

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Chapel Hill Historic District Commission  
FROM: Britany Waddell, Planning Director  
Anya Grahn-Federmack, Principal Planner  
SUBJECT: 306 Ransom Street: Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)  
(PIN 9788-24-8884, HDC-23-9)

FILING DATE: April 18, 2023

DATE: May 9, 2023

**COA SUMMARY**

The applicant, Noah Kilmer, landscape designer, on behalf of owner Lauren Christensen requests a COA for:

- Removing the concrete walkways and replacing them with Chapel Hill grit paths with black steel edging.
- Creating an approximately 3-foot-wide irregular Pennsylvania Bluestone steppingstone path between the driveway and the front walkway.
- Installing a Pennsylvania Bluestone steppingstone path between the north side of the driveway and a new Pennsylvania Bluestone patio with a fire pit on the southwest corner of the site.
- Removing the existing floorboards of the deck and replacing them with new Thermally Modified Oak decking. The existing steps will also be reoriented to face the backyard.
- Creating an expanded landing constructed of Thermally Modified Oak decking on the northwest corner of the house.

**EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The proposed location is zoned Residential-4 (R-4) and is in the Cameron-McCauley Historic District.

**BACKGROUND**

April 18, 2023	The applicant submits a COA application for the work described above.
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**DISCUSSION**

The applicant, Noah Kilmer, landscape designer, on behalf of owner Lauren Christensen requests a COA for:

- Removing the concrete walkways and replacing them with Chapel Hill grit paths with black steel edging.
- Creating an approximately 3-foot-wide irregular Pennsylvania Bluestone steppingstone path between the driveway and the front walkway.
- Installing a Pennsylvania Bluestone steppingstone path between the north side of the driveway and a new Pennsylvania Bluestone patio with a fire pit on the southwest corner of the site.

- Removing the existing floorboards of the deck and replacing them with new Thermally Modified Oak decking. The existing steps will also be reoriented to face the backyard.
- Creating an expanded landing constructed of Thermally Modified Oak decking on the northwest corner of the house.

If the COA is granted for the exterior change, the applicant would then be required to obtain any necessary zoning compliance and building permits from the Town.

#### **NOTE**

The [\*Chapel Hill Historic Districts Design Principles and Standards\*](#)<sup>1</sup> are incorporated into the record by reference.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment 1 – Written Decision (approving the COA)
2. [\*Special Character Essay – Cameron-McCauley Historic District \(pages 31-35\)\*](#)<sup>2</sup>
3. Application Materials

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<sup>1</sup>[https://townhall.townofchapelhill.org/large\\_docs/historic\\_district/CH%20HD%20Design%20Principles%20and%20Standards.pdf](https://townhall.townofchapelhill.org/large_docs/historic_district/CH%20HD%20Design%20Principles%20and%20Standards.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>[https://townhall.townofchapelhill.org/large\\_docs/historic\\_district/CH%20HD%20Design%20Principles%20and%20Standards.pdf](https://townhall.townofchapelhill.org/large_docs/historic_district/CH%20HD%20Design%20Principles%20and%20Standards.pdf)

**WRITTEN DECISION - APPROVING CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

**WRITTEN DECISION APPROVING AN APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 306 RANSOM STREET (PIN 9788-24-8884, Project #HDC-23-9)**

WHEREAS, having reviewed the applicant's argument and various documents and other evidence submitted at the hearing on this matter, and having heard public comment on the application, the Historic District Commission (HDC) finds as facts those facts summarized by the Chair at the conclusion of the Commission's hearing of this matter and hereby incorporates them by reference as Commission Findings of Fact; and finds that such facts are supported by competent, material, and substantial evidence presented to the Commission; and

BE IT RESOLVED by the Historic District Commission of the Town of Chapel Hill that, having considered the requested Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) at 306 Ransom Street, requested by applicant Noah Kilmer, landscape designer, on behalf of owner Lauren Christensen requests a COA Amendment for:

- Removing the concrete walkways and replacing them with Chapel Hill grit paths with black steel edging.
- Creating an approximately 3-foot-wide irregular Pennsylvania Bluestone steppingstone path between the driveway and the front walkway.
- Installing a Pennsylvania Bluestone steppingstone path between the north side of the driveway and a new Pennsylvania Bluestone patio with a fire pit on the southwest corner of the site.
- Removing the existing floorboards of the deck and replacing them with new Thermally Modified Oak decking. The existing steps will also be reoriented to face the backyard.
- Creating an expanded landing constructed of Thermally Modified Oak decking on the northwest corner of the house.

In accord with the improvements on the attached site plan, and identified as Orange County Property Identifier Number 9788-24-8884, the Board makes the following finding:

1. The requested Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is not incongruous with the special character of the Cameron-McCauley Historic District.

The following Design Standards apply to the Application:

*1.1 Site Features (page 42)*

1.1.7. Introduce new site features to be compatible in scale, design, and materials with the overall historic character of the site and district. Utilize traditional materials in the construction of benches, terraces, gazebos, trellises, fences, and walls.

1.1.8. Introduce contemporary site features—including playground equipment and swimming pools—in locations that do not diminish or compromise the overall character of the site and district, typically in rear yards or other locations not visible from the street.

#### *1.4 Walkways, Driveways, & Off-Street Parking (pages 52-53)*

1.4.4. If a historic walkway, driveway, or off-street parking area is completely missing, or if deterioration necessitates its replacement, replace it to match the original in material, design, dimension, configuration, detail, texture, and pattern, based upon physical and documentary evidence. Otherwise, replace it with a new feature that is compatible in material, design, scale, and detail with the overall historic character of the site and district. 1.4.5. Design new walkways, driveways, and off-street parking to conform with the spacing, width, configuration, and materials of character-defining walkways, driveways, and off-street parking areas in the district.

1.4.6. Site new walkways, driveways, and off-street parking areas in locations that are compatible with the character of the building, site, and district—typically to the side and rear of existing buildings—and locate them so the topography of the site and mature trees and other significant site features are not significantly altered, damaged, or lost.

- a. In residential areas, do not locate off-street parking areas in front yards. Whenever possible, driveways should lead to parking areas to the side or rear of the primary building on the site.
- b. In commercial and institutional areas, parking should be located at the side or rear of the property whenever possible.

1.4.9. Construct new walkways in traditional materials and designs that are compatible in configuration, material, scale, and detail with the character of the building, site, and district.

- a. These include red brick, flagstone, concrete, and Chapel Hill grit.
- b. Do not use asphalt or contemporary materials that mimic other materials for sidewalks within the historic districts.

#### *4.10 Decks & Patios (page 143)*

4.10.3. Retain and preserve historic building materials and trim and minimize the visual impact of a deck or patio by designing them to be inset from the building's corners.

4.10.4. Limit the size and scale of decks and patios to minimize their visual impact. Do not introduce a deck or patio if it will visually overpower the building or site or substantially alter the proportion of constructed area to unbuilt area on the site.

4.10.8. Minimize damage to the historic building by designing decks and patios to be structurally self-supporting. Attach decks to the building carefully to minimize the loss of historic fabric and to allow for their removal in the future. Retain a planting strip between patios and building foundations to allow for proper drainage.

4.10.9. Screen the structural framing of decks with foundation plantings, lattice, or other compatible screening materials.

4.10.10. Maintain and protect significant site features from damage during or as a consequence of deck-or patio related site work or construction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission hereby grants the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, in accord with the plan listed above and the following conditions:

1. The certificate of appropriateness shall be valid for three hundred sixty-five (365) calendar days from date of issuance. If the authorized work has not commenced within that period, has not been extended by the commission, or has been discontinued for more than three hundred sixty-five (365) calendar days from the date of issuance, such certificate of appropriateness shall expire, and the applicant shall be required to reapply and obtain a new certificate of appropriateness before commencing further work.

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Signed - Historic District Commission Chair, Sean Murphy

This, the 9<sup>th</sup> day of May 2023.