

**CITY OF FLAGSTAFF HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT - UPDATED**

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
PZ-25-00192
ADDRESS: 402 W. Birch Ave.

DATE: November 12, 2025
MEETING DATE: November 19, 2025
REPORT BY: Lauren Clementino, HPO

REQUEST

This is a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a new one bedroom, one bathroom Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) above a new garage at 402 W. Birch Ave. (APN 103-11-013), with access from Sitgreaves St. This new structure would be detached from the existing single-family dwelling structure. This new structure would be detached from the existing single-family dwelling structure. This request also includes adding a partially covered front porch and patio to the existing single-family dwelling structure and fencing modifications. This property is in the Townsite Historic Design Review Overlay Zone and is a non-contributing property within the Flagstaff Townsite Historic Residential District.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed plans for a new detached accessory dwelling unit and garage, adding a partially covered front porch and patio to the existing single-family dwelling structure, and fencing modifications.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The existing single-family dwelling structure located at 402 W. Birch Ave. is non-contributing to the Flagstaff Townsite Historic Residential District. The structure is a one-story bungalow with a gabled roof and stucco cladding. According to Coconino County Assessor records, the structure was constructed in 1915. Per the property's inventory form completed in 1985, it was constructed ca. 1916-1935. At the time of the inventory, the structure had already seen façade modifications including a historically incompatible bay window and enclosure of the original entry porch. Assessor records show that a small bathroom addition was constructed on the west side of the structure in 1979. The age of the stone fence is unknown, and it was not included in the property description on the 1985 inventory form. The property is within the Townsite Overlay and subject to its design criteria/standards.

INTENT

The purpose of the Townsite Overlay zone is laid out in Section 10-40.50.030 of the Zoning Code. The requirements of the Townsite Overlay are intended to promote the preservation and unique character of the zone and all structures within the zone. The Townsite Overlay zone applies to areas of the City subject to the Townsite Historic Design Review Overlay District Design Standards and Guidelines and design review by the Heritage Preservation Commission for the development of properties located within the boundaries of the zone.

STAFF REVIEW:

Scope of Work

The Certificate of Appropriateness is “appropriate if the proposed work alters a cultural resource but does so in such a way that is compatible with the historic or archaeological character of the resource and all major impacts are mitigated such that the work does not diminish, eliminate, or adversely affect the significance or integrity of the resource.” (Flagstaff Zoning Code 10-30.30.060.E).

Findings

“Prior to the granting of any required approvals or permits and prior to the commencement of any work on a landmark property or within a historic overlay zone, the Heritage Preservation Commission or the Historic Preservation Officer shall review all work proposed and approve or conditionally approve the work in the form of a certificate of no effect, certificate of appropriateness, or certificate of economic hardship” (Flagstaff Zoning Code 10-30.30.060 Development of a Landmark Property and Property within a Historic Overlay Zone).

The Flagstaff Zoning Code 10-30.30.060E states:

Criteria for Approval.

When approving a certification of appropriateness, the Heritage Preservation Commission shall find that:

- a. The proposed work is consistent with the purpose and intent of this division;*
- b. The proposed work is compatible with its context:
 - (1) The appropriate context for a landmark or a historic property is the property itself and, to a much lesser extent, the surrounding properties and neighborhood;*
 - (2) The appropriate context of work in a historic overlay zone is the significant portions of the property itself, the surrounding properties, and the neighborhood;**
- c. The cultural resources associated with the proposed work have been sufficiently sought, identified and evaluated;*
- d. Major impacts on cultural resources are sufficiently mitigated; and*
- e. The proposed work is consistent with applicable development standards and design guidelines. See also subsection (G) of this section, Development Standards and Guidelines.*

Townsite Overlay

“The Townsite Overlay (TO) zone applies to areas of the City subject to the Townsite Historic Design Review Overlay District Design Standards and Guidelines and design review by the Heritage Preservation Commission for the development of properties located within the boundaries of the zone” (Flagstaff Zoning Code 10-40.50.030 Overlay Zones).

Flagstaff Townsite Historic Overlay District Design Standards and Guidelines states “The Flagstaff Townsite Historic Residential District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986 via the National Park Service (NPS). The district represents a strong historical image of time and place with mature landscaping, original road widths and block configurations.”

The following design criteria/standards apply to this case:

A . Style

1. Flagstaff Townsite developed from a natural evolution of a variety of architectural styles in smaller homes such as Craftsman, Victorian, cottage/bungalow, Queen Anne, and Edwardian. The district’s overall style is mixed in terms of landscaping and architecture. As the District exists to preserve the historic character, variations of the above mentioned styles shall be adopted to ensure continuity in the neighborhood.

2. Secondary dwellings and secondary structures/outbuildings do not dominate the main structure.

B. Site

1. Homes reflect early life in Flagstaff through small size, yards, and relationship to the street lending more to community interaction. The following shall occur:

a. Front doors shall have a relationship close to the street – dwellings relate to the street frontage and are not pushed back to the alleys. This preserves neighbor-to-neighbor contact.

b. All dwellings shall have main access from the street.

2. New driveways and parking spaces shall be located beside homes.

3. Garages shall not be at the house frontage. The intent is to follow the historic pattern where garages were a secondary structure and set back from the house frontage. The front door was the primary entrance.

4. Secondary dwellings are any structures not considered the original home and in which people reside. They shall be subservient in bulk, size, scale, design and materials to the main dwelling. Historic homes shall remain the main home.

6. Interior yards or rear yards are desirable. If there are two structures on site, a central or side yard shall occur – locating the structure at the back of the lot allows for the interior yard. Excluding the front yard and driveway, a minimum of 1000 square feet of contiguous yard shall occur.

D. Development Massing, Height, and Proportions

1. Structures that exist at the time of the district designation are the primary structure. In case of multiple existent structures at that time, the structure closest to the street is the primary structure. New primary structures shall be placed forward on the site relative to all other structures.

3. For all other structures, no point shall exceed 16 feet in height, measured from existing or natural grade, excluding chimneys, towers, and similar non-habitable architectural projections. (*NOTE: This provision is no longer applicable to ADUs under the current City Zoning Code and up to 25 feet is allowed for an ADU in the Townsite Overlay per Section 10-40.50.030(C) Building form Standards*)

E. Roof Pitch

1. Pitches for main roofs in new construction shall be over 6:12. Porches, dormers, and similar lesser roofed areas may have shallower pitches.

F. Architecture, Materials, Details, and Colors

1. Materials, details, and colors shall be compatible with historic structures on an individual property and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

K. Exceptions

1. The Historic Preservation Commission may, at its sole discretion, modify the requirements of these standards and guidelines when in the opinion of the Commission, an exception is warranted based for design consistency such as in the case of alterations to existing non-conforming structures, cases where an exception is necessary to accommodate an appropriate architectural style, cases where an exception is warranted based on the development of immediately adjacent properties, and other similar circumstances determined by the Commission.

The following design criteria/guidelines apply to this case:

1. Use of creative design with no wasted interior space is more typical of the neighborhood. The use of attic space as living space with dormer windows, and storage under eaves are typical characteristics of older homes.

2. Front porches/stoops face the street or are in close proximity to the street providing for neighbor contact.

3. Architectural details that are typical can be seen on existing historic homes and these homes can be used as models for future designs.

6. Preserve neighbor viewscapes and privacy and minimize impact to neighbors. Respectful orientation to neighbors' views and privacy should be an ongoing concern throughout the design process. Look at your design from the neighbors' lots.

a. Orient windows to protect neighbors' privacy. You may not want to see them anymore than they want to see you. Placing windows higher or using translucent glass respects privacy.

b. Buildings on the lot could be sited to not block views. There is no City mandate on views – this is strictly between you and the neighbor. Visit neighbors' houses to see the impact your new building may have on views.

c. Windows at streetside are to scale with neighborhood character in order to maintain visual continuity with respect to size, style and height.

DISCUSSION

Basis of Report:

The information in this summary discussion was derived from the application to the Heritage Preservation Commission, the Flagstaff Zoning Code, and the Townsite Historic Design Review Overlay District Design Standards and Guidelines.

ADU Scope of Work Discussion

Site

The proposed ADU has main access from Sitgreaves St. and has a street-facing front door and entry porch. The driveway and garage are located behind the primary structure with access from Sitgreaves St. and are not located at the primary structure's frontage along Birch Ave. The current parking for the primary structure is also in this location but accessed from the alley. The proposed ADU is situated as far as allowable from the primary structure along Birch Ave. and from Sitgreaves St. This placement on the lot is the most subservient placement to the primary structure. The proposed design also includes 1,611 sq. ft. of contiguous yard space for the property, which is above the 1,000 sq. ft. minimum requirement.

Development Massing, Height, and Proportions

The existing single-family dwelling structure is the primary structure as defined by the Townsite standards. The primary structure existed at the time of the district designation and is situated closer to the street than the proposed ADU. The ADU's livable area (also referred to as gross floor area or interior habitable area) of 862 sq. ft. is below the maximum limit of 75 percent of the primary structure's livable area of 1,186 sq. ft., per the ADU size requirements in Flagstaff Zoning Code 10-40.60.030.

The new ADU unit is proposed at 24 feet, 11 inches in height. This is under the 25-foot maximum height for an ADU in the Townsite Overlay, however, it is taller than the primary structure by 5 feet, 1 inch. As such, it needs to be subservient to it in other ways to meet the Townsite Overlay standards. As described above, the ADU placement—to the rear of the lot with access from Sitgreaves St.—maintains the historic pattern of secondary structures being set back from the primary dwelling. The design also attempts to break up the massing through use of multiple siding materials (stucco and lap siding) differentiating each story. The lot footprint of the ADU is smaller than the primary structure (913 sq. ft. compared to 1,186 sq. ft.). However, the combined garage, stairwell, and livable area total is greater than the primary structure (1,775 sq. ft. compared to 1,186 sq. ft.). As requested by staff, the applicant has provided a written justification of how the ADU design is subservient to the primary structure in the Project Narrative in the attached application packet (pages 5-6).

Roof Pitch

Per the design standards, pitches for main roofs in new construction shall be over 6:12. The main roof structure for the proposed ADU is 8:12, which meets this requirement and matches the main roof pitch of the primary structure. Porches, dormers, and similar lesser roofed areas may have shallower pitches. The lesser roofed areas of the proposed ADU have 4:12 and 8:12 pitches.

Style, Materials, Details, and Colors

The proposed ADU materials, details, and colors are compatible with the primary structure and the surrounding neighborhood. The stucco is continued from the primary structure and many surrounding buildings. Lap siding is also found in the vicinity and throughout the Townsite. The use of the

combination of siding materials is compatible, yet distinguishable from the primary structure. The ADU repeats the colors and decorative braces of the primary structure. Roofing materials will also be matching between the ADU and the primary structure.

Additional Scope of Work Discussion

The project proposes to alter the front and rear porches of the primary structure, both of which are visible from the public right-of-way. The original front porch was previously enclosed. This project proposes to extend the porch to create a new covered porch area in front of the current enclosed porch and add a partially enclosed patio area to the side of the porch. Proposed materials and colors will match the existing. As the porch was previously altered, this change will not result in a further loss of integrity. It will also not restore integrity. The primary structure's rear porch railings are proposed to be replaced. The current railings are not original and this is a minor alteration.

The project also proposes fencing changes. The existing chain link fence along Birch Ave. and Sitgreaves St. would be removed and replaced with picket fencing. An existing stone fence is located along Sitgreaves St. behind the primary structure. Most of the stone fence would be maintained, but where the new driveway connects to the street a section would be removed. The malpais stone is proposed to be salvaged and repurposed as stone pilasters along the new picket fence on Birch Avenue. The age of the fencing is unknown, although the chain link is most likely modern and as the stone is set behind the primary structure it is not a defining characteristic. As such, the proposed fencing changes are appropriate.

COMMISSION OPTIONS

- (1) The Commission can approve;
- (2) The Commission can approve with conditions related to the standards and guidelines applicable to the case;
- (3) The Commission can request additional information and continue to a date certain; or
- (4) Deny Certificate of Appropriateness and require Certificate of Economic Hardship or submittal of an alternative design that meets all Townsite Overlay Requirements.

STAFF CONCLUSION:

Staff concludes that the proposed project meets the criteria for a Certificate of Appropriateness and conforms to the Townsite Historic Design Review Overlay District Design Standards and Guidelines. It is appropriate for the Commission to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness based on the findings.