construction in historic districts are subject to the following:

1. Vinyl materials shall not be allowed.
2. Substitute materials (Figure A) may be used on detached new construction, including accessory structures and ADU's, subject to review for compatibility through the required Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process.

Summary

Table A summarizes the Planning Bureau's official procedures on how to apply the Historic District Design Guidelines related to the issue of window and siding materials for the various types of existing and new structures within historic districts.

Building/Construction Type	Period/Original Materials	Substitute Materials*	Vinyl
Contributing structure all sides includes additions	Yes	No	No
Non-contributing structure - outside period of significance	Yes	Yes	No**
Non-contributing structure - substantial modification	Yes	No	No
Detached New Construction includes ADU***	Yes	Yes	No

Yes = can be permitted subject to COA review which is required for any exterior change including all window changeouts

* fiberglass windows, aluminum windows, aluminum clad windows, or non-wood composite siding such as fiber cement (i.e. Hardie Board) may be permitted as substitute materials subject to compatibility review

** May be allowed in limited circumstances when it is appropriate to the period in which the structure was built.

***Includes conversion of detached garage for the creation of an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU).

Figure 1 – Substitute Materials Memo April 2022

The subject building is considered a Contributing Structure which is a building built in the period of significance for the district, and that generally “contributes” to the district due to the year built, character defining features and/or architectural style. The memo concluded that additions to contributing buildings must continue to use period materials when developing an addition to a contributing structure. This means that, although staff recognize the practicality of using a more water-resistant substitute material, as proposed, staff cannot support the proposed use of a fiberglass window in the bathroom portion of the addition, since it is not consistent with the above referenced Substitute Materials Memo. As a result, the proposed conditions of approval for the project currently require wood be used for all proposed windows in the addition.

Staff has recommended that the applicant use a wood window with clear glass in compliance with the Substitute Materials memo. However, the applicant has expressed an objection to the use of wood windows in the shower due to the splashing water and moisture that would lead to faster deterioration of the wood window material before the end of the product’s useful life. The applicant has also expressed the need for privacy and is proposing frosted glass for both bathroom windows in the proposed addition. The applicant argues that where the addition is located greater than 70 feet from the front property line, that the frosted glass and fiberglass will not be visible from the public right-of-way and will not be detrimental to the project nor to the integrity of the historic district as a resource. For reference, the windows in question are listed in the window schedule as Window E, which is 18 inches by 32 inches, and Window F, which is 24 by 32 inches.

Within the context of renovations and additions of homes in historic districts, concerns and challenges with the required installation of wood windows in bathrooms have been raised many times in discussions with property owners, architects and builders. Many from these groups have expressed frustration and find the requirement for wood windows or no frosting to be unreasonable, overly restrictive and impractical. Many affected parties have also stated that due to the bathroom location being rarely visible from the street, that windows and frosted glass would also not be visible and therefore not have a material impact on the aesthetic and design goals of historic districts.

Although the Design Guidelines and 2022 Alternative Materials memo do not give staff the ability to recommend fiberglass windows or frosted glass in the bathroom as it is not original, historic material, staff understands the applicant's request. Given that all the required findings could still be made in the affirmative, particularly since this new addition is in the rear and has minimal visibility from the street, it is within the Commission’s authority to grant approval for the proposed fiberglass windows. Since the substitute materials memo does not get into detail regarding specific circumstances such as bathrooms, there is room for the Commission to make an interpretation to allow for this alternative material request.

The addition is generally compatible with the existing architectural style and in compliance with the Zoning Regulations and the Bluff Heights Historic District Design Guidelines and Craftsman Style Guide. The addition is compatible in size, massing and relationship to the primary structure’s scale. Building features that are incorporated into the proposed addition include

matching roof pitch, gable roof, asphalt roof shingles, exposed rafter tails, horizontal wood siding, and compatible window trim and extended lintels. The windows on the primary structure are a combination of different window styles and materials. As such, a condition of approval was included to ensure new windows on the proposed addition are wood windows, compatible with the existing architectural style. The condition also requires that future replacement of the remaining windows will require re-introduction of wood windows, replacing the non-wood windows.

Compatibility with Neighborhood

As proposed, the project will maintain an appropriate scale with the Bluff Heights Historic District and the context of the block which consists primarily of one-story residences and two multi-family properties.

To comply with the existing Substitute Materials memo approved by the Commission and currently in effect, conditions have been included to require that the three (3) new windows in the project all be wood windows, not aluminum, with decorative wood trim with extended lintels in hung window style. Future retro-fitting of the remaining windows shall be replaced with wood windows over time, pursuant to conditions of approval. The building will be painted in three colors in a light blue body color, dark blue highlight and off-white accent color. The colors are neutral and blend well with the district.

Given the addition is one-story and fits the existing neighborhood context of one-story buildings in the area and the conditions of approval, the proposed project is compatible with the neighborhood and consistent and in full compliance with the City's residential development standards for the R-2-A (Two-Family Residential) zoning district, the Bluff Heights Historic District Ordinance and the Craftsman Style Guide.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

- 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 proposed project will not change the use of the property. The property will remain residential in land use.

- 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.**

The historic architectural character of the property will be maintained. Most historic materials will be retained, but the proposed project will remove some existing original material at the rear of the residence to the extent necessary for the addition. The front elevation will be preserved, no modifications to the architectural integrity and/or style of

the original structure's front façade is proposed. The addition is small in scale and compatible. With conditions, the exterior materials will be consistent with the existing Craftsman style buildings found throughout the Historic District.

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.**

The new project was designed to be compatible in scale to the existing building. No conjectural features are proposed, and the addition will be distinguishable yet compatible to the original residence as to not create a false sense of history.

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

The existing structure is generally intact and retains most of its original architectural features. Prior changes to the building include window replacements, interior changes and mechanical equipment. There have been no changes over time that have acquired significant in their own right.

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

The distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques of the original building will be preserved. The building's cross gabled roof lines, horizontal wood siding, porch and decorative wood trim are the distinctive features and will 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.**

The building is in fair condition and not in a state of deterioration. As conditioned, any features found to be missing shall be replaced and 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.**

No chemical or physical treatments are proposed under this project. A condition of approval was included to required that any surface cleaning required as a part of this

project be done in the gentlest way possible, further preserving the contributing structure.

8. **Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.**

No significant archeological resources will be affected by this project. No major excavations or grading are proposed. Any archeological resources found resulting from the project construction will be protected and preserved, pursuant to CEQA.

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.**

The proposed project will retain all original visible features of the existing primary residence, except at the additional location. The proposed addition will incorporate similar architectural features, while not creating a false sense of history as the addition extends outward from the original building and uses a vertical wood trim board to separate the addition from original building.

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.**

The proposed addition could be removed in the future without changing the essential form and integrity of the historic property. The addition does not remove existing architectural style gable elements. Removal of the addition in the future would not affect the original front of the property and therefore it would not affect the character and integrity of the architecture and its architectural style.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff has analyzed the proposed project and determined that the project meets the requirements set forth in Title 21 of the City's Zoning Code, Section 2.63.080 (Cultural Heritage Commission) of the Long Beach Municipal Code, the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, and *Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, the Bluff Heights Historic District Design Guidelines, and Craftsman Architectural Style Guide.

With the recommended Conditions, staff supports approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness request. All the findings can be made in the affirmative for the proposed improvements, as these improvements are compatible in overall scale, massing, proportions, materials, and colors to the architectural style of the existing structure on the property and in

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the context of the District (Attachment E – Findings). Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness, subject to the Conditions of approval (Attachment F - Conditions of Approval).

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This project has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Based on that assessment, the City has determined the project to be Categorically Exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to the provisions of Article 19 Section 15303 (a) (new construction or conversion of small structures) of the CEQA Guidelines. No further environmental review is required.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Public notices were distributed on April 16, 2025. As of this date, no letters were received in response to this project.

Respectfully submitted,



PABLO CASTILLA
PLANNER



ALEJANDRO PLASCENCIA
PRESERVATION PLANNER



ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ-LOPEZ
ADVANCE PLANNING OFFICER



ALISON SPINDLER-RUIZ, AICP
PLANNING BUREAU MANAGER

ASR:ASL:AP:PC

Attachments:

Attachment A – Vicinity Map
Attachment B – Photography
Attachment C – Plans
Attachment D – Substitute Materials Memo, Report and Presentations
Attachment E – Findings
Attachment F – Conditions of Approval