

STAFF REPORT: MARCH 13, 2024 MEETING

PREPARED BY: A. DYE

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00038

ADDRESS: 2905 GARLAND (AKA THE OSSIAN SWEET HOUSE)

HISTORIC DISTRICT: OSSIAN SWEET HOUSE

APPLICANT: ROSE JAX, INFINITE TECHS

PROPERTY OWNER: DANIEL BAXTER

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: FEBRUARY 19, 2024

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: MARCH 7, 2024

SCOPE: INSTALLATION OF SECURITY CAMERAS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Erected in 1916, the house at 2905 Garland is located at the northwest corner of Garland and Charlevoix Street and is approximately four miles east of downtown Detroit and four blocks north of East Jefferson Avenue. The house is oriented toward Garland, with a secondary orientation toward Charlevoix. Per the Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board's Final Report:

One and one-half stories tall, the Ossian Sweet House is a typical craftsmen style, mid-1910s bungalow built for middle-class occupancy. Aloys DeCruydt, a local contractor, built this house at a cost of \$3,500 in 1916. Its first story is brick veneered; its half-story attic is clad in wood shingles. The main roof is a steeply sloping, side-facing gable roof, its front surface extended to cover the full-width front porch. A large gabled-roof dormer projects up out of the frontal slope, and square brick piers support its outward overhang. Porch walls and stair walls are also brick, with cast concrete coping.

The centrally placed main entrance contains a single door that is now covered with a security door. A picture window is located to the left, or south, of the door, and a single small square window is located to its right, or north. The opening in the roof dormer contains three-double hung sash windows separated by mullions.



Front (east) wall.

Staff photo, March 7, 2024.

The large side-facing gabled ends of the roof have raking verge boards. The south side elevation, facing Charlevoix, features a secondary entrance and a box bay. A pair of small, horizontally rectangular leaded glass windows, quite typical of bungalows, punctures the wall eastward of the box bay, though they appear to be later replacements. Similarly sized and shaped basement windows circle the perimeter. The box bay is covered by a shallow hipped roof. Its depth is one elongated double hung sash window; its width contains four similar windows sharing a common sill.



Side (south) wall.

Staff photo, March 7, 2024.

The house is situated close to the north lot line; grass turf covers the front and south yards which is graded about one foot above the public sidewalk.



Rear (west) wall.

Staff photo, March 7, 2024.

The massing of the rear elevation is similar to the front elevation. A centrally placed gabled dormer protrudes from the steeply sloped roof, and is faced with wood shake shingles that matches the walls of the front dormer and side gable walls. The dormer wall is filled with two mulled double-hung windows and a single wood/glass door which leads to an upper porch.



NE corner of house, view looking southwest from Garland.

Staff photo, March 7, 2024.

On the north side, the window openings are fairly symmetrical in placement; the window openings at the second floor gable wall echo the openings (placement and operation) of those on the south side. The western rectangular window (at right in above photo) is covered due to its internal location within the bathroom. A louvered attic vent is located near the peak of the gable.



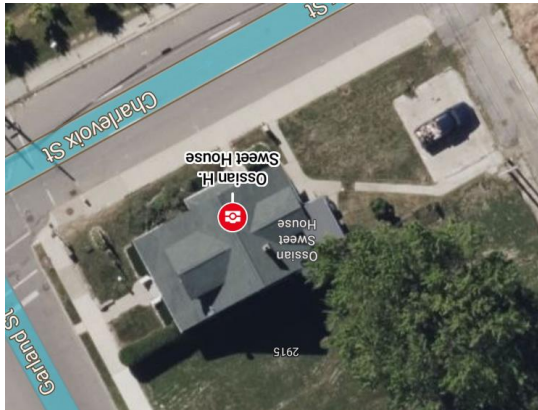
SW corner of house, from Charlevoix looking northeast.

Staff photo, March 7, 2024.

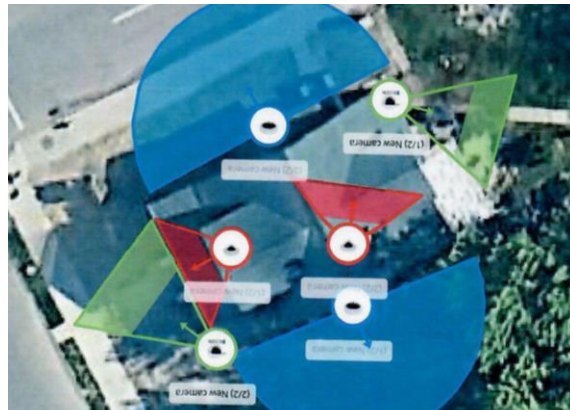
Wide, rectangular basement windows are located on the sides and rear. The north and south side openings are original/historic wood framed inswing hopper units (each sash has two clear glass panels equally divided by one wide wood vertical muntin bar), whereas the remaining units are new replicas. The sills are cast stone.

PROPOSAL

- Install 4 (four) security cameras on each exterior wall of the structure.
 - One camera near the front and rear entrances (2).
 - One camera centrally placed on the north and south walls (2).



Aerial view of property, Bing Maps.



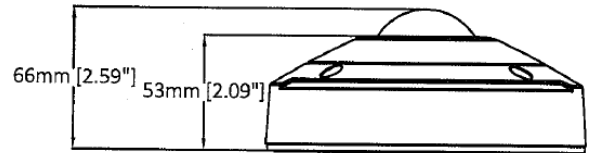
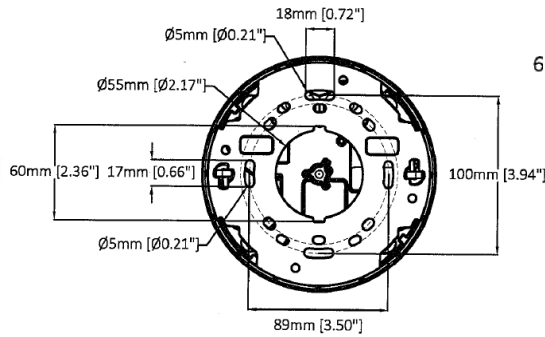
Applicant diagram. Red identifies range of interior cameras. Green identifies range of front and rear entrance cameras. Blue identifies range of side wall cameras.

M3058PLVE –outdoor-ready dome with 360° panoramic view and IR illumination

North and south side walls (blue on diagram)

2-1/2” deep // approx. 4” in diameter

Factory white finish – product can be painted with proper preparations



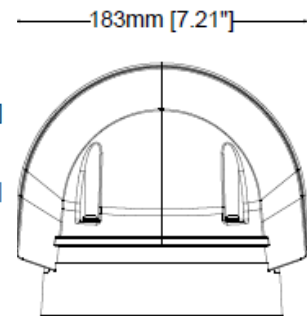
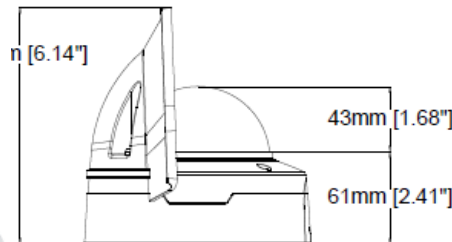
Images copied from manufacturer cut sheets.

P3265-LVE –fixed mini dome with HDMI, hood is optional

NE corner of front wall & SW corner of rear wall (green on diagram)

Camera w/hood: 6-1/4” deep, camera only: approx. 4” deep // 7-1/4” wide (w/hood)

Factory white finish – product can be painted with proper preparations



STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Ossian Sweet Historic District is a single resource district and was established in 2006.
- In 2018, the National Park Service (NPS) Historic Preservation Fund African American Civil Rights Program awarded a \$500,000 grant to the City of Detroit to repair the Sweet house. More information can be found here: <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/03-12-2018-aacr-grants.htm>. Out of the 51 projects awarded that year, only 2 are in Michigan and only twelve received \$500,000.
 - African American Civil Rights (AACR) grants are funded by the Historic Preservation Fund and administered by the NPS.
 - AACR grants fund a broad range of planning, development, and research projects for historic sites including: survey, inventory, documentation, interpretation, education, architectural services, historic structure reports, preservation plans, and "bricks and mortar" repair.

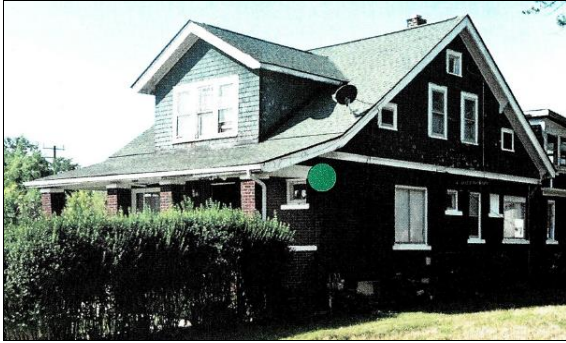


Staff photo, March, 7, 2024

- In 2023, the Commission adopted new "[Security and Lighting Guidelines](#)". The applicable guidelines are listed below:
 - New security equipment shall be minimally visible from the public right-of-way. Except for doorbell cameras, new equipment shall not be installed on a building's primary façade (typically, the front side of a building featuring its main entrance). Rather, it shall be installed in the eaves or gable end of the roof, on a secondary façade/wall, or within the site/yard in a manner that will not call undue attention to itself or detract from significant architectural or landscape feature(s).
 - If installed at a primary façade/entrance, doorbell cameras shall only be located at the wood casing/trim of the primary entry doorway, or other surface of minimal impact to historic materials.
 - Mounting hardware shall not permanently damage significant architectural or landscape features. If the equipment must be affixed to a masonry wall, it shall be secured in mortar joints rather than into the brick or stone.
 - The installation shall be as small and limited in number as feasible. The equipment shall be unobtrusive and simple in form, without decorative embellishment.
 - The equipment shall be shop finished or painted a color to match that of the building surface to which it is affixed. If installed within the site/yard, the equipment shall display a neutral finish color.
 - If the installation requires a conduit, it shall be not visible or minimally visible. The conduit shall not be placed on or across ornamental features and shall be shop finished or painted a color to match that of the building surface to which it is affixed. If the conduit must be affixed to a masonry wall, it shall be secured in mortar joints, not the brick or stone. If there are multiple proposed or existing installations, associated conduit shall be combined to the maximum extent feasible.

ISSUES

- The below images were provided by the applicant.



Green circles indicate locations for entry cameras.



Blue circles indicate locations of side wall panoramic cameras.

- It is staff’s opinion that the installation of cameras as proposed does not meet the Commission’s guidelines (guidelines define work that can be reviewed/approved at a staff level) nor the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards.

- As stated earlier in this report, it is staff’s opinion that each side of the dwelling is historically and architecturally significant and is considered a distinctive character-defining feature.
 - The four cameras are to be located in visually prominent locations and will severely alter the features and spaces that characterize the property.
 - Three of the four cameras are proposed to be installed on masonry walls. It is not clear if the mounting hardware can be placed within mortar joints (regardless of where on a masonry wall the camera is proposed). Mounting on the brick would permanently damage a significant architectural feature.
 - Different cameras may be available within the marketplace that can be installed within the eaves.



Photograph of 2905 Garland circa 1925, Chicago Defender 11-14-25

- The Commission has the authority to consider additional constraints and information provided by the applicant in its deliberation for approval. The Commission also has the authority to issue a Notice to Proceed for work that doesn’t meet the Standards, so long as the project meets one of the four stated conditions. With this in mind, staff listed this overview of regulatory authority under “Issues” because the \$500,000 federal grant issued to the City of Detroit has the requirement that all exterior work meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards and *independently* requires the approval of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Should work be completed that doesn’t meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards and is not approved by the SHPO, the city could be required to return the \$500,000 grant money. Given this risk, neither HDC staff nor PDD can support

any approval of potentially inappropriate work on this high-profile and highly regulated property, no matter how minor.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the proposal for the installation of security cameras does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the following reasons:

- The four sides of the dwelling are historically and architecturally significant and are considered character-defining features.
 - The four cameras are to be located on visually prominent locations and would alter the features and spaces that characterize the property.
 - Three of the four cameras are proposed to be installed on masonry walls. It is not clear if the mounting hardware can be placed within mortar joints (regardless of where on a masonry wall the camera is proposed). Mounting on the brick would permanently damage a significant architectural feature.
 - Different cameras may be available within the marketplace that can be installed within the eaves.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the work as proposed, as it does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standards 1, 2, and 9:

- 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.
- 9) New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.