

STAFF REPORT 06-14-2023 MEETING

PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG

APPLICATION NUMBER: 23-8392

ADDRESS: 1524-1550 BAGLEY (AKA 1530 BAGLEY)

HISTORIC DISTRICT: CORKTOWN

APPLICANT/ARCHITECT: TIMOTHY R. FLINTOFF/4545 ARCHITECTURE

DATE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION: 05-22-2023

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 05-31-2023

SCOPE: ERECT MULTI-FAMILY BUILDING

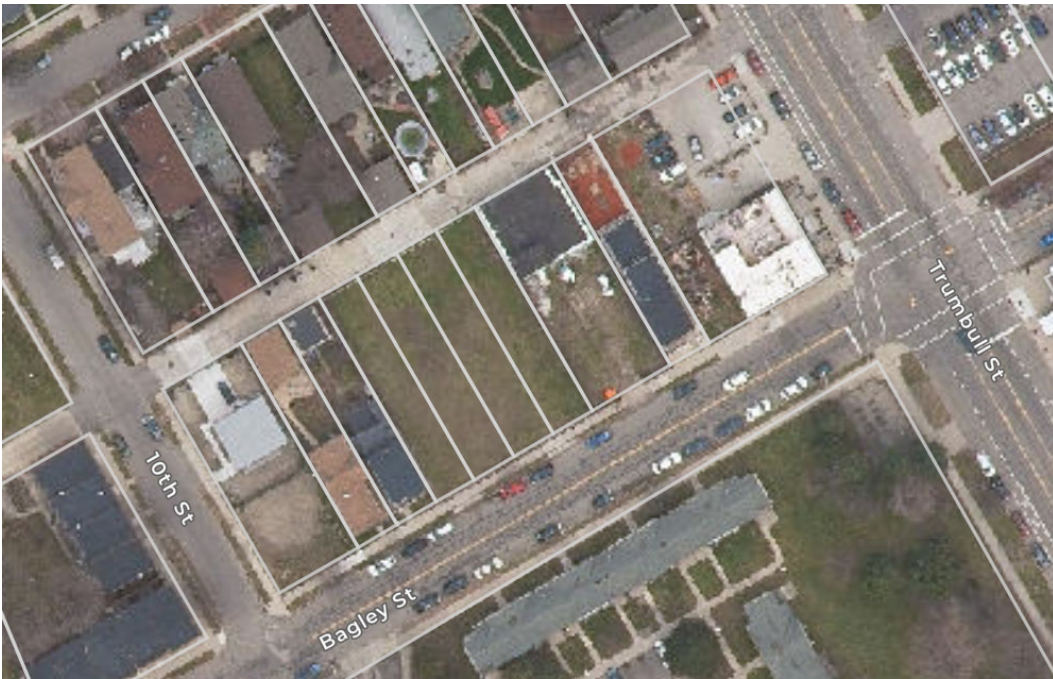
EXISTING CONDITIONS

The project site is composed of five parcels on the north side of Bagley, between Trumbull Avenue and 10th Street. The lots, with the exception of a non-contributing concrete block building oriented to the rear of 1520 Bagley, are vacant lots with a mowed lawn. Both the alley and the sidewalk frontage are enclosed with non-historic fencing.



View of existing conditions at 1530 Bagley, looking towards the north. Development site is the vacant area at center. Staff photo, May 31, 2023.

The project vicinity is of varied architectural and urban character. Immediately to the west of the site are two nineteenth-century frame houses. Along 10th is a strikingly modern metal building approved by the Commission some years back, which will ultimately be joined by a new modern corner building at 10th and Bagley. Towards the east is the commercial bulk of Trumbull, which extends down Bagley in the form of another recent Commission approval for a concrete block building. The parcels to the south, not in the historic district, are built up with the 7-acre Clement Kern Gardens housing development, which is approaching forty years old. The historic context, like much of Corktown, can be described as eclectic and diverse in character, form, finish, and use.



Subject development parcels shown in red outline. Detroit Parcel Viewer.



View of Bagley street context at east end, at Trumbull Staff photo, May 31, 2023.



Sidewalk view towards site, in front of historic home to west. Staff photo, May 31, 2023.



Alley view towards site, showing Clement Kerns Gardens buildings across Bagley. Staff photo, May 31, 2023.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Per the submitted drawings and narrative, the applicant is proposing to erect a 3-story, 11-unit multi-family building in a contemporary design, and an 11-space surface parking lot, as such:

The ground level will consist of six one-bedroom flats, with small front porches and entry doors facing Bagley, and five 2-story units occupying levels two and three. Each of the upper units also have entry doors at grade. The upper units have balconies, with two having access to a roof deck. Parking is at the rear, accessed from the alley.

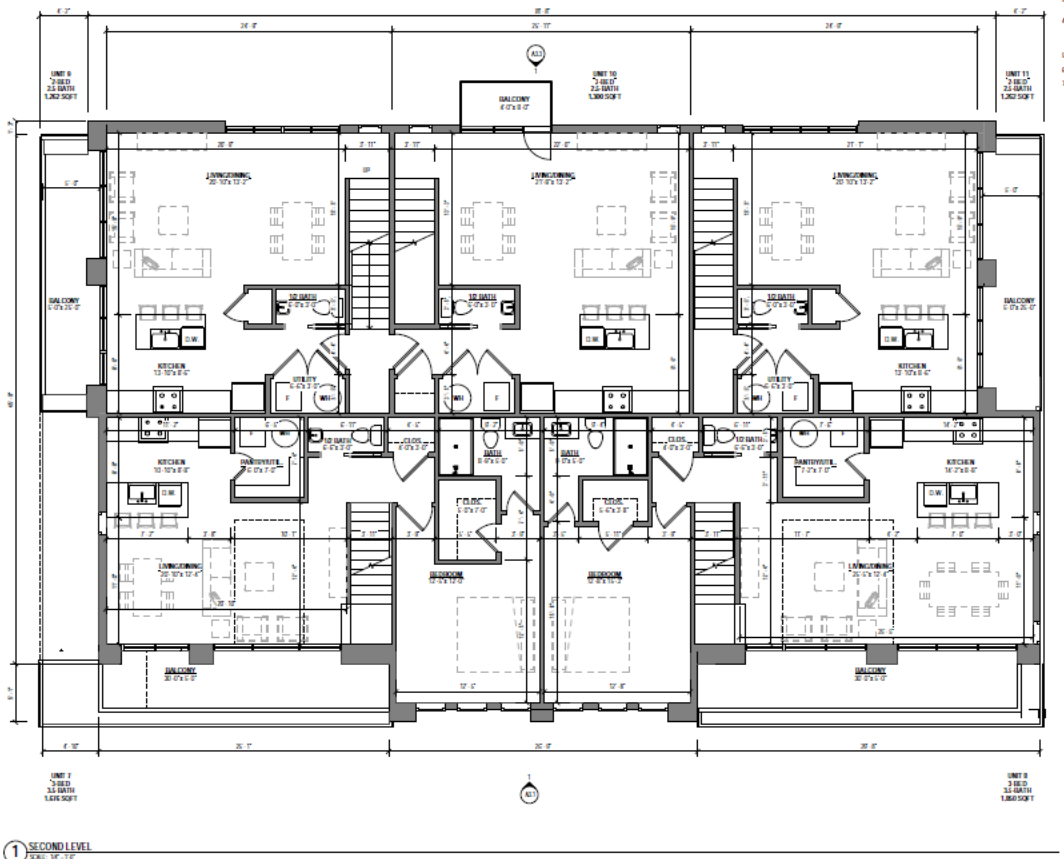
The building is 37' in height, and is set back 4'-0" from the sidewalk, which is intended to continue an "urban street wall" established by the commercial buildings near Trumbull, and continued west to 10th Street by the Beyster Terrace rowhouses and the newly constructed Coachman townhouses. The applicant also notes that Clement Kerns Gardens, across the street to the south, will soon be redeveloped at a higher density with mixed uses.

To create relief between the proposed three-story building and the two historic-age single-family house to the west, the applicant is proposing a pedestrian pathway at the west property line as a visual break. Additionally, the second and third stories of the proposed building step back along the west side.

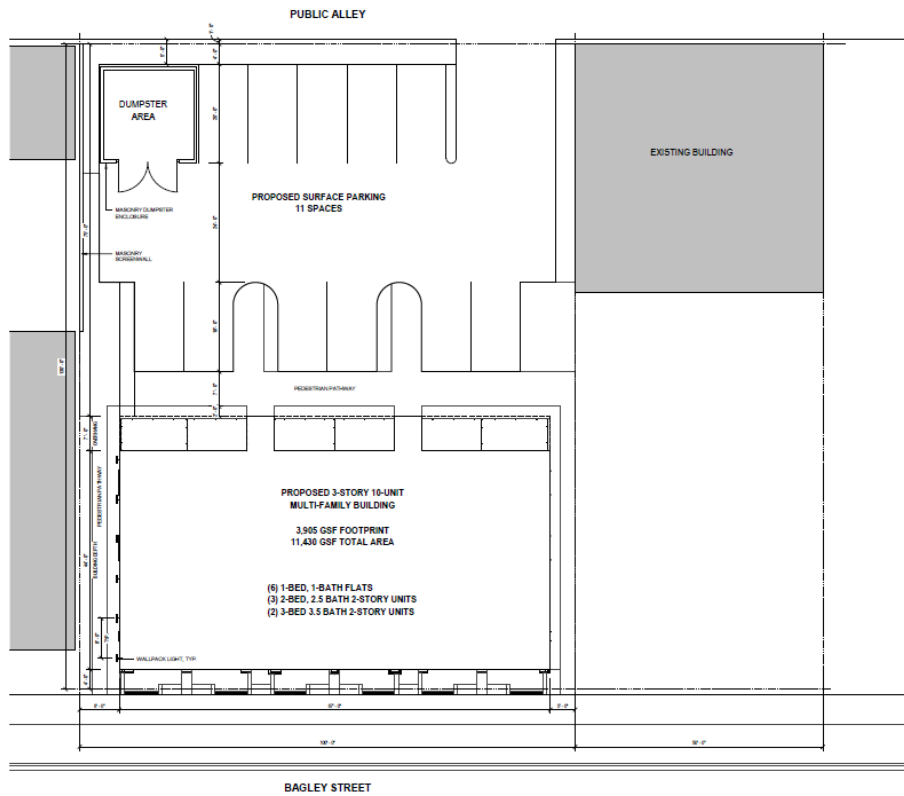


Elevation view from applicant's submission materials, above. Perspective rendering, below.





2nd floor plan from applicant's submission materials, above. Site plan, below.



STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Corktown Historic District was established in 1984.
- As a guide to new construction, the [Elements of Design](#) for this district does offer the following (excerpted) relevant points. For each Element, the applicant has provided a comment, after which staff assessment is discussed:
 - **Element 1, Height:** *Most residential buildings in the district range from one (1) story to two and one half (2½) stories tall*
 - Applicant: 37'-0" to the top of the parapet/guardrail.
 - HDC Staff: No concerns/acceptable.
 - **Element 2, Proportion of buildings' front facades:** *Proportion varies in the district, depending on the age, style and type of building*
 - Applicant: Front façade is broken horizontally into thirds and is generally symmetrical
 - HDC Staff: As a modern building, staff is satisfied that the proportion is appropriate.
 - **Element 3, Proportion of openings within the facades:** *Window openings are usually taller than wide, but there are also square openings and transom window openings which are wider than tall. Window openings are almost always subdivided...*
 - Applicant: The front façade is generally equal in solid wall and openings
 - HDC Staff: Windows are not subdivided. In staff's opinion, a necessary level of detail and articulation is missing, and this Element is not met.
 - **Element 4, Rhythm of solids to voids in front facades:** *...post-1880s Queen Anne style buildings exhibit a greater freedom, with their bay windows and combinations of windows in gables...*
 - Applicant: Voids are grouped together in threes, which align vertically on each level.
 - HDC Staff: No concerns/acceptable.



Proposed front elevation. Lack of subdivided windows create large areas of glass and a deficit of detail.

- **Element 5, Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets:** *The original pattern of spacing of buildings on streets was that of houses placed very close together.*
 - Applicant: The middle of the block is currently empty of buildings, but the spacing of buildings at either end of the block features tight side setbacks. The proposed building maintains a slightly larger setback on the west to give relief to the existing historic homes

- HDC Staff: No concerns/acceptable.
- **Element 6, Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections:** *Most houses in the district have projecting front porches, usually on one (1) side of the front façade and sometimes wrapping around to the side...some Victorian houses have a secondary porch on the side*
 - Applicant: Front porch projections are distributed equally along the front façade and align with the openings above.
 - HDC Staff: No concerns/acceptable
- **Element 7, Relationship of materials:** *The great majority of buildings in the district are wood frame structures originally clad in clapboard with wooden skirting or brick foundations...There are some brick residential buildings in the district, the majority of these being duplexes and multi-unit dwellings*
 - Applicant: The exterior is mostly two colors of gray brick with accents of dark gray metal and cedar-colored wood-look siding. The rear (north) elevation utilizes large format GFRC panels for the upper two stories.
 - HDC Staff: No concerns/acceptable. Brick at the public-facing elevations is critical to acceptable conformance with this Element, in staff's opinion.
- **Element 8, Relationship of textures:** *...Detailed brickwork on brick buildings contributes to textural interest when it exists*
 - Applicant: The texture of brick is mostly continuous throughout the elevations. A woodgrain textured GFRC siding helps to break this up as an accent near window openings.
 - HDC Staff: While the masonry texture is important, the building still exhibits a certain starkness and lack of texture. The only relief to the running brick bond are some soldier courses at the parapet and top floor lintels. Staff recommends incorporating some additional minor brick variation/courses as may be compatible with modern buildings of the type.
- **Element 9, Relationship of colors:** *Paint colors in the district generally relate to style*
 - Applicant: The color palette is generally gray tones with an accent of cedar colored wood-look GFRC siding.
 - HDC Staff: The building is very gray. Though neutral tones are a hallmark of contemporary architecture, some areas of accent color may be preferred in the otherwise colorful context of Corktown, and may help with Elements 8 (texture) and 19 (complexity).
- **Element 10, Relationship of architectural details:** *These generally relate to style...In general, Corktown is rich in its diversity and quality of architectural styles and detail.*
 - Applicant: The detailing is kept minimal and clean. The organization of façade elements creates the overall character of the elevations. Brick is used to create a solid base and wraps the three portions of the front façade. Within these areas, the façade steps back, creating depth and a tectonic quality to the façade.
 - HDC Staff: While we generally agree, another level of detail, that being subdivided windows as discussed above,
- **Element 11, Relationship of roof shapes:** *Pitched roofs with frontal gables predominate in the district...commercial buildings generally have flat roofs.*
 - Applicant: The building features a flat roof.
 - HDC Staff: No concerns/acceptable for the building type.
- **Element 12, Walls of continuity:** *The major wall of continuity is created by the buildings...*
 - Applicant: The minimal front setback continues an urban street edge established by the

- buildings to the east.
 - HDC Staff: We agree.
- ***Element 13, Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments:*** *The typical treatment of individual properties is a shallow flat front lawn area in grass turf, subdivided by a concrete walk leading to the front entrance and sometimes a concrete walk leading to the side entrance.*
 - Applicant: Built-in planter boxes along the outer edge of the front-facing balconies add greenery to the front elevation. Landscape buffers are used at the rear of the property to screen parking.
 - HDC Staff: Though renderings appear to show some new trees and plantings, no site or landscape plan showing new plantings, or the buffer described above, has been received.
- ***Element 14, Relationship of open space to structures:*** *Open space in the form of front yards to buildings is generally very shallow*
 - Applicant: Each unit has access to a small private outdoor space.
 - HDC Staff: Though the building adds considerable bulk to the block, it is not inconsistent with the historic density of Corktown. Acceptable.
- ***Element 15, Scale of facades and façade elements:*** *The majority of buildings in the district are small in scale...Façade elements...are moderate in scale. Details within these elements are generally small in scale.*
 - Applicant: The building is generally wider than it is tall. The front elevation is broken into three horizontal portions. Within these, a consistent rhythm of solid and void is created.
 - HDC Staff: No concerns/acceptable scale for this building type.
- ***Element 16, Directional expression of front elevations:*** *Two-story Italianate and Greek Revival single-family residences are vertical in directional expression...two-story Queen Anne buildings are either neutral in directional expression or have vertically expressed front facades...*
 - Applicant: While the overall façade is horizontal in nature, the stacked vertically oriented windows create a vertical expression.
 - HDC Staff: No concerns/acceptable
- ***Element 17, Rhythm of building setbacks:*** *Setbacks vary from area to area...although they are usually consistent within blocks. In general, buildings have very shallow front yards...Buildings on the north-south streets and corners are very close to the front lot lines.*
 - Applicant: The minimal front setback continues an urban street edge established by the buildings to the east.
 - HDC Staff: No concerns/acceptable
- ***Element 18, Relationship of lot coverage:*** *Lot coverage ranges...the average residential coverage being approximately forty (40) percent.*
 - Applicant: a. Lot Size: 13,000sf, b. Building Footprint: 3,905sf, Percentage of lot Coverage: 30.0%
 - HDC Staff: No concerns/acceptable
- ***Element 19, Degree of complexity within the façade:*** *Early buildings are simple and straightforward. Queen Anne buildings are more complex in massing and detail but are not overly complex.*
 - Applicant: The façade is organized and consistent.
 - HDC Staff: A historically appropriate level of complexity can be achieved by

subdividing the windows, or alternately providing protruding brick courses, recesses, or other additional brick detailing as described in Elements 3, 8, and 9.

- ***Element 20, Orientation, vistas, overviews:*** *Garages are oriented toward the alleys...the general overview is that of small-scale mixed-use neighborhood...*
 - Applicant: The building will be highly visible when travelling either direction along Bagley. From the building, the upper units offer views to downtown to the east, and the train station and bridges to the west.
 - HDC Staff: No concerns/acceptable scale and orientation for the type.

- ***Element 21, Symmetric or asymmetric appearance:*** *Most buildings in the district are asymmetrical in appearance, but result in balanced compositions.*
 - Applicant: The overall appearance is symmetrical.
 - HDC Staff: We agree. However, per the Element, such symmetry is not common. There is a strong classical, symmetrical emphasis to the building created by the projecting center bays. However, multi-family buildings in the district do tend more towards symmetry.

- ***Element 22, General environmental character:*** *The Corktown Historic District, with its narrow lots, shallow front yards, and small-scaled buildings, has a low-density, urban, mixed use character of a pre-automobile city...*
 - Applicant: Corktown is made up of modestly detailed small-scale homes on narrow lots creating a dense walkable neighborhood. Outside of the Michigan Avenue corridor, few multi-story commercial buildings exist. However, this block of Bagley does feature this type of larger scale building. The proposed structure follows the simple massing and closely spaced arrangement precedent set by the existing neighborhood context. The homes and buildings in Corktown were built over various periods of time and are examples of many architectural styles. What makes the neighborhood cohesive is the attention to scale, proportion, and quality in each home regardless of style. While the proposed structure utilizes some contemporary elements, the overall scale, massing, and textural quality are inspired by and designed to complement the overall Corktown character..
 - HDC Staff: No concerns/acceptable

ISSUES

- As described in the Elements of Design analysis above, staff assesses that slightly more detailing, incorporated in window subdivision, brick coursing, color accents, or other added complexity is necessary for the design to be found appropriate under the Standards and in conformance with the Elements of Design.
- In general, the building gives a stark impression that is rooted in simple forms and symmetry; the earthtones chosen for materials and finishes reinforce this rigid, heavy character. Adding additional asymmetries and/or areas of finer detail or other visual interest may be necessary, consistent with many neighborhood residential prototypes, to fully contextualize the building into its diverse historic context.
- Landscape plan not included.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-73, Certificate of Appropriateness

The proposed new construction infills vacant parcels and is compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features of its environment, and does not destroy historic materials that characterize the property.

Staff therefore recommends that the proposal should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Corktown Historic District's Elements of Design, with the condition that:

- Additional detailing, which may include additional subdivision of windows, relief or variation in the brickwork, or other accents/complexity be added to the design. Such revisions are subject to staff approval.
- Landscape plan subject to staff review and approval be submitted