

STAFF REPORT: 12/13/2023 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: D. RIEDEN

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2023-00046

VIOLATION NUMBER: 766

ADDRESS: 4750 CORTLAND

HISTORIC DISTRICT: RUSSELL WOODS - SULLIVAN

APPLICANT: QUYEN PHAN (HHT CONSTRUCTION INC)

PROPERTY OWNER: COAST TO COAST USA LLC

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 11/20/2023

DATES OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 8/1/2023, 11/28/2023

SCOPE: REPLACE WOOD WINDOWS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Erected in late 1919, the two-story dwelling at 4750 Cortland has a hipped roof with asphalt shingles and features a dormer and brick chimney and walls are clad in red brick in a running bond pattern. The wood-clad dormer once featured wood casements with nine-divided light configuration and sits over a two-story bay with wood, 9/1 divided light windows on top of cast-stone sills. All windows have been recently replaced with vinyl windows without approval. Some of the windowsills and brick cladding are missing. The windows were all once hooded with metal awnings that matched the balcony roof, which centers over the front porch and supported by wood pillars. The wood paneled front door has been replaced with a steel door without approval. The entrance is flanked by wood casement windows that remain with heavy stone sills and nautical-style sconces, which were installed without approval. Both the porch and balcony original metal railings and supports remain. The front porch is raised with a concrete surface and brick wing-walls that hug the stairs leading to the front yard, flanked with foundation evergreens.



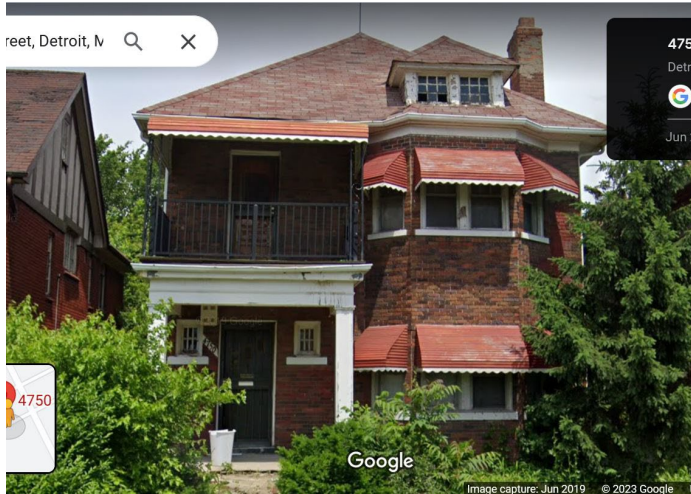
Site Photo 1, by Staff November 28, 2023: (South) front elevation.



Designation Slide, 1999: (South) front/side elevation showing original windows, porch, entrance, and roof. Note chimney support.

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

- July 2023, Violations: all windows removed except the front porch casements, awnings removed, brick siding and window will removed, front door replaced, and front porch sconces installed.
- No Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) were found in the HDC files.



Site Photo2, Google Streetview June 2019: (South) front/side elevation showing conditions before current owner work.



Aerial of Parcel # 14004594.



Site Photo 3, by Staff November 28, 2023: (South) front elevation, showing side wood windows replaced with vinyl windows.



Site Photo 4, by Applicant 2023: (North) rear elevation.

PROPOSAL

The proposed work consists of the following work: install new Anderson series wood windows where existing wood windows, vinyl windows or no windows (just the openings) exist. This application does not include any other unapproved work (the front door, brick or sill repair, front porch light installation) other than the windows.

WINDOW DETAILS

The applicant proposes to remove wood boards on window openings, remove wood windows, and install new windows at 12 locations as shown in the attached window schedule. Staff requested verification of the remaining windows that were replaced but did not receive an update from the applicant at the time of this report. Therefore, this application does not address the remaining vinyl windows that are shown in the applicant’s window schedule. An earlier version of the application which showed that the proposed windows were to be Jeld-Wen vinyl windows has since been replaced with Anderson wood windows. However, staff has not received product information that shows the design details of these windows at the time of this report. All installed windows are proposed to have white trim and simulated divided light, but the configuration of these windows is not known.

Front (South) Elevation

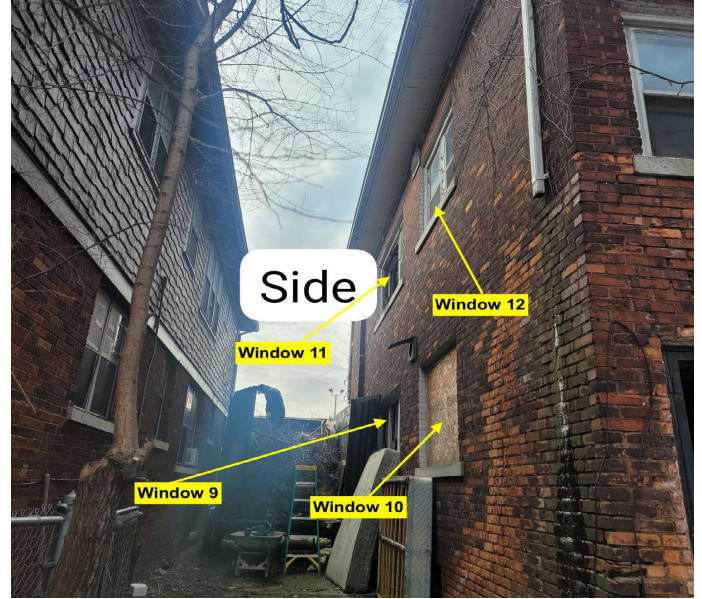
Windows 1-6, single-hung wood windows, no sashes
Windows 7-8, “sashes windows”

Side (East) Elevation

Windows 9-12, single-hung wood windows



Site Photo 5, by Applicant 2023: (South) front elevation, showing proposed replacement locations of windows 1-8.



Site Photo 6, by Applicant 2023: (East elevation, looking southward) side elevation, showing proposed replacement locations of windows 9-12.

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:
 - “Windows are commonly either metal casements or wooden sash.”
 - “Subdivided windows” create textural interest.
 - “Buildings of vernacular English Revival styles generally have painted woodwork and window frames of a dark brown or cream color.”



Site Photo 7, by Applicant 2023: Interior, looking towards front bay and east side of the house, showing original windows by fire place and 9/1 configuration of wood windows in the front bay.

- Some unapproved work, such as the removal of the windows, may have been done by a previous owner. As described under existing conditions, Staff observed that the following work was completed without approval (*See photos 1 & 3*). Other than the 12 windows listed above, these items are not included in this application at this time:
 - Replacement of west elevation and rear elevation windows with vinyl windows
 - Replacement of wood panel front door with steel door
 - Removal of window awnings
 - Removal of brick cladding and window sill from front elevation.

- Installation of porch sconces.
- The applicant states wooden windows were missing or broken. However, staff sees in the applicant photos that some wood windows remained until recent replacement with vinyl windows. Staff requested the applicant to provide photos of showing evidence that the original window were beyond repair, but have not received this information at the time of this report. (See site photo 7.)
- From the designation slide, it is staff's observation that most original windows were wood, double-hung with a 9/1 true divided-light configuration. Some remains of these wood frame windows were recently partially or fully present in the house prior to replacement with vinyl windows. It is staff's opinion that these remaining windows could have been potentially repaired and did not require replacement. (Staff has not received a report on the condition of these windows, or if they are still available to be repaired.) It is staff's opinion that these original wood windows, their double-hung operation, and formation are distinctive character-defining features that have been either removed or neglected.
- Regarding the fact that many openings may have had missing windows altogether, the National Park Service (NPS) Guidelines recommends that any new window at that location must be *compatible* by reflecting materiality that is harmonious with the house, dimensions and scale that align with the building's openings and respect the architectural expression of this historic colonial style.
 - *"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. In many cases, this may be accomplished using substitute materials...Replacing existing incompatible, non-historic windows with similarly incompatible new windows does not meet the Standards"* <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/successful-rehab/windows-replacement.htm>
- While the proposal to install wood windows is appropriate, the replacement of double-hung windows with single-hung or fixed windows would introduce a new design and operation that substantially detracts from and alters the historic appearance of the building. Furthermore, without understanding the full design, dimensions of the window's cross-sections, configuration of the divided light, placement in the window openings and dimensions for the new brick moulds, staff has incomplete information as to how the proposed windows will be framed in the openings, and therefore be potentially inconsistent with the general characteristics of the historic windows.
- Staff recommends that compatible material does not necessarily have to be wood. Aluminum clad wood, for example, may be appropriate too, but the operation of the windows, i.e., double-hung, be consistent throughout the first and second floors of the building.
- Even though the work is not addressed in the application, staff recommends that the second floor's missing window sill and brick header should be addressed to show how the proposed window will be properly placed.

ISSUES

- Work was completed without the Commission's approval.
- No documentation establishing that the original wood windows were beyond repair was submitted or available.
- It is staff's opinion that the removal of the original windows and proposed replacement with single-hung, wood windows with unknown product information, configuration, design and dimension detailing will greatly alter the original *scale, design, and materiality* and introduces new materials that are incompatible and inappropriate for this historic property, and therefore does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
- Staff has not received any brick mould or cross section details of the proposed windows, nor repair of damaged or missing window sills or headers. Staff believes these are necessary details to demonstrate that the proposal is compatible and historically appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation: Replace wood windows

Staff finds that the replacement of the original wood windows with new single-hung and fixed windows does not meet the Secretary of Interior Standards for the following reasons:

- Wood windows were replaced with vinyl window units without approval.
- 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 9/1 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 application does not include sufficient information to understand the design, configuration, and dimensional detailing of the proposed windows, nor does it include repair of the window sills, headers or brick moulds to demonstrate that the work is compatible or historically appropriate.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the proposed window replacement, as it does not the Russell Woods-Sullivan 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.