

**STAFF REPORT 10-09-2024 REGULAR MEETING**

**PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG**

**APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00519**

**ADDRESS: 3628-3644 LINCOLN**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT: WOODBRIDGE FARM**

**APPLICANT/ARCHITECT: WILLIAM BARBOUR-KEIR (MARK JOHNSON ARCHITECTS)**

**OWNER: HOLLIS HOLDINGS LLC**

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 9/16/2024**

**DATES OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 9/19/2024, 9/30/2024**

**SCOPE: DEMOLISH REAR WINGS, CONSTRUCT NEW REAR ADDITION, REHABILITATE EXTERIOR. DEMOLISH GARAGE, ERECT NEW CARRIAGE HOUSE**



*View of existing nineteenth century house at 3644 Lincoln. Note immediately adjacent 5-story apartment building. Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The subject property consists of two adjacent lots mid-block on Lincoln between Brainard and Selden Streets, at the eastern edge of the local historic district. 3644 Lincoln (the northern parcel) is occupied by a nineteenth-century Italianate brick upper-class house, with several wings and extensions. The house, erected circa 1875, features a two-story, central hipped roof mass, with a lower two-story, hipped roof wing to the rear, and an additional gabled wing beyond that. A one-story flat roof wing was appended to the building's south wall prior to 1921, and some of the architectural detailing appears to have been transferred from the original house to this wing at its construction. The south wing, and rear-most addition, do not have basements as does the original portion. The roof's prominent overhanging eaves retain original jigsawn wood brackets at the front façade; others have recently been stolen or removed for safekeeping. Exterior walls are red brick although painted stone is present at the base of the façade. Stone is also present at window sills, window hoods, and the front façade's projecting bay windows. Windows and doors are not extant, having been destroyed by a large fire. Currently the property is protected by boarding and a more recently installed construction fence.

The western end of the northern parcel is occupied by a utilitarian 20<sup>th</sup> century garage erected from cinder

blocks. This building is rectangular in plan and features a gabled roof. Per BSEED's records, the garage was built in 1952.

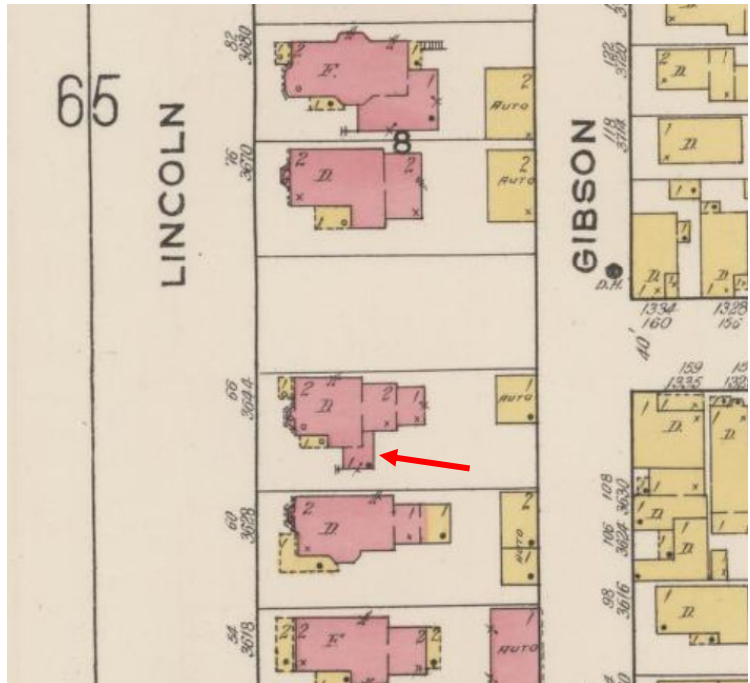
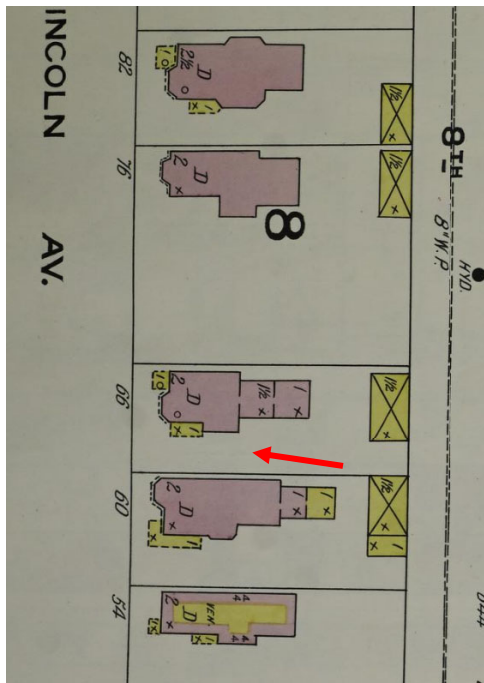
The southern parcel, 3628 Lincoln, is a long-time vacant lot (existing prior to 1991 designation). The Commission has recently approved ornamental fencing and landscape improvements at both parcels, described in the August staff report available on the website.

The Woodbridge Farm Historic District, even at its designation in 1991, was marked by large areas of vacant lots approaching 50% of the total district. As the Commission knows, the more dense, historically intact section of Woodbridge is to the west/north-west of the local district, and is not in the Commission's jurisdiction (Woodbridge along Avery, Commonwealth, et al., is a federal National Register district, not local). In the much smaller local Woodbridge Farm district, since local designation, *even with historic district protection*, the loss of historic buildings has continued at a dispiriting pace. Starting with somewhat less than 50 extant structures across eight city blocks, the district has lost at least 8-10 buildings since 1991, based on our analysis and records. Of the thirteen architecturally important buildings specifically described in the HDAB report, four of those are now gone. These represent devastating losses of 20-30% of the district's already diminished 1991 historic fabric. More optimistically, in the last 3-5 years, at least four new construction projects (including very large projects at the former Scripps mansion site, a new multi-family building at 4130 Trumbull, and a recently approved multi-family project at the corner of Lincoln and Brainerd), have begun to rebuild vitality and density. Many other properties have seen rehabilitation efforts as the district recovers.



*Parcel at 3644 Lincoln per Detroit Parcel Viewer, outlined in yellow. The current owner also owns the adjacent parcel to the south, to be combined into a large lot (fence/berm already approved). Note juxtaposition between very high density/lot coverages and vacant parcels to north, south, and west. Two parcels further south of the subject property (3606-3618 Lincoln, 1532 Brainerd) have already received HDC approval for a multi-family development with high lot coverages and additional density.*





Sanborn maps of subject property; 1897 (left) and 1921 (right). Address prior to the 1920 renumbering was 66 Lincoln. Note additional south-extending wing present in right image, and apparent change in form to the frame garage at rear, now further replaced by the current concrete block garage. Note the creation of a new parcel by 1921 for the adjacent 5-story apartment building to the north, not yet constructed. Frame (wood) buildings are shown in yellow; structural brick buildings are shown in red. D=dwelling, F=flats, S=stores.



View of front façade/entry porch. Staff photo, September 30, 2024.





*View towards top of front bay window, showing original surviving stone and wood detailing. Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*



*View to the north, showing south-facing wall of main house and, to the right, the oddly attached "south-extending addition" which awkwardly intersects with one of the original windows (red arrow). Ornament from another window was apparently moved to this new wing's window, or perhaps sourced from the same supplier. The wing has only a crawlspace, while the original house has a full basement. This interesting historic condition will be preserved in the proposal. Note "ghost" of former frame porch (yellow arrow). Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*





*View towards the northwest, showing rear additions/wings proposed for alteration/removal. To the left, the “south-extending addition” is marked with a red arrow. The two-story wing in yellow, and the gable-roofed addition in green. Note substantial brick distress (blue arrows). Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*



*View to the southwest at north property line, towards Lincoln. The main house portion is at right. Yellow arrow shows two-story wing to be replaced with “hyphen”, green arrow shows gable-roofed addition. Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*





*View to the northeast showing existing block garage. Note high density development in vicinity. Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*



*View across Lincoln to the west, showing 3627 Lincoln (c. 1875), which is called out in the HDAB report and shares similar features to the subject property. To the right is 3643 Lincoln. Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*





*Interior view of main house interior, looking towards front door/Lincoln. Note complete lack of second floor and bracing in place to support exterior brick walls. Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*



*Opposite view of main house interior, looking east towards rear. Note complete two-story brick wall closing this portion off from the additions/wings. Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*





*Detail view of salvaged and braced interior monumental stair, prepped for rehab. Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*



*Typical interior damage at rear addition/wing. Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*





*Typical damage at rear addition. Note condition of window. Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*



*View of the crawlspace beneath the south-extending addition, taken from basement of main house. Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*





*View into the south-extending wing showing extent of fire damage, including collapsed floor and bowed roof joists. This area, excepting the west (front) facing wall visible in the photo below, will be replaced by a sunroom. Applicant photos, September 30, 2024.*



*Another view of the "south-extending addition". The wall fronting the dumpster, featuring the large arched window, will be preserved, whereas the south facing wall (at right) will be replaced with sunroom windows extending further south. Staff photo, September 30, 2024.*



## PROPOSAL

Per the submitted drawings and documents, the applicant proposes to rehabilitate/restore the main front-facing portion of the house, while demolishing/altering the additions/wings to the south (side) and rear (east). The front-facing portion of the south-extending addition will be preserved as part of an enlarged south-extending sunroom. The proposed addition is meticulously designed to match the original almost as a mirror, fully adopting its architectural vocabulary with a very high degree of verisimilitude and historically correct materials. A new “hyphen” piece, rendered in darker brick and also incorporating strict Italianate detailing, is proposed to separate the older and newer portions.

Also included in the scope of work is demolition of the existing 2-bay concrete block garage, and replacement with a carriage house-style (2-story) garage. Instead of Italianate, this new 4-bay garage is carefully designed in a historic style which appears to be rooted in the shingle style (albeit with siding) and other related early 20<sup>th</sup> century precedents. Select images from the applicant’s full drawing set are shown below for reference. Salvaged/matching brick and block will be used in both new construction pieces.



*South (side) elevation of the expanded house, rendered with materials, from applicant’s submission materials. Staff has added red line to clarify existing (left) vs. new (right) construction. Front elevation pictured later in this report. Not to scale.*



*East (alley) elevation of the four-bay garage/carriage house. Not to scale.*



## STAFF OBSERVATIONS

- The local Woodbridge Farm Historic District was established in 1991. This local historic district, as described earlier in this report, is part of the larger, but mostly out-of-jurisdiction National Register (i.e., federal) “Woodbridge Neighborhood Historic District,” which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. The Commission has in the past used NR reports to supplement historic analysis and Period of Significance (POS) content sometimes missing in local reports. The local report does not provide a Period of Significance, nor a listing of contributing/non-contributing (i.e., historic/non-historic) properties, but does provide a “sampling” of thirteen named buildings that “runs the gamut between 1870’s Second Empire style single-family dwellings to 1920’s apartment buildings,” suggesting a circa 1870s - 1926 Period of Significance, the latter being the completion date of the Venice Apartments immediately adjacent to the subject property (described and dated by HDAB).
- Staff assesses that the nineteenth-century main house is contributing to the district (i.e., historic), as the designation report for the district focuses exclusively on residential development largely focused in the 1870s/1880s and concluded in 1926, and that the building is clearly associated with the well-ornamented brick and stone nineteenth-century residential development that is characteristic of the district. The subject house is also stylistically related to 3627 Lincoln across the street, which is architecturally “sampled” in the HDAB report (this house is not). For the rear garage, based on a 1920s cutoff date, a utilitarian style completely unrelated to any of the featured buildings in the HDAB report or the NR report, a construction date of 1952, and the fact that it replaced an original frame garage built during the Period of Significance, the rear concrete block garage is assessed by staff as non-contributing. The Commission is not required to follow staff recommendation concerning historic/contributing status (or any other matter). The Commission maintains jurisdiction over exterior changes to both historic and non-historic resources in local historic districts. For alterations to non-historic/non-contributing properties (similar to reviews for new construction), the Commission is tasked with assessing the general *compatibility* of the proposed changes with respect to the historic and architectural character of *the district*. A non-contributing structure is presupposed to have no features of significance requiring preservation.
- The Commission, at the August 2024 Meeting, approved fence and landscaping interventions by this same applicant across both parcels, 3628 Lincoln (the vacant lot) and 3644 Lincoln (the parcel with the nineteenth-century house). This earlier report is made available to you on the Commission’s website.
- The applicant visited with historic preservation staff in March to discuss their proposal for the site. Our advice at the time was that the garage was likely to be assessed as non-contributing, based on its appearance and the district’s apparent period of significance. For the proposed partial demolitions and large addition to the main house, staff suggested that further research would be necessary to understand the condition and importance of the various additions and wings. Thirdly, in reviewing the proposed addition, staff suggested that it be detailed distinctly from the historic prototype, and not attempt to incorporate falsely historic features. More recently, the applicant made the interior of the building accessible to staff during the preparation of this report, which highlighted some of the challenges concerning the building’s poor condition and its interior layout, particularly at the additions/wings.
- The current proposal before the Commission envisions several major interventions to the property and main house, which suffered a catastrophic fire approximately five years ago. The scope of work is generally summarized as:
  - Restoration of the main portion of the nineteenth-century house, facing the street, with correct materials and designs. This includes a major interior reconstruction effort not subject to the Commission’s review.
  - Demolition/removal of three damaged portions: the south-extending side wing, and the two rear wings/additions.
  - Erection of a large addition, similar in character and scale to the original main portion of the house, separated by an architectural “hyphen.”
  - Demolition of the concrete block garage at the rear/alley end of the parcel.
  - Erection of a large “carriage house” style garage
- In staff’s opinion, there are several historic preservation questions for the Commission to consider in this case. These include the demolition or alteration of the rear/side historic-age additions; secondly, the scale, differentiation, and expression of the proposed rear addition; and thirdly, the overall



rehabilitation, including the restoration of the authentic front façade elements. Each is discussed below in its own bullet-pointed section below. Another section discusses the demolition of the garage, and its proposed replacement.

- National Park Service (NPS) guidance concerning additions is well-known, given that such work is very common as part of a new or adaptive reuse. Here are some relevant excerpts taken from the [current NPS guidelines](#)<sup>1</sup> (staff emphasis added):

*In accordance with Standard 9, a new addition must preserve the historic building's form/envelope, significant materials and features; **must be compatible with the historic building's massing, size, scale, and architectural features; and must be differentiated from the historic building to preserve its character.** Standard 10 calls for new additions to be constructed in such a manner that the essential form and integrity of the historic property be unimpaired if the new work were to be removed in the future. Limiting the removal of historic materials and utilizing existing doors or enlarging windows to transition to the new addition may accomplish this. **The Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings also recommend locating a new addition at the rear or on an inconspicuous side of a historic building.***

*There is no formula or prescription for designing a compatible new addition. **A new addition to a historic building that meets the Standards can be any architectural style—traditionalist, contemporary or a simplified version of the historic building.** However, there must be a balance between differentiation and compatibility in order to maintain the historic character and the very identity of the building being enlarged. **New additions that are either identical to the historic building or in extreme contrast to it fall short of this balance.***

- NPS *Preservation Brief 14*<sup>2</sup>, appended to this staff report, also speaks at length to the compatibility of additions to historic properties. Notable is this introductory paragraph (emphasis added):

*The subject of new additions is important because a new addition to a historic building has the potential to change its historic character as well as to damage and destroy significant historic materials and features. **A new addition also has the potential to confuse the public and to make it difficult or impossible to differentiate the old from the new or to recognize what part of the historic building is genuinely historic.***

- **Demolition/alteration of rear/side historic additions.** In general, staff usually describes wings (especially when original to the building) and subsequent additions, if erected during the Period of Significance, as significant and distinctively character-defining (i.e., they are important to the historic character of the property).
  - Significance, as defined by the NPS, is the association of a resource with the rationale for the district's preservation, be it architectural or association with historic people/events. Central to significance, again per the NPS, is the retention of a building's integrity, or the continued ability of a resource (or major portion thereof) to express that significance. Historic integrity is statutorily defined using seven "aspects," namely *location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association*. It is staff's assessment that the three wings/additions proposed for removal, retain their integrity, and are significant, but are at most *secondary in significance to the main portion* of the house and its public-facing front façade.
  - In assessing the appropriateness of any proposal under the NPS Standards and Guidelines, reasonableness shall also be a factor. As defined in 36 CFR 67.7, the reviewing authority shall consider "economic and technical feasibility" in meeting the Standards.
  - A final consideration is the recognition that the significance of historic features are not binary ("yes/no") but instead exist on a continuum (or spectrum) of significance from most to least. As

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/additions.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-14-exterior-additions.pdf>



such, the NPS recognizes the concept of “[cumulative effect](#)” in assessing the impact on a building’s features. Stated simply, this concept recognizes that negative impacts to *less* important though still significant historic features might be acceptable, in the context of a larger project that preserves or restores substantially *more* important features, and delivers a net positive result.

- In this case, the Commission is faced with the loss of three secondary building portions; one original wing to the rear, a later gable-roofed addition further to the rear, and finally a turn-of-the-century south addition to which some nineteenth-century elements were transferred during the historic era (partial loss, the front wall is preserved). All of these portions show substantial interior destruction from fire, suggesting a complete and complicated rebuild of the interior is necessary should they be retained. There is also ample evidence of heavy deterioration at the exterior, with large areas of failing brick.
  - Staff’s opinion is that, in the context of the very poor condition of these three fire-damaged wings/additions, the heavy cost represented by their necessary repair, their secondary importance in terms of historic character with respect to the main house portion, and *finally and most importantly the overall proposal’s cumulative effect of restoring to a high degree the remarkably important street-facing expression of the building*, is that the loss of these additions would be minimally appropriate, i.e., it would satisfy the Standards as part of the entire scope of work, as the end result would be a positive restoration of the historic streetscape.
- **Scale, differentiation, and expression of the proposed rear addition.** In this analysis, the Commission must apply the “identical/extreme contrast” test, i.e., does the addition properly balance differentiation with compatibility in order to “maintain the historic character and the very identity of the building being enlarged”? Or has the proposal erred too far towards one side (identical) or the other (extreme contrast)? The Commission must also consider whether such differentiation is apparent to a layperson (this is the NPS’s position, per *Preservation Brief 14* excerpted above) or if the differentiation will be so subtle that only an architect or other preservation professional might detect it.
    - Over many decades since the dawn of professional historic preservation practice in the 1960s, as architectural trends like post-modernism and contemporary architecture have alternately risen and fallen from favor, approaches to the stylistic choices for additions to historic contexts have varied in response to (or contrast with) such trends. In Detroit, and in particular Detroit’s local historic districts like Brush Park and Corktown, the Commission (with staff’s encouragement) has in recent years preferred compatibility in terms of massing, bulk, and shape, rather than worrying about ornamental/stylistic elements that mimic historic prototypes, most of which cannot be faithfully or convincingly reproduced without great expense. In academic terms, this is generally an embrace of modernism, and has resulted in many contemporary or “simplified versions” of buildings/additions, as the NPS puts it above, in our districts. Many of these use traditional materials in contemporary ways, or sometimes dispense with traditional materials altogether to prioritize historically compatible massing and rooflines. These are appropriate projects under the Standards.
    - Nevertheless, there have been many *other* approved projects that hew closer to architectural precedent, using traditional materials in traditional ways, using familiar ornamentation of particular architectural styles, and related approaches that aim for compatibility by being similar, but not too similar, and not by exact reproduction. This tends more toward post-modernism or “traditionalism.” Both approaches are generally appropriate under NPS rules, as long as the difference is clear to a layperson, and the addition/new construction is subordinate to its context. See next point for a discussion of subordination.
    - **Subordination.** In general, staff guidance is to ensure that the addition is “subordinate” to the original building, per the NPS definition. It is interesting to note that this does not *necessarily* mean that the addition must be *smaller*. The guidelines state:

*Depending on its location, it may be possible that **an addition slightly taller or slightly larger than the historic building may be acceptable**, as long as it is visually subordinate to the historic building. **In some cases, separating the addition from the***



*historic building with a small hyphen can reduce the impact of an addition that is larger than the historic building. Another way of minimizing the impact of a new addition to an historic building is to offset it or step it back from the mass of the historic building.*

- Staff assesses that the proposed addition is currently incompatible and not subordinate to the original structure (or rather, the portion remaining after removal of the rear additions). In staff's opinion, this is not *necessarily* due to the proposed size, footprint or massing of the addition, which is approximately equal to the historic portion, but *instead* the selection of a strict Italianate style that exactly and precisely reproduces the distinctive features of the original (window hoods/orientations, brickwork, roof lines, brackets, etc.). This, in our opinion, detracts from and confuses the prime reading of the original building, thus failing to be subordinate to it, by definition. The NPS writes that:

*exterior additions that duplicate the form, material, and detailing of the structure to the extent that they compromise the historic character of the structure will result in denial of certification. This does not mean that the addition and historic building should be glaringly different in terms of design, materials and other visual qualities. Instead, the new addition should take its design cues from, but not copy, the historic building.*

- Consistent with a close reading of the above referenced NPS guidance, we believe that a simplification of the detailing (i.e., removal of most/all of the historic reproduction features in the addition) will make the addition "visually subordinate," as it will not be in conflict for architectural primacy with the original, and will not be also then be confused by laypeople who might misinterpret the addition as original construction. Staff notes the existence of a "hyphen," which, in combination with a streamlining of detailing at the addition, will create a subordinate addition per the Standards and Guidelines. We do not believe that substantial redesign of the proposed addition is necessary, only an alternate approach to exterior detailing and roof geometry, and perhaps some additional variation in window openings that gives the addition a contemporary reading.
- **Rehabilitation of the main house/front facade.** The applicant proposes a nearly "textbook" rehabilitation of the important street-facing portion of the nineteenth-century house. As described in the proposed project documents, historic features including the highly significant porch, columns, stonework, brickwork, and woodwork will be repaired, and if beyond repair, will be reproduced in exact form, including materials. Per staff's field assessment, much of the surviving decorative woodwork appears salvageable. True wood double-hung windows are specified everywhere. Per the architect's submission, concerning the porch reconstruction:

*Replacement of any materials will only occur in the event the item in question cannot be cleaned and restored. Fire has affected a large portion of the detail on the house, but every effort will be made to restore the items that are able to be restored. All items being replaced will be the same material of the piece it is replacing.*





*Proposed west (front) elevation of the nineteenth-century house. Not to scale*

This of course is entirely consistent with Secretary of the Interior’s Standards 5 and 6, which read:

*(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 missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

The proposed treatment of the main portion of the historic house is not only appropriate, in staff’s opinion, but represents the best available historic preservation treatment possible, at substantial cost. No “more appropriate” approach is even conceivable.

As described above, the great care taken with this most significant portion of the property, especially with respect to both its rarity and current perilous/threatened state, in staff’s opinion, would allow a “cumulative effect” interpretation of the overall project that has tolerance for some less historically correct approaches on less important elements, within reason.

- The [Elements of Design for the Woodbridge Farm Historic District \(Section 21-2-155\)](#) should be studied when new construction, additions, or substantial exterior alteration are proposed, as the Commission must find that the proposal is in general conformance. Staff notes the following excerpts from these codified elements, as such (**emphasis added**):
  - **(1) Height.** *The buildings in the district range from one to five stories tall; the majority are 2½ stories tall, meaning they have two full stories with an attic or a finished third floor within the roof. Multi-unit apartment buildings range from two to five stories.*
  - **(2) Proportion of building's front façade.** *Proportion varies in the district, depending on style, size, and age of the buildings. Victorian single-family buildings and the larger apartment buildings are usually taller than wide to the eaves; duplexes and two and three-story multi-unit buildings are often wider than tall or as tall as wide. Elements above the eaves, such as turrets and gables, increase the appearance of height where they exist.*
  - **(3) Proportion of openings within the façades.** *Areas of voids generally constitute between 15 percent and 35 percent of the front façades, excluding the roof. Many buildings have window*



openings within the roof, in dormers, gables or towers, adding to the number of voids. Most window openings are taller than wide, although when grouped together might achieve a horizontal effect. ... A great variety of sizes, shapes, and groupings of openings exist in the district.

- **(4) Rhythm of solids to voids in front façade.** Most single- and two-family houses of the Late Victorian Era display a great freedom in placement of openings within the façades. Voids in Italianate dwellings are generally more regularly arranged than those in Queen Anne or Romanesque-style buildings. Apartment buildings show a regular arrangement of voids..
- **(5) Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets.** The spacing of buildings was generally determined by the setback from the side lot lines. Because of the number of buildings lost to demolition, the original rhythm has been disturbed. Consequently, the present spacing of buildings on the street does not establish any particular rhythm...
- **(6) Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections.** Steps and porches exist on all of the residential buildings in the district. The positions of porches contribute to the variety of design of the houses; front porches are frequently off to one side of the front façades of single-family houses and at both sides or in the centers of the front façades on duplexes. No consistent progression of front porches contributing to the streetscape exists because of the vacant land between houses due to building demolition. Rear porches and side porches exist on most of the houses throughout the district.
- **(7) Relationship of materials.** The district exhibits a wide variety of building materials characteristic of Victorian architecture. Brick is prevalent....Stone foundations and trim, either limestone, red sandstone, or concrete, were frequently used in combination with brick. Wooden details and trim are prevalent...
- **(8) Relationship of textures.** The most common textural relationship in the Victorian buildings is that of several materials juxtaposed within the same building to create a variety of rich textural effects. Brick with mortar joints is the most common textural effect, and often contrasts with the texture of other masonry and/or wood...Smooth or rough-faced stone foundations and detail provide substantial textural contrast...
- **(9) Relationship of colors.** Paint colors generally relate to style. Victorian buildings display freedom in the selection and placement of color; other buildings in the district generally do not. Orange-red brick frequently contrasting with light gray stone or red stone is the most common color relationship. ...The most common roof colors are brown, dark gray, green, and black and these are generally in the natural slate or stained wood shingle color range. ... Colors known to have been in use on buildings of similar type in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century may be considered for suitability on similar buildings. ...
- **(10) Relationship of architectural details.** Architectural details generally relate to style. The majority of the buildings in the district are from the Victorian period and are of the Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne, and Richardsonian Romanesque styles. Porches, window hoods and trim, cornices, dormers, turrets and gables are frequently treated with stylistic details in stone, wood, or brick; Neo-Georgian, Arts and Crafts, and Prairie buildings display simpler detail, usually around the windows, cornice, or within panels; in general, buildings in the district are rich in architectural details.
- **(11) Relationship of roof shapes.** A multiplicity of roof types exist, and frequently within the same building...
- **(12) Walls of continuity.** Primary walls of continuity are created by consistent setbacks of adjacent building façades. ... where there have been many buildings removed, primarily on Lincoln, the original wall of continuity is destroyed. ...
- **(13) Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments.** The Lincoln streetscape consists of a 70-foot right-of-way with the widths of tree lawns varying by block, although most are narrow. ,,Black wrought iron fencing is occasionally used for front yard fencing; modern chain-link fences predominate in the district. ... Shrubs and plantings in front of fences and along the sides of fences on corner lots throughout the district are also common.
- **(14) Relationship of open space to structures.** Large amounts of open space have been created by demolition of structures. Both the northern and southern boundaries of the district are



surrounded by open fields. Ample side yards have been created where previously there would have been houses, primarily on Lincoln. Most properties have shallow rear yards, ... There are a few garages along the rear lot lines. ... In the visual sense, the large areas of open space do not read as having function, but seem to demand appropriate new infill construction.

- **(15) Scale of façades and façade elements.** The scale of houses in the district range from small to large. The elements within the moderate to large scale Victorian buildings divide their façades into large segments, such as towers, gables, dormers, verandas, and bays. Details within those elements are usually small scaled. ...
  - **(16) Directional expression of front façades.** Directional expression often relates to style. The majority of buildings in the district have vertically expressed front façades. Duplexes and small multi-unit buildings of any style may be horizontal or neutral in expression, excluding the roofs, but vertical projections above the eaves, such as gables, turrets and dormers, sometimes contribute to a vertical appearance.
  - **(17) Rhythm of building setbacks.** Setbacks are usually consistent within each block but, due to building demolition, there is little consistency of rhythm in the streetscape. Large apartment buildings and later commercial buildings are not at the setback of the older houses; they are closer to the sidewalk.
  - **(18) Relationship of lot coverage.** The original relationship of structures to land has been altered by building demolition. Frequently, several lots are combined to form one large lot or side lot. Buildings occupy approximately between 40 percent to 95 percent of their original building sites, not including vacant lots, which may have been added later to the property.
  - **(19) Degree of complexity with the façades.** The degree of complexity has been determined by what is appropriate for a given style. The Victorian buildings exhibit complex massing, multiple roof forms, colors, materials, and textures within their façades. Other styles are less complex.
  - **(20) Orientation, vistas, overviews.** Most buildings are oriented towards the north-south avenues, Lincoln and Trumbull... Where they exist, garages are generally oriented towards the alley but may also be reached from the front.
  - **(21) Symmetric or asymmetric appearance.** Few buildings are symmetrical in appearance but most have a balanced composition. The Victorian buildings generally exhibit an asymmetrical appearance. Classically Derived, Prairie, and Arts and Crafts buildings are generally symmetrical.
  - **(22) General environmental character.** Woodbridge Farm is a pocket of primarily late Victorian middle-class residential architecture and later apartment buildings off of West Grand River Avenue and Martin Luther King Boulevard. Due to the loss of original housing, the appearance of the neighborhood is altered; there is no longer an intact streetscape; instead, some blocks read as individual houses. Visually, appropriate infill construction seems demanded. The Jeffries Homes creates a visual boundary to the east; the Woodbridge Neighborhood to the west provides continuity to the Woodbridge Farms Area. ...
- **Garage.** As described above, staff assesses that the current garage is not a “contributing” building to the historic property/district. Should the Commission agree, its demolition would meet the Standards. As to the replacement, the architect has designed a very competent historically inspired building that would merge seamlessly into many historic contexts. Interestingly the first story of the garage/carriage house also incorporates salvaged cinder block from the current garage, adding additional block to match as required. This nod to context (and the existence of an earlier building) is a strong design move in any historic district, and will help to distinguish the building as contemporary construction. The garage is also designed with true wood siding and windows. Staff recommends that the Commission find the carriage house appropriate. Its size and architectural treatment is compatible with the scale and context of the Woodbridge Farm Historic District.
  - The Commission is on record supporting higher lot coverages and dense development in this historic district. In February 2021, the Commission approved a large multi-family townhouse style project for the site of the former Scripps mansion (now under construction). This was a substantial increase in density from the historic precedent. More recently in April 2023, and on the same block as the current proposal, the Commission approved a multi-family development constructed with lot coverage of



similar density, also on parcels that were previously occupied by large houses.



## THE TOWNS @ SCRIPPS PARK

MULTI-BUILDING TOWNHOUSE DEVELOPMENT IN  
THE WOODBRIDGE FARMS HISTORIC DISTRICT



*“Scripps Park” between Trumbull & Lincoln, approved by the Commission in Feb. 2021 and now under construction.*



*Development at 3606 Lincoln, immediately to the south of the subject parcels, approved by the Commission.*

- As described above, staff’s assessment of this proposal’s appropriateness is based substantially on the NPS principles of *reasonableness* and *cumulative effect*. Staff recognizes that restoration of the main portion of the house, which was completely hollowed out by a major fire, has placed the future of this important and distinctive nineteenth-century building in serious jeopardy. Immediate substantial investment is required to keep this building standing, and in the interim, it could be threatened with



BSEED-ordered demolition as a dangerous building. Staff recommends to the Commission that it is reasonable to accept loss of some original fabric at the rear, and a high-lot coverage addition, in exchange for the comprehensive and correct restoration of forward portion of the main house, which is indisputably the most historically significant portion of the property, and clearly most important to the district overall. The district cannot afford the loss of yet another nineteenth-century survivor. On the other hand, it can reasonably tolerate a large modern addition, given the large, dense, and high lot coverage buildings (both historic and new construction) currently adjacent and going up around it, assuming that addition is detailed properly to show deference to the original portion. Staff therefore believes that this proposal, with some modifications, will serve the public purpose enshrined in the historic districts ordinance, and recommends its approval.

## **ISSUES**

- The exterior of the large addition to the main house should be redesigned to be more architecturally distinct, and not be designed to so carefully mirror the ornamentation and rhythm of the historic precedent. Staff believes this is possible with relatively small tweaks such as deleting ornament, reorienting roof lines, and modifying windows. Possible approaches include more contemporary detailing and window arrangements, alternate cladding materials, and other textural juxtapositions to purposefully differentiate it from the nineteenth-century prototype. It should be clear to the public and/or the casual observer that the new construction elements, while high quality, are a contemporary addition to the property and/or district.
- To support this clarity, the architect might explore ways to unify the design of the rear addition with the carriage house, instead of pursuing unification with the old house, which defines the current approach. However, this would require additional (simplifying and contemporary) revisions to the carriage house, as the style of that proposed garage would likely be incompatible as a direct appendage to the Italianate house, despite its acceptable compatibility as a stand-alone building. In our opinion, the site could not sustain three different architectural vocabularies (i.e., original house, addition, and garage). Two designs should relate to each other, and those two should be the carriage house and the rear addition. This is not to say that the rear house addition should “look” like a garage, only that the new construction on the parcel should seek be unified in design vocabulary, and that vocabulary be distinct from, yet compatible with, the nineteenth-century house.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

#### **Recommendation, Certificate of Appropriateness**

Staff recommends that the proposed work should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and the Woodbridge Farm Historic District’s Elements of Design, with the condition that:

- The exteriors of the rear addition (including the “hyphen”) and the carriage house/garage be designed in a simplified architectural vocabulary distinct from the Italianate style of the main nineteenth-century house, subject to staff approval.