

STAFF REPORT: SEPTEMBER 13, 2023 MEETING

PREPARED BY: A. DYE

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2023-00024

ADDRESS: 2241 (2245) WABASH

HISTORIC DISTRICT: CORKTOWN

APPLICANT: MARC GRASSI, PUSH DESIGN

PROPERTY OWNER: COURTNEY JENSEN

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: AUGUST 21, 2023

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: AUGUST 30, 2023

SCOPE: ERECT REAR ADDITION AND SIDE PORCH

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Erected in 1864, the dwelling at 2241/2245 Wabash, known as the Joseph H. Esterling House, is located on the west side of the street, the third house/fourth lot south of Michigan Avenue. From the Historic Designation Advisory Board’s Corktown Final Report:

Joseph H. Esterling, the first owner of this house, was a carpenter and contractor of Prussian heritage. Members of this family resided here until 1954. As a result, there has been very little alteration to the original floor plan and architectural features.

A significant event in the westward expansion of Corktown was the arrival of the street railroad on Michigan Avenue in 1863, one year before the Esterling house was built. The Esterling House is a fine example of a single-family Italianate residence. The structure is sheathed in clapboard and has Italianate “eyebrow” window hoods, small eave brackets, a porch with elongated columns, and a bay window containing upper panes with rounded corners. The house is entered through a handsome set of double doors with a transom above.



*Left: Staff photo, September 7, 2023.
Below: Detroit Parcel Viewer.*

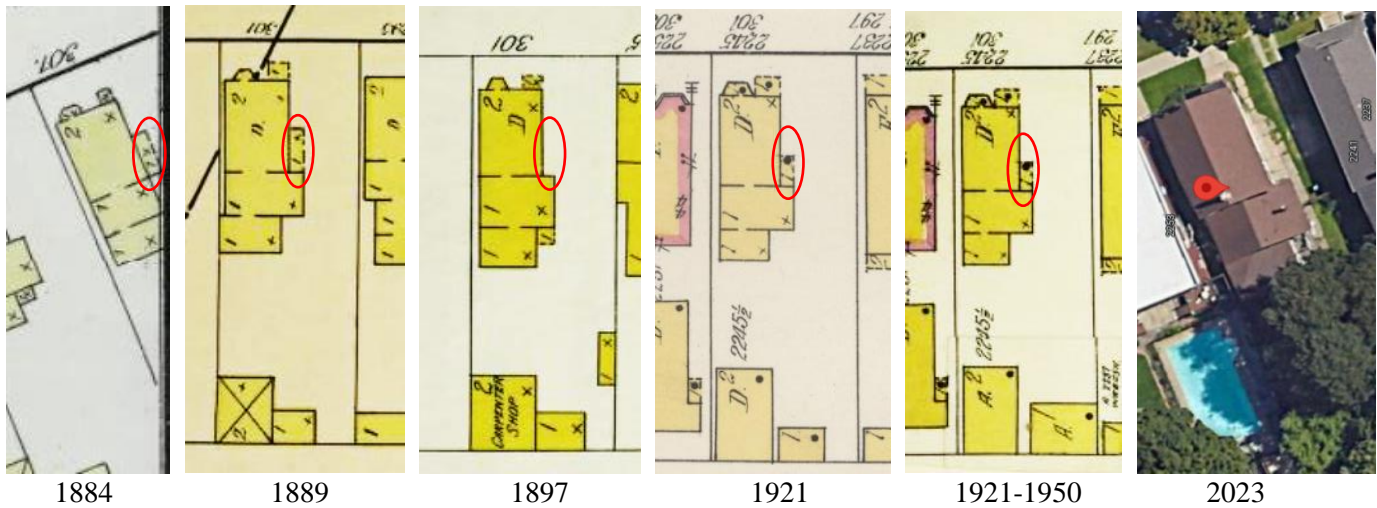


PROPOSAL

- Erect a second story at existing rear extension (and within existing footprint).
- Erect a one-story addition (21'-7" wide x 18'-7" deep) that will extend to the south from the rear extension.
- Erect a covered porch at existing side (front-facing) entrance.
- Clean, repair exterior siding and trim. Paint with new color scheme.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Corktown Historic District was established in 1984.
- The house was erected in 1864. The first documentation of the house available to the city is the 1884 Sanborn map. Reviewing the succeeding Sanborn maps against the current Google aerial view, the only changes to the house's footprint is at the side entry porch. Greater changes were made to the accessory structures, in size, location, and use. Due to solid wood privacy fences at the alley and rear corner of the house (facing the street) and dense tree cover in the aerial photo, it is not clear to staff if the garage (erected in 1922, per a building permit card) or other buildings remain at the rear of the lot.
- The original address was 301 and was changed to 2045 in 1921. According to Detroit Parcel Viewer, the current legal address is 2241.



- The 1884 and 1889 Sanborn maps show a deep side porch, which was gone by 1897. A shorter porch was erected by 1921 and remained until at least 1950. It was not present in 1984 at the time of district designation.
- The Final Report states members of the Esterling family lived in the house until 1954. Staff located a building permit card that shows the house was converted to a two-family dwelling in 1955.

2245	
Wabash	018/27
58013	8/1/55
Use	Dwelling (1 to 2)
Cons.	Frame
Remarks	\$500.00 O.K.
General repairs & convert from 1 family to 2 families as per plan.	



Above: 1984 designation photo, HDAB.
 Left: Building permit card, BSEED.

- The design of the house shows a clear hierarchy of elevations which is most evident when comparing treatments to the window openings.



The front window openings are deeply detailed with elaborate window hoods, two-over-two double-hung windows with upper sash rounded corners, and dimensional/profiled window casings and sill brackets.

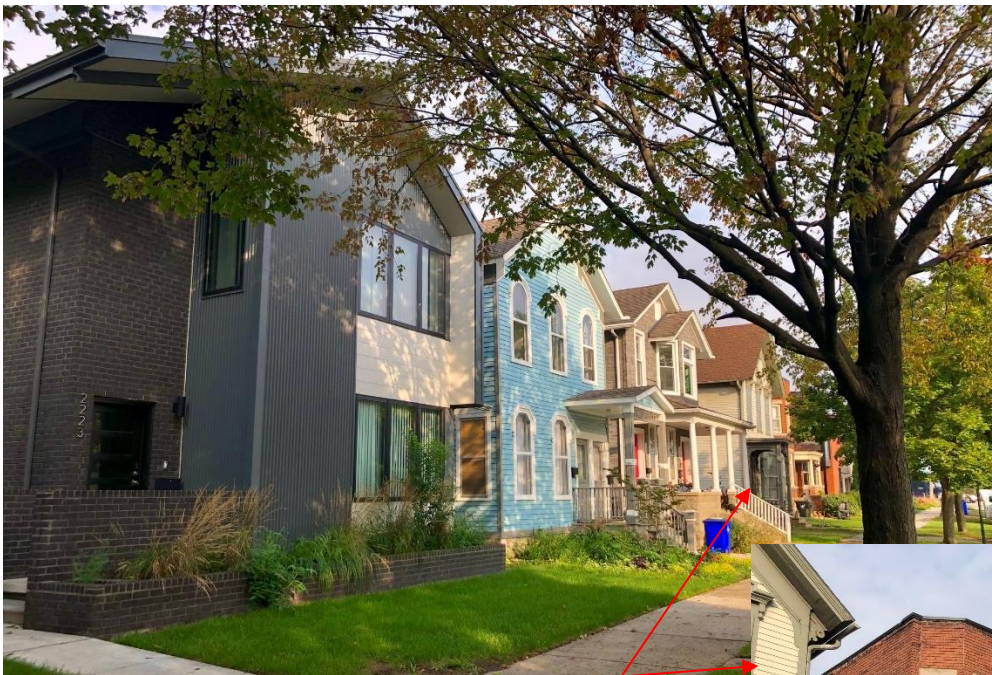


The side window openings have narrow rectangular projecting hoods, four-over-four double-hung windows with rectangular corners, flat and straight-edged window casings, and simplified, yet still dimensional, sill brackets.



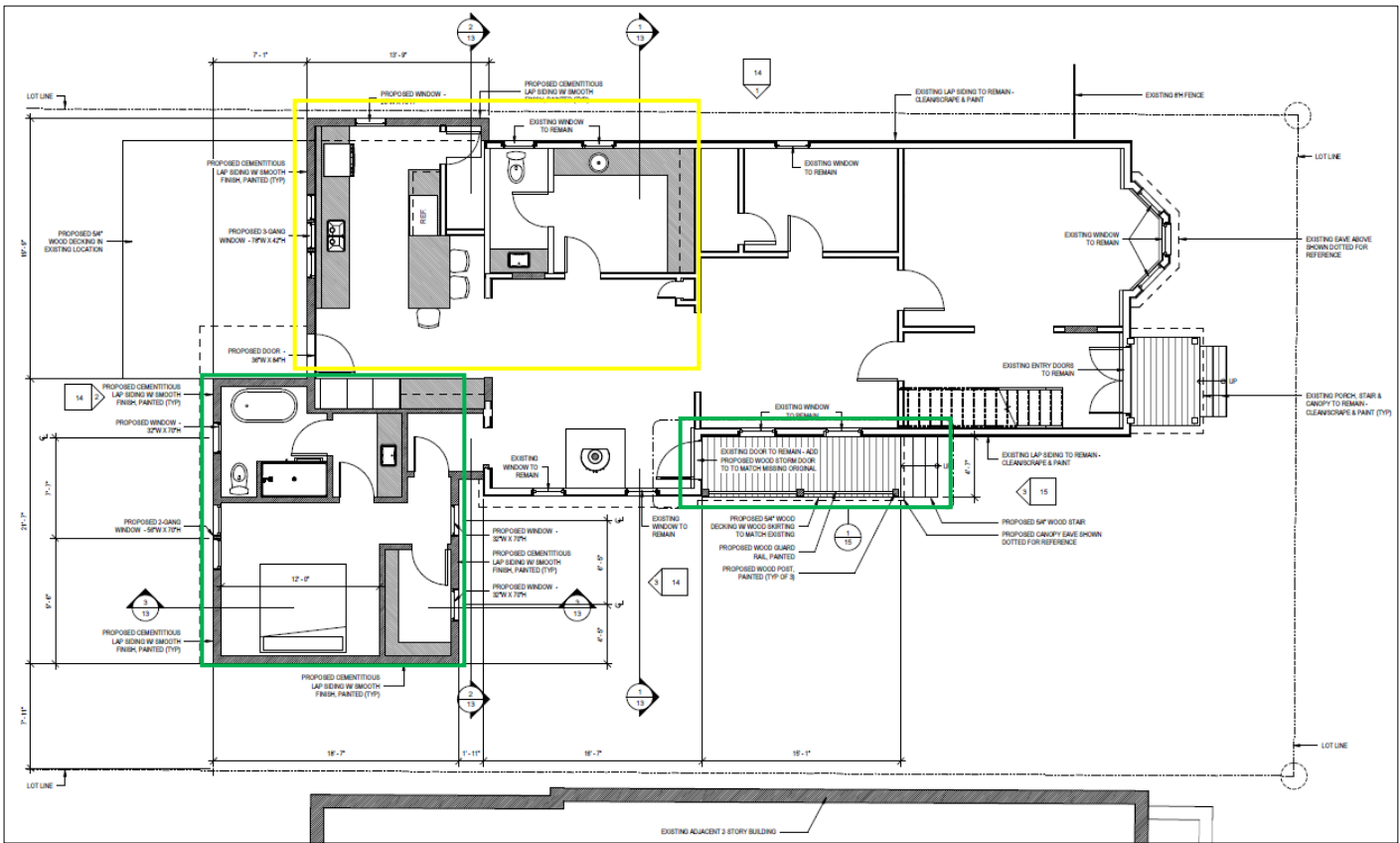
The window openings on the extension have window hoods and double-hung windows similar to the main house's side windows, but the sills have utilitarian trim pieces instead of decorative brackets.

- There are two contemporary structures on this side of Wabash between Michigan Avenue and Dalzelle. Both structures sit at front setbacks identical to the historic houses, so a solid wall of residential dwellings has been re-established.

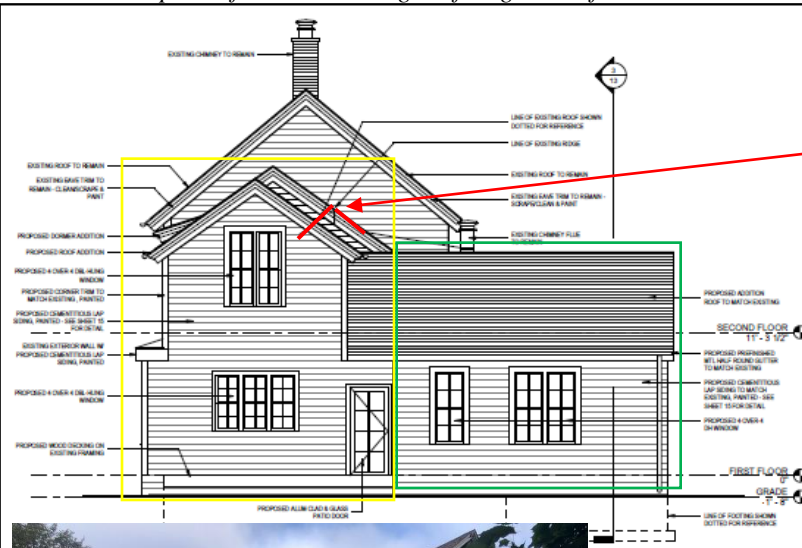


Staff photos, September 7, 2023. 2241 Wabash is at the far right in the above photo, and at the far left (cut-off) in the adjacent photo.





Applicant drawings: proposed first floor plan and rear elevation. The yellow box identifies the area where a second floor will be erected and will remain within the existing footprint. The green boxes identify the locations of the proposed single story additions. The red arrow points from the existing roof ridge to its former location within the proposed second story expansion.



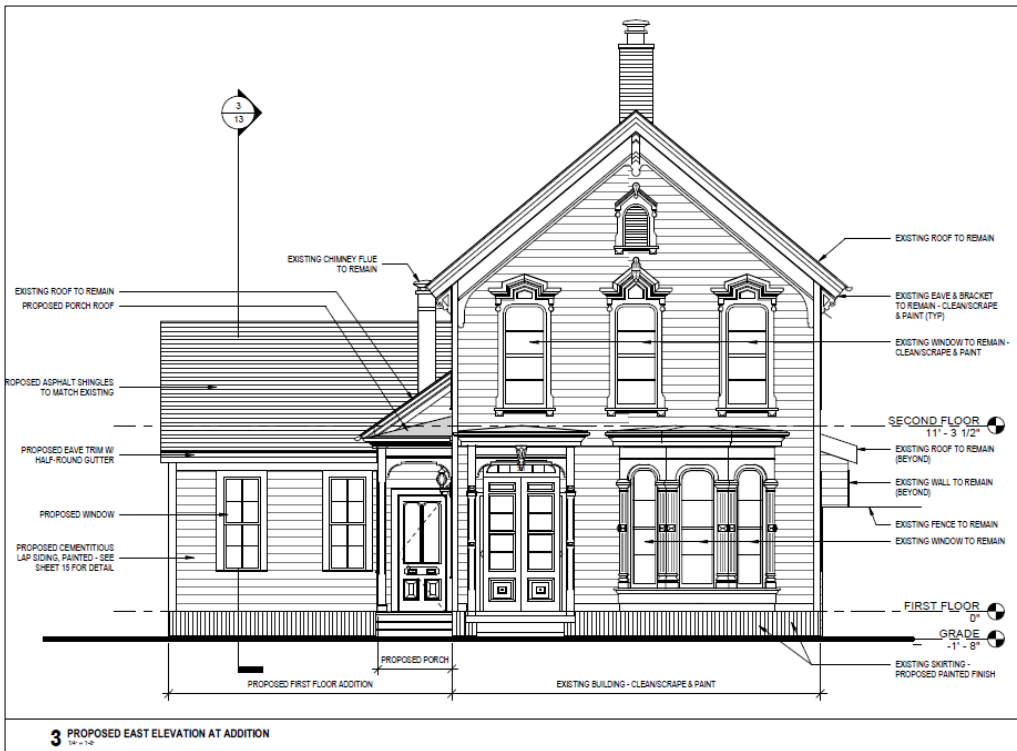
2. VIEW OF REAR LOOKING NORTHEAST (JULY 2023)



4. VIEW OF REAR LOOKING EAST (JULY 2023)



Right: applicant photos. Left: staff photo.



Applicant elevation. The addition will be sited approximately thirty-eight feet from the front corner of the house and approximately forty-nine feet from the front property line. The addition's front elevation will be visible from the right-of-way, but only from this direct viewpoint.



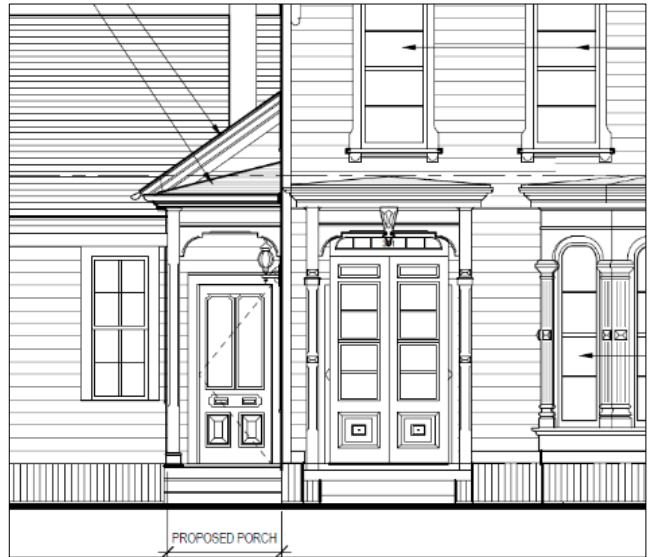
Staff photo, August 30, 2023.

- The selection of materials and design details will let the new construction read sympathetically against the existing house, yet as a product of its time.

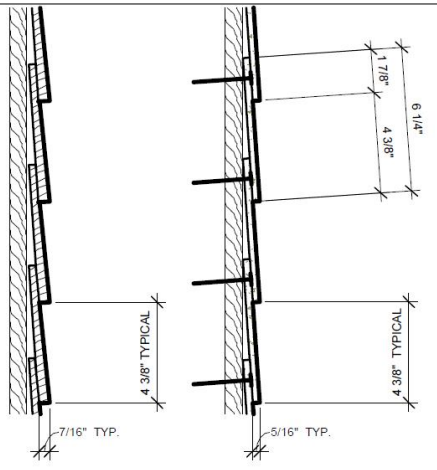


The new window casings (in comparison to the historic casings discussed on page 3) take a further step toward simplicity, which is in keeping with the decrease of complexity of window openings relative to their distance from the front facade.

The side porch will have chamfered posts and corner brackets similar to the front porch, but the posts will not have the decorative medallions nor intermediary post caps. The side porch railing will have straight, square spindles, unlike the thick turned balusters at the front entrance.



7. PHOTO OF EXISTING CONDITIONS



EXISTING SIDING

PROPOSED SIDING
HARDIEPLANK LAP SIDING
6 1/4" BOARD WIDTH
4 3/8" TYPICAL EXPOSURE
SMOOTH FINISH, PAINTED

The cementitious siding has an identical exposure to the historic siding but will have a slightly shallower reveal: 7/16" (historic) compared to 5/16" (new). It is staff's opinion a matching exposure is important for the addition, but a shallower reveal will let the historic house retain an overall greater dimensionality.

ISSUES

- As this report shows on page 3, the historic windows and window openings were designed differently to reflect their location on the existing dwelling. Therefore, staff suggests the addition should have one-over-one double-hung windows, instead of the more ornamental four-over-four.
 - Dimensions and profile sections of the new and historic windows have not been submitted. However, due to the limits of current window production and the reduced strength of new growth wood and exterior aluminum cladding of wood frames, it is staff's opinion that no new window, regardless of manufacturer, can match historic windows in every detail.
 - Clear glass sash within the addition's windows would allow the historic side and front windows to retain architectural and historic prominence.
 - To create a commonality amongst the door and window openings within the new construction, staff also suggests the rear elevation door have clear glass (replacing the proposed two-over-four/eight-light glass pattern).

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the proposal will not alter the features and spaces that characterize the property and district and therefore recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Elements of Design for the district.

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

- The double-hung windows and rear entry door within the new construction will have clear glass.