

STAFF REPORT 02-10-2021 MEETING

PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG

APPLICATION NUMBER: 21-7068

ADDRESS: 1451 BROOKLYN

HISTORIC DISTRICT: CORKTOWN

APPLICANT: JOHN P. BIGGAR/INTEGRITY BUILDING GROUP

DATE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION: 01-21-2021

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 02-03-2021

SCOPE: DEMOLISH STAIR ENCLOSURE, REPLACE WINDOWS, REHAB BUILDING

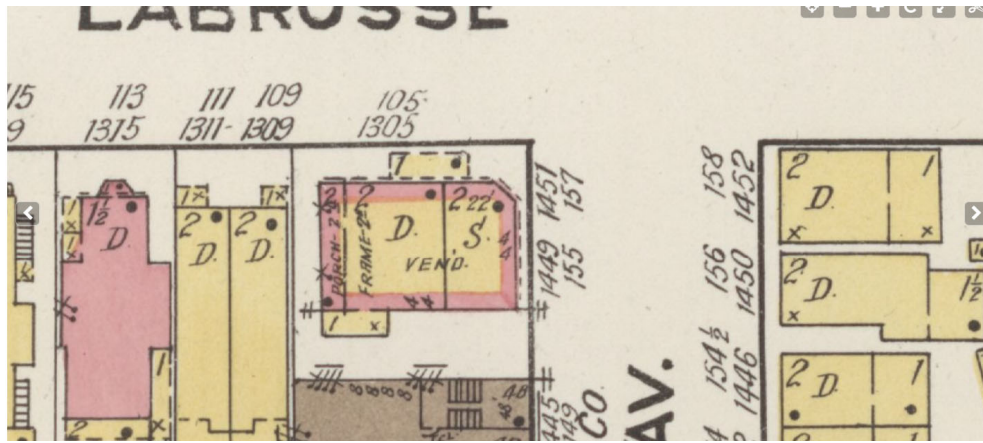
EXISTING CONDITIONS

Erected circa 1910, 1451 Brooklyn is a two-story building that is located within the Corktown Historic District, immediately adjacent to and to the north of the Kaul Glove Company building, but in an otherwise residential context. The building plan is rectangular with a clipped northeastern corner at the intersection of Labrosse and Brooklyn Streets. Per the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (next page), in 1921 the building accommodated a store/commercial use at its eastern half (i.e, along Brooklyn Street, while its western half (along Labrosse) was residential. The map indicates that an open, one-story porch was at the front/Labrosse Street elevation (now enclosed by brick) while a diminutive one-story wing was located at the rear elevation.



View of 1451 Brooklyn, looking towards the southwest. Staff photo, February 3, 2021.

A rear/south elevation, two-story, shed roof stair enclosure dates from ca. 1940, which appears to be a utilitarian alteration to the earlier one-story wing. The building's exterior walls are primarily clad with tan brick with lighter buff brick window surrounds. A form of imitation brick (asphalt) siding, a non-character defining material from the early 20th century, clads the stair enclosure in combination with asphalt roll material. The building's flat roof features wood, overhanging open eaves with decorative brackets. The windows at the building's original first-story commercial space are fixed wood undivided light storefronts. Remaining windows are historic-age, double-hung, 1/1 units or wood casement units. The building's original, commercial entry door, located at the northeastern clipped corner includes an historic-age, full-light door which is topped with a transom. A second historic-age door (wood panel), is located at the west elevation. The remaining exterior doors are not historic.



Sanborn map of vicinity, circa 1924.



View towards east from 1451 Brooklyn, showing context. House shown is 1452 Brooklyn. Staff photo, February 3, 2021.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

As per the submitted drawings and narrative, the applicant is proposing to rehabilitate the building, to include the following work items:

SOUTH ELEVATION

- Demolish existing stair enclosure
- Install mechanical condensers and bicycle racks on the space between buildings

WINDOWS

- Replace all windows (to include wood sash and trim), with new 1/1 wood-sash units.

DOORS

- Replace non-historic doors with new wood, rail-and-stile doors
- Repair the historic doors at the rear elevation and the northeast clipped corner. Note that the drawings indicate that a transom will be located above this door. However, the materiality of this transom has not been indicated.

SECOND-STORY, WEST ELEVATION PORCH

- Retain and paint the existing wood siding, porch columns, French doors, and railings.

ROOF

- Replace shingles at front elevation, one-story hipped-roof wing (material, color, and type not indicated)
- Install new gutters and downspouts (material, color, size not indicated)
- Scrape and paint wood eaves and brackets (color not indicated)

EXTERIOR WALLS

- Tuckpoint where necessary according to SOI Guidelines

Note that the submitted site plan (A2.10) shows proposed alterations at adjacent parcels. This application is only for work proposed at 1451 Brooklyn, and does not include work depicted at 1309 Labrosse, 1441 Brooklyn, or 1444-1448 Brooklyn.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- As previously noted, the building's first story originally served as a store/retail space. The two remaining fixed, full-light wood windows are likely associated with this commercial use.
- A review of Google Streetview indicates that a stucco exterior wall at the second story, west elevation was removed (without approval) sometime between 2015 and 2017 to reveal the current porch. Wood siding, railing, and French doors, and porch posts were added at that time. The current project proposes to retain and paint these elements.
- During the field visit, staff paid special attention to the condition of the wood windows throughout, including the shop windows.
 - Staff agrees that with the applicant in that the three pairs of wood casement windows in what appears to be the enclosed original porch along Labrosse were not properly designed and that their reuse in a rehabilitated building would present issues of technical feasibility.
 - Staff was unable to confirm the applicant's characterization of the double-hung windows as beyond repair. It is staff opinion that the windows are distinctive character-defining features; they exhibit a robust articulation and depth not easily reproduced in a modern replacement window. It appears that parts of existing sash and other sub-elements of the windows could be repaired and renewed without losing the entire window.
 - Staff was unable to field confirm that the shop windows once enclosed mulled double-hung sash as recreated on the submitted drawings. The existing conditions are a casing in fair condition with a metal-clad sill.



Detail view of shop window frame at first story along Brooklyn Street. Staff photo, February 3, 2021.

ISSUES

- The removal of the south utilitarian stair, in staff’s opinion, does not destroy historic materials or distinctive character-defining features important to the property or environment.
- However, it is staff’s opinion that the existing wood windows on the two primary facades along Brooklyn and Labrosse (with the exception of the poorly installed wood casements at the former porch) should be retained and repaired. The repair of the 1/1 double-hung windows would require replacement of some sub-elements (stops, sill, sash, etc.), but staff recommends that such a repair would be reasonable and economically and technically feasible under the Standards. These highly visible wood windows are important to the historic character of this small, residential scale building, but are also important to the historic character of the surrounding environment, given that several of the adjacent nineteenth-century homes continue to feature character-defining wood windows of a similar type as are on this partially residential structure. The windows at the secondary elevation are less important for the building’s character, and have greater integrity issues. The surviving fixed, undivided light wood shop windows at the first story are now rarely seen in Detroit, and are in surprisingly intact condition, including metal-clad sills. Staff finds them to be particularly important in establishing and preserving the historic character of this modest building.
- Staff acknowledges applicant concern that a mix of new wood windows on the building would not present a unified or consistent composition. However, the Standards do prioritize retention of historic character-defining features over consistency. Consistency could also be achieved by creating new wood windows matching the historic prototypes, but is not required for appropriateness, in staff’s opinion.
- For new wood windows (which, per staff recommendation, would be limited to the secondary facades and at the former porch “bump-out” along Labrosse), the applicant has submitted cut sheets for Andersen A Series, but the drawing notes (A5.10) indicate Andersen 100 Series. Staff recommends that only the A Series would be appropriate as a replacement. Those at the primary facade should also be painted to match the historic windows in a color appropriate to the style of the building.



Detail view of windows at second floor. Though there are many areas requiring paint and repair, with certain elements missing and/or requiring replacement, the work would not be technically challenging. Staff photo, February 3, 2021.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-73, Certificate of Appropriateness

It is staff's opinion that the proposal should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Staff recommends that the Commission approve a COA for the proposed application, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Corktown Historic District's Elements of Design, with the conditions that:

- The existing historic and distinctive wood windows at the primary facades along Brooklyn and Labrosse Streets, including eight (8) 1-over-1 double-hung windows and the two (2) large fixed, undivided light "shop" windows, *but excluding the three (3) wood casement pairs at the former porch along Labrosse for reasons of technical infeasibility*, are to be retained, reglazed, and repaired, with new sash elements permitted as required. A paint color for these windows appropriate to the style of the building is approvable by staff; and,
- Replacement wood double-hung windows permitted on secondary elevations and at the former Labrosse porch shall be Andersen A Series; and,
- The six (6) new wood double-hung windows at the former Labrosse porch should be painted to match the retained historic windows in the primary facades.