

Certificate of Appropriateness

Application for Design Review - Staff Report of Findings

Property Address: 1520 East Rockwood Boulevard
Applicant: Will and Christine Quinn
Hearing Date: 5/20/2026
Type of Work: Alterations to historic rock walls and changes to terraces

AUTHORITY BY WHICH PROJECT IS REVIEWED:

1.) The Landmarks Commission has the authority to review this proposal for a Certificate of Appropriateness under SMC 17D.100.200.

- In making a decision on an application, the commission uses the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, historic district design standards (if applicable) and other general guidelines established and adopted by the commission.

2.) The Victor & Georges Dessert House at 1520 East Rockwood Boulevard is individually listed on the Spokane Register of Historic Places (date listed 9/25/2006) and it is subject to a management agreement. The house is also contributing to the Rockwood National Historic District.

3.) The Management Standards for Spokane Register properties and districts are the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. Staff recommendation is based on the Standards as listed below.

PROPOSED WORK:

This proposal is to modify the historic rock walls and terraces on the property to accommodate two additional sites that are suitable for construction of new houses. The work includes:

- Removing a twelve-foot section of basalt wall to facilitate a driveway or garage entrance.
- Finishing the new opening in the basalt wall with a similar treatment to the opening on the west end of the same wall.
- Modifying the terraces to accommodate the new driveway or garage entrance on the east end of the site.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

- A.** The proposal seeks to remove a twelve-foot section of the historic basalt wall in the northeast corner of the property to accommodate a driveway or garage entrance. The wall is over 8 feet tall in this location. The massive basalt walls on the property were constructed in 1913, twenty-three years before the house was constructed in 1936. The walls, stairways, arched entry, and terraces retain good integrity and are protected features of the nominated property as explained in the nomination: "the Dessert House and its contributing historic structures rock terraces, rock walls, rock stairways, entrance gate, garage depict the Spanish Eclectic Style and survive as one of the most well-preserved and prominent historic landmarks in Spokane." The nomination describes the "rock-walled terraces and stairways, and decorative wrought-iron" features as character defining elements of the Spanish-Eclectic Style.

Standard #9: New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic

materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

Staff commentary:

The basalt walls and terraces are a character defining feature of the property, but they are secondary in nature to the house and accessory buildings. The proposed changes to the basalt wall do constitute an adverse impact to the basalt wall itself, but they do so in a way that only minimally impacts the overall character and feeling of the historic property. The changes do not rise to the level of destroying “materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property.” On that point, staff suggests that any basalt removed from the wall should remain on site as landscaping features and for the potential to be replaced if plans change.

The work to finish the new opening in the wall will be modeled on the west driveway opening in the wall. The new east-end opening shall be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing of the basalt wall and the existing driveway opening.

This application is limited to changes to the wall and potential changes to the terraces to accommodate the driveway. Consequently, any future changes to the terraces or stairway to accommodate new buildings will need to be reviewed and approved prior to issuance of a building permit.

Staff recommend that the removal of a 12-foot section of the basalt wall at the Dessert House and the subsequent refinishing of the opening to be compatible with the character of the existing basalt wall, AND modifications to the terraces to facilitate a driveway or garage on the east end of the site are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standard 9. Any changes to the terraces beyond this scope will require additional review by our office.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The proposed work to alter the basalt walls and terraces at Dessert House should be approved.

HPO Report: Logan Camporeale

Design Review Committee: Yes

Landmarks Commission Review: pending

Date: 5/19/2026

Site Visit: visit on own (staff visit on 5/7/2026)

Hearing Date: 5/20/2026

Slide 1: The Spokane Historic Landmarks Commission has the authority to review changes to properties under Spokane Municipal Code 17D.100.200 B. That chapter of the code allows us to “Review proposals...to construct, change, alter, modify, remodel, move, demolish and significantly affect properties or districts on the register.”

Slide 2: The Green-Hughes Printing Company Building at 19 W Pacific Avenue is individually listed on the Spokane Register of Historic Places (date listed 3/25/2002).

Slide 3: It is also a contributing resource in the East Downtown Historic District which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on 8/29/2003.

Slide 4: This Certificate of Appropriateness application is for the construction of a large, one-story addition to the Green-Hughes Printing Company Building to the west of the main historic building. It will be connected to the Green-Hughes building by two corridors that will be located on the west elevation through two existing windows which will be converted to hallways.

Slide 5: Interestingly, there was previously a small concrete block building that was constructed sometime between 1953 and 1958 – based on Sanborn maps and a city aerial photograph which shows the building from 1958.

Slide 6 – this is the front view of the addition from Pacific street or the north elevation of the building. The connecting corridor is recessed by several feet to give a visual separation of the old and the new.

Slide 7 – this is the west elevation showing where the two corridors will be added for the connection to the addition. **Click** – this is what that elevation looks like today.

Slide 8 - Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness based on the following Secretary of the Interior’s Standards:

Standard Number 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.

Slide 9 – slide shows commentary

Slide 10 – Slide shows standard 10 and commentary

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The proposed addition at the Dorothy Darby Smith House meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards (specifically Standard #9) and should be approved.