

STAFF REPORT: AUGUST 9, 2023 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO

APPLICATION NUMBER: 23-8483

ADDRESS: 2432 W BOSTON

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT: JOHN MCCARTER CONSTRUCTION

OWNER: YUKON CONSULTING LLC

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: JULY 13, 2023

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: AUGUST 1, 2023

SCOPE: REHABILITATE DWELLING AND GARAGE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1922, the property at 2432 W. Boston is a two-and-one-half story, brown brick house facing north onto the street. It is Tudor Revival in style, with irregular massing and roofline and an asymmetrical façade. Distinctive features include a prominent, projecting, bracketed cross gable (formerly clad with stucco), recessed, round-arched entry porches, decorative brickwork above a gabled front entryway, and rows of mullioned windows. A two-bay, hip roof garage in the rear yard is also subject of this application. Both buildings have asphalt shingle roofs.



August 2023 photo by staff.

The twenty-first-century history of this property is one of extensive rehabilitation work, some of which has been appropriate, and some of which has been inappropriate. In 2003 a fire destroyed much of the second floor and attic story. The Historic District Commission issued a Certificate of Appropriateness on March 19, 2003, for repairs, including the replacement of three windows “to match the materials and configuration of the existing.” (Photos show that more than three windows were damaged; the treatment of the remaining windows was not specified.) On May 11, 2004, the property owner was issued a violation notice for the installation of an

unspecified number of vinyl windows. A comparison of photos from that time with Google Street View images shows that several second-floor windows were changed, yet again, between 2018 and 2022. Historic District Commission records are unclear in that they do not specify which windows are the subject of the 2003 Certificate of Appropriateness, which windows are the subject of the 2004 violation notice, and which, if any of the windows replaced between 2018 and 2022 may have been subject of the 2003 Certificate of Appropriateness. Nonetheless, the property presently includes both inappropriate vinyl windows and recently installed, historically appropriate (but unfinished) wood windows, as described in greater detail below.



Left: North elevation in 2003. Right: West elevation in 2003. Staff photos from Historic District Commission files.



Left: North elevation in 2004. Right: West elevation in 2004. Staff photos from Historic District Commission files.

Google Street View photos also show that the stucco on the front-facing (north-facing) gable was removed between 2015 and 2019. This area is now covered with oriented-strand board (OSB). There is no record of

Historic District Commission approval for this work. Staff is reasonably confident, based on Google photos as well as photos provided by the applicant, that no historic stucco remains beneath the OSB.

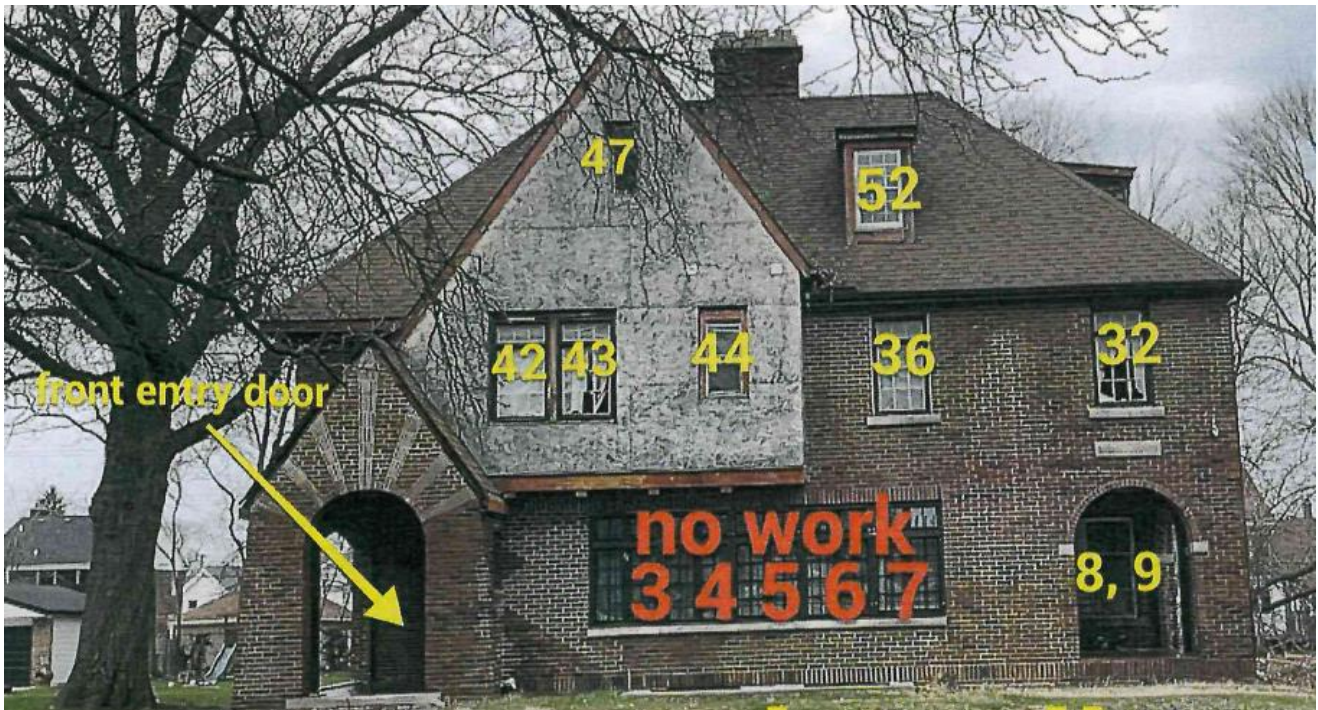
PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes an exterior rehabilitation of house and garage consisting of multiple scope items. The proposed work largely consists of replacing deteriorated features with new features.

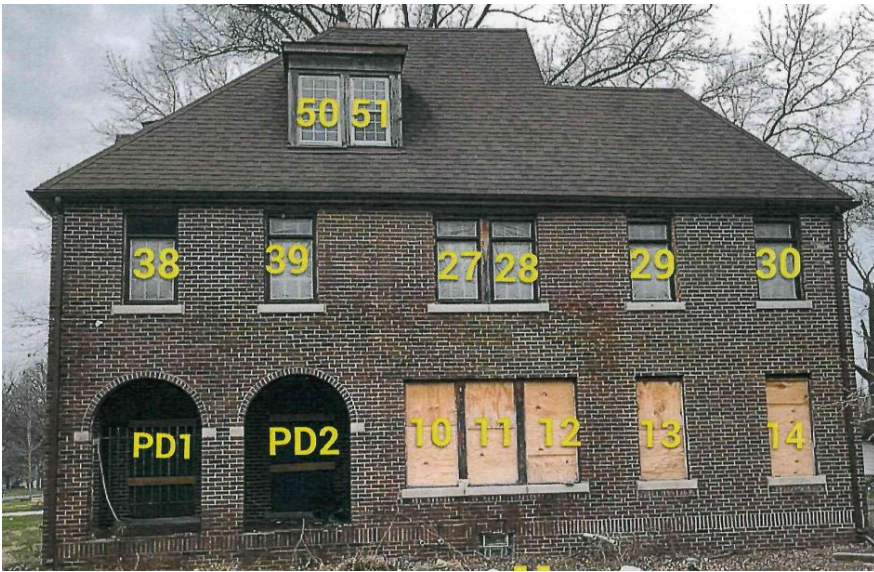
Windows

The applicant proposes to install 49 windows on the house and two on the garage. The existing window openings, numbered 1 through 58 and G1–G2 in the provided window schedule, are presently a mix of historic wood windows in varying conditions, vinyl windows, non-historic wood windows, and boarded-up openings from which windows are presently missing.

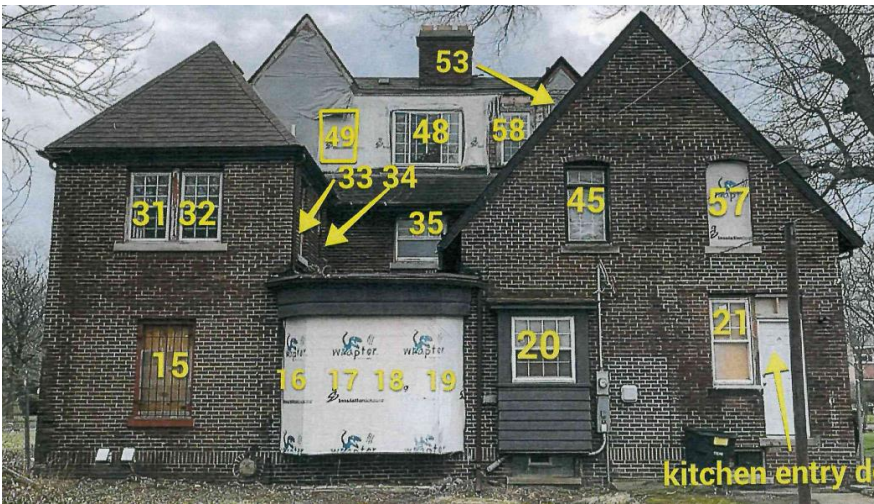
Nine historic windows not proposed for replacement are groupings of mullioned windows: windows 3–7 (the prominent grouping of mullioned windows on the ground floor, front/south elevation), windows 24–26 (a grouping of three mullioned windows on the second floor, rear/north elevation), and window 23 (a small window on the rear/north elevation).



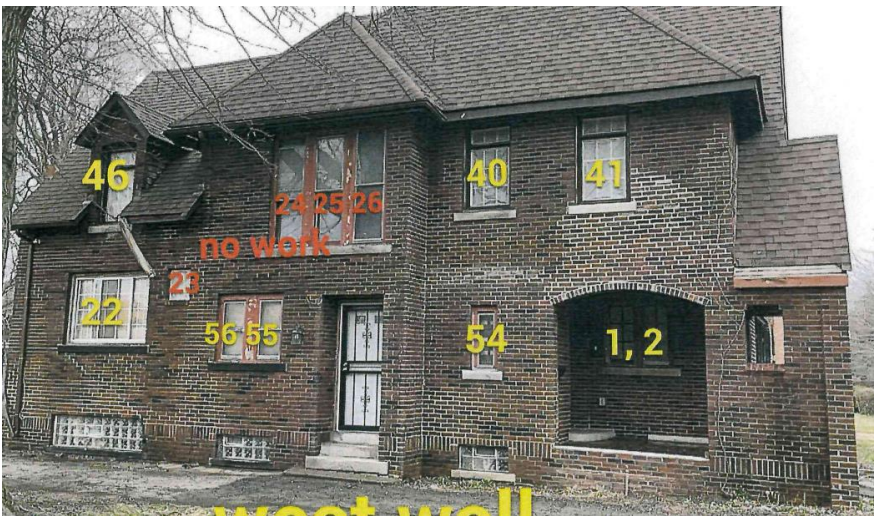
North elevation. Illustration by applicant. Note that “32” is a typo; it should be “37.”



West elevation.



South elevation.



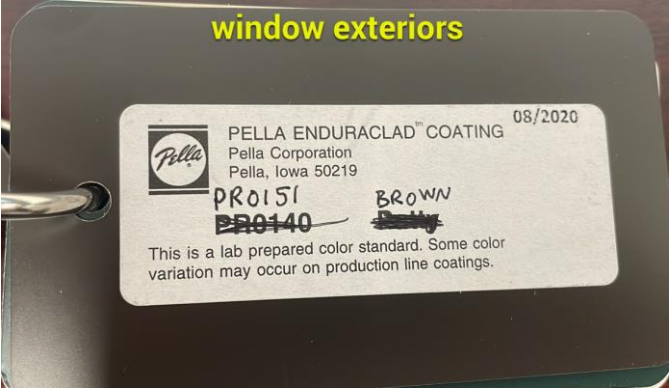
East elevation.

The proposed new windows are Pella Lifestyle aluminum-clad wood windows with simulated divided lights. Most are double-hung, six-over-six, sash windows. A few are casement, fixed, or awning windows, varying by placement. The proposed color is brown. (Note that the submitted window schedule shows between-the-class grilles; a subsequent email from the applicant clarifies that the application is for simulated divided lights.)

The center portion of a north-facing (rear) bay window (17–18 in the submitted window schedule and shown in the images above) is proposed to be replaced with a Pella Lifestyle Contemporary aluminum-clad wood door in brown with simulated divided lights.



Pella Lifestyle Contemporary sliding door. Rendering from product website.



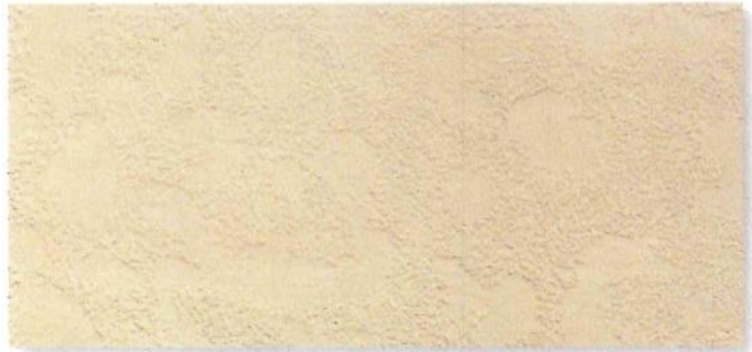
Proposed window color provided by applicant.

Stucco panels

The applicant proposes to install HardiePanel brand, fiber-cement, simulated stucco panels in several locations.



Proposed HardiePanel locations. Left to right: North elevation, west elevation, south elevation. Images by applicant.

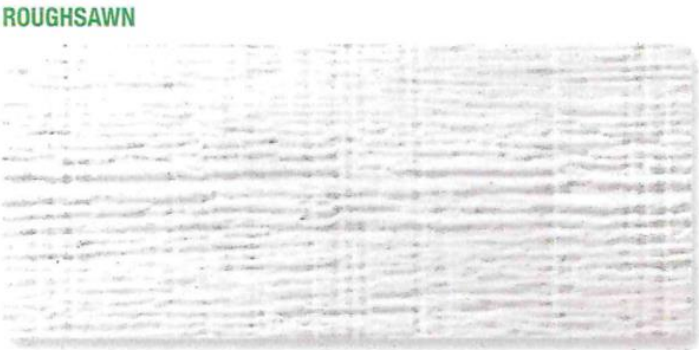


Size	4 ft x 8 ft	4 ft x 9 ft	4 ft x 10 ft
STATEMENT COLLECTION™			
DREAM COLLECTION™	✓		✓
PRIME	✓	✓	✓

Stucco HardiePanel image provided in application materials.

Soffits on house and garage

The applicant proposes to replace all soffits and associated trim on the house and garage with fiber-cement HardiPanel. A color is not specified.



Proposed replacement materials. Images from application documents.

Front door

The applicant proposes to replace the front door with a Thermatru Classic Craft Mahogany Grain fiberglass door.



Left: Application photo of existing front door. Center: Sketch of proposed door from application materials. Right: Mahogany wood grain pattern from product website.

Rear door

The applicant proposes to replace a non-historic, rear (south elevation), steel door with a Thermatru Smooth Star fiberglass door and transom. Also proposed for that location is a Larson aluminum storm door.



Left: Existing door. Photo from applicant. Center and right: Proposed door and storm door. Images from application materials.

Side porch doors

West-facing porch doors are proposed to be replaced with Pella Reserve Traditional double inswing doors,

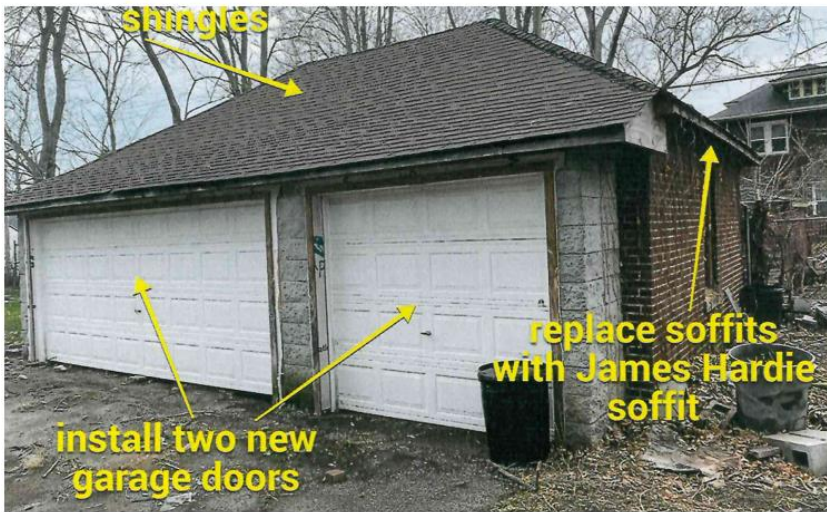
aluminum-clad wood, with five by two simulated divided lights.



Left: Existing porch doors, photos from application. Right: Pella Reserve Traditional door (shown without simulated divided lights), image from product website.

Garage roof

Garage roof shingles are proposed to be replaced. The proposed new material is GAF Timberline HDZ shingles in hickory color.



Left: photo of garage from application. Right: Timberline hickory shingles. Image from product website.

Garage doors

The existing garage doors are proposed for replacement with new, Haas 600 Series, segmented steel doors.

Gutters

Aluminum, 6", K-style gutters are proposed for the house and garage.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston-Edison Historic District was established by resolution of the City Council in 1974. No Final Report was prepared for this district. The Elements of Design for Boston-Edison provide the following relevant observations:
 - “Windows openings are virtually always taller than wide; however, several windows are sometimes grouped into a combination that is wider than tall. Window openings are always subdivided. The most common window type is double-hung with sashes that are generally further subdivided by muntins or leaded glass.”
 - “The majority of houses are faced with brick, while many are partially or totally stucco. There are some stone buildings, sometimes combined with stucco; clapboard is rare and is extremely rare as the sole material. Roofing includes slate, tile, and asphalt shingles. Wood shingle roofs were once common and have generally been replaced with asphalt. Wood shake does not exist and there is no known evidence that it was ever used in the district. Stone trim is common. Wood is almost universally used for window frames and other functional trim and is used in many examples for all trim.”
 - “The most common relationship of textures in the district is that of a low-relief pattern of mortar joints in brick contrasted with the smooth surface of wood or stone trim. There are a few houses with rough or rusticated stone surfaces. The use of stucco or concrete, with or without half-timbering, as a contrast to brick surfaces, is not unusual. Tile, slate, or wood shingle roofs have particular textural values where they exist. Asphalt shingles generally have little textural interest, even in those types which purport to imitate some other variety.”
 - “Where stucco or concrete exists, it usually remains in its natural state, or is painted in a shade of cream. Roofs are in natural colors (tile and slate colors, natural and stained wood colors), and asphalt shingles are predominantly within this same dark color range. Paint colors often relate to style.”
 - “Buildings of Medieval inspiration, notably Neo-Tudor, generally have painted woodwork and window frames of a dark brown or cream color.”
- Windows 10–19, 49, and 57 are missing. The applicant has stated that they were removed at an unknown date and staff has no information regarding their prior appearance or their removal. As a result, the guidance of *Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards* with respect to “replacement windows where no historic windows remain” (National Park Service, 2007) applies: “The appearance of the replacement windows must be consistent with the general characteristics of a historic window of the type and period, but need not replicate the missing historic window ... this may be accomplished using substitute materials.” Staff observes that the proposed window configurations are comparable to those of other buildings of the same period and style and are consistent with the Boston-Edison Historic District and its Elements of Design.
- Windows 27–30, 36–43, 45, and 46 have a casement lower portion and an awning upper portion, and appear to be either non-historic windows or historic windows that have been modified to the point that they can no longer be considered original or historic features. They appear to date from 2018–2022, as noted above. The windows appear to be the result of prior fabrication work that was never completed. They have muntins that appear to be made of unpainted pine and glass is not present. With the original windows missing, the guidance cited in the previous point also applies here; staff suggests the proposed windows are appropriate.



Details of non-historic windows proposed for replacement. Images by applicant, cropped by staff.

- Windows 17 and 18, located within a larger bay window on the south (rear) elevation, are proposed to be replaced with a larger, sliding door. This would necessarily require enlarging the opening. Staff suggests that while the bay window itself is a character-defining feature, the placement of individual units within the bay window is not. Also, as noted above, the windows are already missing. Thus, staff suggests that the guidance of *Evaluating Historic Windows for Repair or Replacement* (National Park Service, 2007) applies: “The number of windows being replaced is a consideration that may allow for window replacement that does not depend on deterioration. It may be possible that the replacement of a few windows may have only an inconsequential effect on the character of an elevation with many windows. Thus, where a need such as egress can be achieved with little change to the appearance of the building, a few windows may be replaced irrespective of their condition.



Windows 17 and 18 proposed to be replaced with a sliding door. Photos from application materials.

- Windows 8 and 9 are historic windows missing the lower sash. The openings are covered by storm windows and bars, suggesting this condition may have existed for some time. The openings are not

visible in 1980 Historic Designation Advisory Board photos or in more recent Google photos due to being within what was, at the time, an enclosed porch. Staff suggests that the guidance quoted in the two points above also applies here, and the proposed new windows are appropriate.

- The proposed brown window color is appropriate, as noted in the Elements of Design.
- The applicant has submitted photographs of the front entrance door showing damage including warped wood components (possibly a veneer) on the exterior and extensive use of wood filler on the interior.
- Other than the front entry door, other doors on the house and garage appear to be non-historic replacements. Staff has no information regarding the appearance of the historic doors. There is also no record of the replacement doors having been approved, though in some cases, they may pre-date the enactment of the historic district.
- The proposed rear (south) door and storm door replaces a non-historic door with a compatible new door.
- The existing porch doors do not appear to be intended for exterior use and may date from the era when the porch was enclosed. Due to their recessed, west-facing location, they are minimally visible. Staff suggests that their replacement is appropriate.
- The proposed garage shingle work replaces a worn, historically appropriate material with matching material.
- The garage doors are not a historic feature; the Secretary of the Interior's Standards do not require that they be retained. However, the new doors must be compatible in materials and visual qualities.
- The proposed gutters are appropriate.

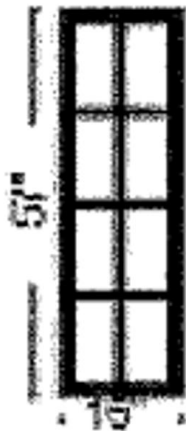
ISSUES

- Windows 1, 2, 53–56, and both garage windows appear to be original or historic windows. According to the submitted window schedule, their condition is listed as either “fair” or “missing parts.” Based on applicant photos, the windows seem to have missing glass, missing rope, or to be painted over, all conditions that are repairable. Standards #2 and #6 (quoted below) require that historic materials and features be retained unless they are deteriorated beyond repair.



Examples of historic windows proposed for replacement.

- Window 47 is a historic arched window, yet the proposed replacement is not. The proposed replacement of window 53 would also replace a distinctive irregular window with a rectangular window. This is contrary to Standard #2, which requires that “alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.”



Window #47. Left: existing window, photo by staff. Right: proposed window from application materials.

- The areas of the south (rear) and west (side) elevation, proposed for replacement with HardiPanel stucco, historically are presently clad in wood shingles. Based on the age and architectural style of the house, this is presumed to be a historic material and is certainly a character-defining feature. Standard #2 states that “the removal of historic materials ... shall be avoided.” If the historic materials are deteriorated beyond repair, Standard #6 states that the replacement features must “match the old in design, color, texture, and where possible, materials.” Thus, the existing wood siding must be retained, or, if deteriorated beyond repair, be replaced in kind.

- The proposed HardiePanel stucco installation is likewise inappropriate for the same reasons mentioned in the previous bullet point. It replaces a missing historic material with a new material that differs in appearance and texture from traditionally applied stucco. In staff’s opinion, the material, texture, and detailing of fiber-cement siding panels and siding, as well as their propensity to weather and age differently from traditional materials, makes them inappropriate for repairs on historic buildings. True applied stucco remains technically and financially feasible.
- The application includes a photo showing that one area of the soffit has deteriorated; however, there is not enough information to determine if the entirety of the soffits on the house and garage have deteriorated beyond repair. Standard #6 directs that the replacement of historic features shall be avoided unless they are deteriorated beyond repair.
- Further, Standard #6 states that a synthetic replacement would not be appropriate: “Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, other visual qualities, and where possible, materials.” Thus, a replacement should be wood, rather than the proposed James Hardie soffit and trim.



- Photographs of the front entrance door show a large degree of deterioration, but staff is not convinced that it is beyond feasible repair. Standard #2 requires that “the removal of historic features ... shall be avoided.” This is particularly true of a “distinctive feature,” such as a unique front door (Standard #5).
- A front entrance door is typically a distinctive, character-defining feature worthy of preservation. This is especially so in Tudor Revival architecture, where doors tend to be heavy, solid wood panel doors, with unique detail and complexity. The proposed new door is much simpler than the historic door in that it lacks the depth, depth, battens, glazing, and curved wood panels of the historic door. Replacing the historic door with a simpler new door is contrary to Standard #6: “the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, and where possible, materials.”
- Specifications for the proposed west-facing porch doors are not provided in the application materials.
- A cut sheet provided for the proposed garage doors provides several options for colors, textures, and glazing, but does not indicate which options are proposed.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78: Determinations of Historic District Commission (Recommendation One, Denial of historic window replacement and historic wood cladding replacement)

Staff concludes that the proposed replacement of windows 1, 2, 47, 53–56, and both garage windows does not meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the following reasons:

- The windows are historic materials that have not been shown to be deteriorated beyond repair.
- For windows 47 and 53, the proposed work replaces nonrectangular windows with rectangular windows.

Staff concludes that the proposed replacement of previously existing stucco cladding and existing wood cladding with HardiPanel stucco does not meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the following reasons:

- The wood cladding is a historic material, and the wood dormers, bay windows, and rear-facing gable end are a distinctive feature; they have not been shown to be deteriorated beyond repair.
- The lost stucco was a historic material, and it was not shown to have been deteriorated beyond repair prior to having been removed; also, it can be feasibly replaced in kind.
- The proposed work would replace two historic materials (wood shingles and true stucco) with a different material (fiber-cement siding and panels) of different textures and other visual qualities.

Staff concludes that the proposed front door replacement does not meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the following reasons:

- The existing front door is a distinctive feature that has not been shown to be beyond feasible repair.
- The proposed replacement, lacking the battens, recessed panels, and square window of the historic door, lacks the necessary texture and depth to serve as an appropriate replacement.

Therefore, staff recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the proposed replacement of windows 1, 2, 47, 53–56, and both garage windows, the proposed replacement of stucco and wood with fiber-cement panels and siding, and the proposed front door replacement as the proposed work fails to meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular:

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 historic 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, other visual qualities, and where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be documented by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

Section 21-2-78: Determinations of Historic District Commission (Recommendation Two Certificate of Appropriateness)

Staff recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the remaining work items as they meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, with the following conditions:

- Existing historic window trim will be retained. If it is deteriorated beyond repair, its replacement will be subject to approval by staff.
- The soffit panels may be replaced only to the extent that they have deteriorated beyond repair. The new soffit and trim panels will be wood rather than synthetic fiber-cement panels and will be painted a color selected from Color System D or another color approved by staff.
- The color of the proposed rear (south) doors will be a color selected from Color System D or another color approved by staff.
- The selection of garage doors will be subject to approval by staff.
- The color of gutters will be a color selected from Color System D or another color approved by staff.