

STAFF REPORT: 5/10/2023 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: D. RIEDEN

APPLICATION NUMBER: #23-8333

VIOLATION NUMBER: #705

ADDRESS: 4325 FULLERTON

HISTORIC DISTRICT: RUSSELL WOODS - SULLIVAN

APPLICANT/ PROPERTY OWNER: EHLERS, LEE & ERIN

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 4/17/2023

DATES OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 3/13/23, 4/20/23

SCOPE: INSTALL VINYL WINDOWS, PAINT TRIM, REPAIR REAR DECK (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Erected in 1924, the two and half-story dwelling at 4325 Fullerton features a front, sweeping gable from the 3rd to 2nd floor that characterizes it as English or Tudor Revival. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The walls are clad with light brown brick with a running limestone band between the first and second floors. The third-floor gable and the second-floor side gable siding are clad in wood clapboard. The former wood, double hung windows were in a 6/1 or 8/1 true divided light configuration, have since been replaced with 1/1 vinyl on the 2nd and 3rd floors on the front and side elevations. Each window opening has a limestone sill. Basement windows have been replaced with glass block on the side elevations. The elevated front porch shows no railing in the designation photo, and the brick porch with concrete decking remains without a railing. The arched entrance is roofed with a portico that meets the front edge of the porch and steps, flanked with brick walls that lead to a concrete arching walkway through the front yard. The lamp in the front yard has been removed.



Site Photo 1, by Staff April 20, 2023: (North) front elevation showing replaced windows on 2nd & 3rd floors, black painted siding/trim, and removed light post.



Designation Slide, 1999: (North) front/side elevation showing original windows and light post.

This property has the following HDC approvals and violations for work done without approval on Detroit Property Information System (DPI):

- Violations: Wood windows on 2nd and 3rd floors replaced with vinyl, replaced rear deck and balcony railings, removal of front yard light post, and siding and trim painted without approval.
- HDC COA, December 2019: Remove existing roof, gutters and downspouts and replace with asphalt shingles and aluminum gutters, white to match existing.



Site Photo 2, Google Streetview June 2022: (North) front/side elevation showing windows before work.



Aerial of Parcel # 14004828.



Site Photo 3, by Applicant (unknown date) March 22, 2023: (South) rear elevation, showing original windows, deck and balcony railing, siding, and trim colors.



Site Photo 4, by Applicant 2022: (South) rear elevation showing replaced windows, repaired siding, new railings, and trim/siding paint work. Notice windows on 2nd and 3rd floor have been replaced, while the original first-floor windows remain.

PROPOSAL

The proposed work consists of the following work that has been completed without approval: replace original wood windows on the second and third floors with vinyl windows, replace rear deck and balcony railings, removal of the front yard lamppost, repair of wood shake siding, and paint siding, deck and trim, color black. Please note that the applicant also submitted proof that the original doors have not been replaced, and therefore this material in the application is not a part of the proposal: the front and side doors shall remain.

WINDOW DETAILS

The applicant proposes to replace 23 original wood windows with vinyl double hung, 1/1 windows on all second and third floor elevations. The window product is sourced by Mulligan Windows of Farmington, MI. The windows were installed at all 2nd and 3rd floor elevations. All windows are white in color, no grids, simulated divide lites or muntins. See attached product details showing the window's cross-sections and dimensions.

RAILING DETAILS

The applicant states that no alterations were made to the balcony or rear deck decking, footprint or design with the exception of the railings. All existing railings were replaced with new railings and a railing added to the steps to the driveway. At the time of this report, no dimensions for the new railing have been received by staff as requested. See attached photos.

REPAIR of SIDING, PAINT and REMOVAL OF LAMP POST

The applicant states the original siding was “rotted-through” and replaced some siding pieces with “like kind” wood siding and painted black (Sherwin Williams SuperPaint Exterior Acrylic Latex, 6258 Tricorn Black). Also, the removal of the lamppost is included in this application. See attached photos.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Russell Woods- Sullivan Historic District was established in 1999. Its Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-168) provide the following guidance:
 - “Stone trim is common, and wood is almost universally used for window frames and other functional trim. Windows are commonly either metal casements or wooden sash.”
 - “Roofs on the majority of the buildings in the Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District are now asphalt shingled, whereas many were likely originally shingled in wood.”
 - “Paint colors often relate to style...Buildings of vernacular English Revival styles generally have painted woodwork and window frames of a dark brown or cream color.”
 - “Porches, shutters, window frames, cornices, and dormer windows are commonly, although not always, treated.”
 - “Common are the multiple steeply sloped, gables, and substantial chimneys present on vernacular English-Revival-influenced houses.”
 - “Recent front yard steel lamp posts with round globes are common on some blocks.”
- The current owner purchased the property in May 2009 according to Detroit Parcel Viewer data.

WINDOWS

- Staff requested original window photos and condition details and received a photo (*see Site Photo 5*) and the following description: “*When I purchased the home, it was completely derelict and had been occupied by squatters. After removing them from the property, we discovered that the second floor windows had at some point been replaced, and were non-functioning/rotted through. At first, we attempted to repair the windows, but after continual breakage, degradation, and a repair specialist telling me they weren’t able to be fixed, we were forced to use Mulligan Windows in Farmington to replace them*”.
- Staff has confirmed with the applicant that the original windows have been removed and destroyed by the window contractor.
- The applicant states that three other vendors were contacted, Majic Windows, Wallside Windows and Iovan Door and Glass, and all including the installer, Mulligan Windows, confirmed that the windows were beyond repair. It is staff’s opinion that these window suppliers may not have window repair services to adequately assess the conditions and reparability of historic windows.



Site Photo 5, by Applicant, showing conditions of original windows removed.

- From the designation slide, it is staff's observation that the original windows were wood, double-hung with a 6/1 configuration on the upper floors. It is staff's opinion that these original wood windows, their double-hung operation, and 6/1 divided lite configuration are distinctive character-defining features that have been removed/destroyed.
- Vinyl is not an appropriate material for replacement windows in the Russell-Sullivan Historic District, given its inability to faithfully replicate historic profiles, its detracting color/sheen, and its poor detailing.

REAR DECK/BALCONY RAILING

- The rear balcony and deck are not publicly visible.
- Staff observed that the rear porch, balcony and railing are not likely historic due to the layout of the deck, the previous railing having no bottom rail and overall design and construction.
- From the applicant photos, staff observed that the original railing exhibited spun spindles with a double railing top and no bottom rail, which has been replaced by square-spindled wood railing with a single top and no bottom rail. Typically, historic railings would consist of a top and bottom rail, similar to the railing added to the stairs as shown in site photo 4. Staff has the opinion that the current railing design would be more historically appropriate if the bottom rail was returned as part of a porch design rather than a deck. However, given that the bi-level deck likely predated the designation of the district, reconstruction in the manner executed would be acceptable. This is not a porch but a deck.
- While painting the deck to match the siding and trim of the house is appropriate, the color black is not appropriate, in staff's opinion, and is addressed in the next section.

REPAIR of SIDING, PAINT and REMOVAL OF LAMP POST

- Staff has no issue with the proposed repair of the wood siding.
- According to the Commissions guidelines, Color System D for Tudor Revival homes and the color black is not listed as an appropriate color for the shingle siding and deck. Dark grayish olive would be the closest appropriate color. Other colors include Moderate Brown (B6), Grayish Brown (B8), and Moderate Olive Brown (B13).
- According to the Historic Designation Advisory Board report, the period of significance for the residential architecture is between 1920 and 1949 (*See HDAB report, page 4*). According to the Elements of Design, the front yard steel lamp posts with round globes are described as "recent" and although present at the time of designation, were not likely present during the period of significance and therefore not historic age. While distinctive, it is staff's opinion that these lamp posts are not *historic*, and therefore the proposal to remove or replace this feature would be appropriate.

ISSUES

- All work in this application was completed without Historic District Commission (HDC) approval.
- No documentation establishing that the original windows were beyond repair was submitted or available.
- It is staff's opinion that the removal of the original windows and proposed replacement with vinyl windows with no divided lite alters the original *scale, design, and materiality* and that is incompatible and inappropriate for this historic property, and therefore does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Elements of Design.
- While the color black is appropriate for window sash, it is not an appropriate color for the trim, deck or shake siding.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78, Determination of Historic District Commission

Recommendation 1: Replace wood windows with vinyl windows

Staff finds that the replacement of the original wood windows with vinyl, 1/1 windows does not meet the Secretary of Interior Standards for the following reasons:

- The windows that were removed without approval were a distinctive historic feature that characterized the property. The windows dated to the building's original construction and included 6/1 divided lite, double-hung wood units.
- The application does not include documentation that the windows removed without approval were deteriorated beyond repair to an extent that merited their replacement.
- The introduction of no divided lite, which replaced the true divided lite of the original wood windows, and the introduction of vinyl windows, particularly for the front elevation, are not an adequate match for the original true divided lite of the original, double-hung windows.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the proposed window replacement, as it does not the district's Elements of Design nor meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standards:

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.

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

Recommendation 2: Replacement of rear deck and balcony railing, repair of siding, paint, and removal of lamp post

It is staff's opinion the replacement of rear deck and balcony railing, repair of wood shake siding, painting of the siding and trim, and removal of the front yard lamp post is appropriate. Staff therefore recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed because it meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.

Staff recommends the Certificate of Appropriateness be issued with the following conditions:

- The shingle siding, deck and trim be repainted a color selected from Color System D of the HDC color chart guidelines.