

STAFF REPORT: MAY 8, 2024, REGULAR MEETING
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00079
ADDRESS: 3844 BAGLEY
HISTORIC DISTRICT: HUBBARD FARMS
APPLICANT: LUZ JANNET AYALA-MORENO
PROPERTY OWNER: LUZ JANNET AYALA-MORENO
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: MARCH 4, 2024
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: APRIL 23, 2024

PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO

SCOPE: ALTER SIDE PORCH (WORK STARTED WITHOUT APPROVAL), REPLACE WINDOWS AND DOORS, INSTALL VINYL SIDING

EXISTING CONDITIONS

3844 Bagley is a two-story, gable-front house, facing south onto the street. It was built in 1900. Though it appears to display Queen Anne, Carpenter Gothic, or nineteenth-century folk vernacular style, and its overall form and massing are largely unchanged from its original design, much of the building’s present-day appearance is the result of recent alterations. Original or historic architectural detail appears to be limited to decorative brackets and vergeboards on the front façade and turned porch posts and a wood balustrade on the side (west) porch.



April 2024 photo by staff. Note porch elements removed without approval are sitting on the ground at the lower left corner of this image.

According to Historic District Commission staff records and City of Detroit building permits, the building experienced a fire in 1987. Shortly thereafter, the building was repaired, an unknown amount of new clapboard siding was installed, and one window opening was eliminated on the second floor of the front façade. (This occurred prior to the 1993 enactment of the Hubbard Farms Historic District and thus was not subject to Historic District Commission review.)

This work can be seen in the earliest available photo of the building, dating from 1993, when the Hubbard Farms Historic District was established. It shows a relatively plain façade lacking in the decorative details that likely once existed on the building. Front porch supports are aluminum and the bay window is clad in a smooth material.



1993 photo by Historic Designation Advisory Board.

In 2001 the building exterior was altered by creating a new window opening on the second floor, front façade, adding decorative window hoods on the front façade, adding new scalloped (fishscale) siding, adding turned wood front porch posts, replacing an unspecified number of windows, and installation of vinyl siding on top of the existing siding. The work was completed without approval but later received a Certificate of Appropriateness dated October 10, 2001.

In 2015 or 2016, a hip-roof, single-story, rear (north) projection was removed without approval by the Historic District Commission. The applicant has been encouraged to submit an application for this work. The brick foundation remained in place until 2022 or 2023; this has since also been removed.



Google Maps photos from 2015 (left) and 2016 (right).

One window on the rear (north) elevation and four windows on the east side of the building are missing, removed without approval. These windows are visible in November 2022 Google Street View images; thus, their removal is relatively recent.



2022 Google Street View images. Red boxes added by staff to show windows that have since been removed without approval.

Some posts and part of the balustrade on the side (west) porch were removed without approval in 2023, prompting a Stop Work order. The removed elements remain on site and have not been discarded.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes an exterior rehabilitation including multiple scope items.

On the side (west-facing) porch, the applicant proposes to remove porch posts and balustrades and replace them with new materials. The proposed porch posts are 5”x5” solid pine posts. The applicant also proposes to add a layer of plywood on top of the existing porch flooring.



Left: 2022 Google image of historic porch. Right: Proposed new posts. Image from product website.

The applicant proposes to replace all windows on the building. First-floor and second-floor windows are proposed to be Ply Gem, single-hung windows in sand color. For the basement windows, American Craftsman brand sliding vinyl windows are proposed, with glass block windows also proposed as an alternate option. The applicant also proposes to eliminate several window openings altogether—these are the same five windows shown as removed without approval on page 2 of this report.

The proposed work would also replace two front doors and install a new rear door (see below for the proposed scope of work for the rear elevation). The proposed new doors are Masonite brand engineered wood panel doors with fan lights.



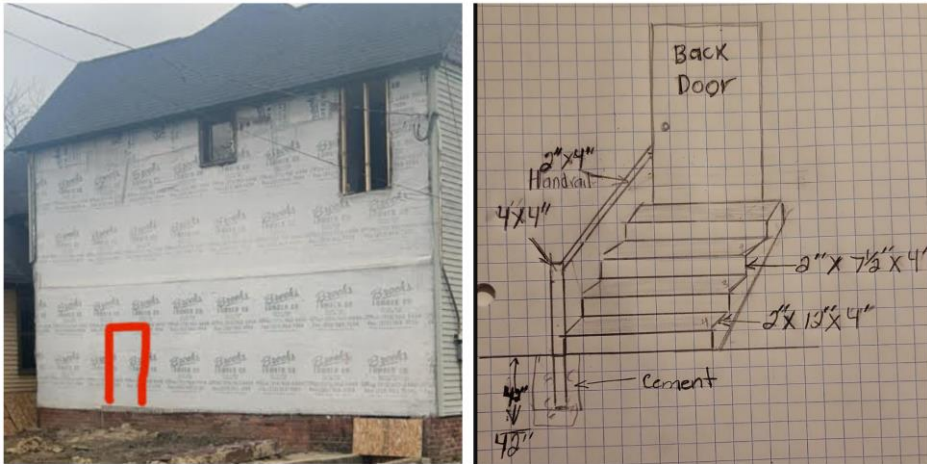
Left: Proposed Ply Gem single-hung window. Image from product website. Right: Proposed door. Image from product website.

The applicant also proposes to install vinyl siding on a large expanse of the rear (north) of the house that presently lacks siding. The proposed siding is Ply Gem Transformations 4” vinyl siding in “mist” (light grey) color.



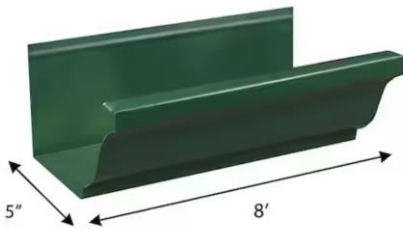
Left: Rear (north) of house where new siding is proposed. April 2024 photo by staff. Right: Proposed siding. Image from product website.

The proposal would also add a rear door where a rough opening presently exists (the opening is not visible due to being concealed behind building paper). The door would be accessed with exterior steps.



Left: Sketch by applicant showing location of existing rough opening and proposed door. Right: Sketch by applicant of proposed steps. Images from application materials.

Finally, new gutters are proposed. The gutters would be Spectra Pro Select 5" K-style aluminum gutters in Forest Green.

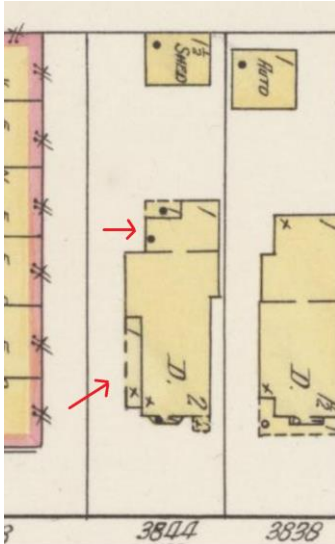


Proposed gutter. Image from product website.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Hubbard Farms Historic District was established by Ordinance 01-93 in 1993.
- The Final Report for the Hubbard Farms Historic District provides a Period of Significance of 1870 through 1930. Pertinent Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-157 [d]) are excerpted as follows (note that this building would be considered “Queen Anne” or “Victorian” under the Elements of Design):
 - “In general, buildings have between 15 percent and 35 percent of their area glazed.” (*Proportion of openings within the façade.*)
 - “In the Queen Anne and Richardsonian Romanesque style buildings, openings are often irregularly arranged.” (*Rhythm of solids to voids in front facades.*)
 - “Brick and wood are the primary building materials originally used. Many wood frame buildings are clad in clapboard.” (*Relationship of materials.*)
 - “Wooden elements display a variety of colors, depending on what is appropriate for their style. In general, wooden elements of buildings derived from classical precedents, such as the Neo-Georgian or Colonial Revival, are painted in the white-yellow-gray range, while wooden elements of Victorian buildings show more freedom, ranging from shades of rose to green, sometimes with a contrasting color highlighting the architectural detail.” (*Relationship of colors.*)

- “Buildings of Victorian substyles also tend to have details of wood located around the entrance, porch, windows, bays, towers, and dormers. Lathe-turned and jigsaw cut wooden elements and details are common.” (*Relationship of architectural details.*)
- As described throughout this report, many exterior features of this building are neither original nor historic. There is no requirement to preserve non-historic features. However, if non-historic features are altered or removed, the new work must be compatible with the building and the district.
- The side porch and now-missing rear section are likely original, as they appear in a 1921 Sanborn map.



Sanborn Map Company 1921. Arrows added to indicate side porch and rear section.

- The applicant has provided photos showing advanced decay of the porch posts and flooring. Google Street View photos also show the porch in a state of deterioration. Staff suggests that partial replacement of some elements is likely warranted, pending further inspection and documentation. (Full replacement is likely avoidable; for example, the rectangular lower portion of a column could be replaced without needing to replace the turned upper portion.)



Photos of decaying porch components, from application documents.

- Staff believes that only a small number of historic windows remain, based on the following information:
 - An October 10, 2001, Historic District Commission staff report states “the upper story windows were replaced prior to designation.”
 - The six-over-one windows on the first floor, front and west elevations, do not appear, to staff, to be original to the building or from the period of significance. The six-over-one configuration, in general, is associated with period revival styles from mid-twentieth century. Further, the dimensions of the six-over-one windows are different; most noticeably, their meeting rails are thicker than other windows on the building that do appear to be original. Finally, the window openings on the front-facing bay window appear to have been shortened; circa 1900 bay windows tend to have taller window openings and a larger proportion of glazed area overall.
 - In conclusion, the only remaining historic windows appear to be as follows: one, relatively large, one-over-one window with transom on the west elevation; two one-over-one windows on the east elevation, and one small square window on the north elevation. Additionally, two historic windows on the east elevation, first floor, appear to have been removed without approval.



East elevation as seen in 2001 Historic District Commission staff photo, red boxes added to indicate likely historic windows that have since been removed without approval.

- Available photos and earlier staff reports show no indication that the historic doors were present at the time of the 1992 designation of the historic district; their loss would have been consistent with other alterations made during the 1980s. The current doors do not appear to be exterior rated and are in noticeably poor condition. Their replacement with compatible doors would be appropriate.
- In general, adding an additional entrance and steps to a non-primary elevation is acceptable, provided that no character-defining features are obscured or eliminated.
- Gray body color is mentioned in Color System B as inappropriate for Queen Anne buildings. However, staff opinion is that grey is a minimally acceptable siding color for this particular building due to its

vernacular nature; grey paint was often used on mid-nineteenth-century vernacular buildings even though its use declined into the Queen Anne era.

- The proposed sash color is appropriate, as it is mentioned in Color System B and in the Elements of Design.
- The size and material of the proposed new gutters are appropriate and consistent with what is typically approved under staff administrative authority. The proposed forest green color for the gutters is consistent with several deep green trim colors provided in Color System B.

ISSUES

- A porch repair should generally consist of minimal new material and the retention of most of the existing components. Staff suggests the existing porch is likely not structurally sound enough to be repaired without the insertion of some amount of new wood decking, railings, and columns. However, any new components should match the old, as directed by Standard #6 (quoted below).
- *Preservation Brief 45: Preserving Historic Wood Porches* provides the following guidance:
 - “When individual porch parts are deteriorated beyond the point of repair or missing altogether, replacement is necessary. To retain the historic character of the porch, the replacement parts should match the historic component as closely as possible in material, design, color, texture, and other qualities. To achieve this, existing evidence of the historic design, such as a baluster or column detail, or a tongue and groove floor design, should serve as a pattern for the replacement part.”
 - Rot-resistant, synthetic materials are sometimes appropriate, as long as they match the dimensions of the historic components and they are able to have similar texture and appearance when painted.
- The proposed plywood porch surface would constitute an “alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property,” contrary to standard #2; it would also create future maintenance problems as even exterior-grade plywood does not hold a finish and does not resist water property in a horizontal application.
- According to the National Park Service document, *Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards*, non-historic windows are not required to be preserved; if missing, they are not required to be reproduced. Nonetheless, any new windows must be compatible replacements. The proposed windows do not meet this guidance. According to the document, “The stiles of double-hung historic windows align vertically and are the same width at the upper and lower sashes. The use of single-hung windows as replacements may alter this relationship with varying effects on the appearance of a window.” (This condition is illustrated by the image on page 4 of this report). A single-hung window is almost never appropriate on a historic building and is not appropriate in this case.
- Vinyl is an inappropriate window and siding material. Standard #6 requires that historic materials be used “where possible;” if substitute materials are warranted, vinyl is not an appropriate substitute material (see National Park Service, *Preservation Briefs 16: The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors*, 2023).
- National Park Service guidance allows the elimination of window openings in very limited cases, such as eliminating one or two windows in non-prominent locations to provide code-required egress or to provide a location for connecting an addition, when no other options are available. However, the elimination of multiple window openings absent a compelling reason is never appropriate.
- The fanlight pattern on the proposed doors is an anachronistic design that is not compatible with the Queen Anne or folk vernacular, circa 1900 design of the building. A somewhat similar door, but either unglazed or

with a rectangular vision panel, would be appropriate.

- The removal of the hip-roof rear section (done without approval) dramatically altered the form of the building and eliminated character-defining features, contrary to Standard #2, which requires that “the alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.”
- Adding siding and a new entrance to the rear (north) elevation of the building is inappropriate in that it furthers and makes permanent a condition (i.e., the removal of the building’s hip-roof rear section) that was created without approval.
- The proposed colors—grey siding, sand windows, and forest green gutters—are individually appropriate; however, when taken together, they create an awkward hybrid between the paler colors of nineteenth-century vernacular architecture and the more saturated tones of the Queen Anne style.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission (Recommendation One: Denial)

Staff concludes that the proposed installation of a plywood surface on the side porch, replacement of historic windows (i.e, the large, one-over-one window with transom on the west elevation; two one-over-one windows on the east elevation, one small square window on the north elevation, and two presently missing historic windows on the east elevation, first floor), installation of vinyl siding, and installation of a new rear entrance does not meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the following reasons:

- A plywood porch surface is not compatible with the property; it would also weather quickly and cause additional deterioration.
- The historic windows have not been shown to be beyond repair.
- The proposed work adds historically inappropriate vinyl siding to the building.
- The proposed treatment of the rear elevation (installation of siding, door, and steps) makes permanent an inappropriate alteration that was not approved by the Historic District Commission (i.e., removal of the hip-roof rear section).

Therefore, staff recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the proposed work, as it 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, and other visual qualities, and where possible, materials. Replacement of a missing feature shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*
- 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.

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 the proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, subject to the following conditions:

- Replacement of porch elements shall be limited to those that are deteriorated beyond feasible repair; new elements must match the old, subject to approval by staff.
- The first and second floor windows shall be double-hung wood or clad-wood sash windows, subject to approval by staff.
- The basement windows shall be installed according to the Glass Block Guidelines.
- The doors shall be wood or metal panel doors with a rectangular vision panel, or no vision panel, subject to approval by staff.
- The color scheme shall be taken from either Color System A (mid-century vernacular), or Color System B (Queen Anne), but not both; or, another appropriate color scheme may be used subject to approval by staff.