

STAFF REPORT: OCTOBER 9, 2024, REGULAR MEETING
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00569
ADDRESS: 1180 VINEWOOD
HISTORIC DISTRICT: HUBBARD FARMS
APPLICANT: VALERIA LOPEZ
PROPERTY OWNER: VALERIA LOPEZ
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: SEPTEMBER 19, 2024
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO

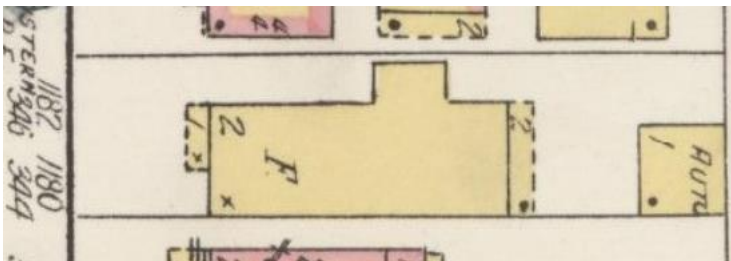
SCOPE: ALTER DWELLING INCLUDING WINDOW AND DOOR OPENINGS, ROOF, SIDING, AND PORCH (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

1180 Vinewood was built in 1900 and faces west onto the street. In 2023 and early 2024 it was heavily altered without review or approval by the Historic District Commission.



Left: March 2024 photo by staff. Right: Photo from July 2023 listing on realtor.com.



The subject property as depicted on a 1921 Sanborn map. The rear porch and garage have since been removed.



The house around 1993. Photo by the Historic Designation Advisory Board.



The house in 2006. Photo by staff.

1180 Vinewood was, until recently, a two-and-one-half-story house. Sitting on a brick foundation, its facades were defined by projecting, rectangular, box-bay windows on the front (west) and north side of the building, and a projecting, flat-roof front porch. Its irregular roof plan included a front-facing (west-facing) gable on the southern half of the front façade, a steep, pyramidal tower on the north half of the front facade, two north-facing cross gables, and a south-facing dormer. The building showed a mix of the Queen Anne and Free Classic styles; additional character-defining features included scalloped, wood shingles on the upper half-story at the gable ends of the building, a Classical cornice with dentil trim along the porch and above the first-floor bay windows, and curved brackets, also on the first-floor bay windows.

Prior to the 1993 ordinance enacting the Hubbard Farms Historic District, there were several alterations. Simulated masonry cladding and composite siding were added, though the original siding remained underneath and the scalloped shingles on the upper half-story remained exposed. Original porch supports and doors were replaced. Exposed wood stairways were added to access residential units on the second floor.

By 2000, staff photos show that vinyl or aluminum siding was added to the front (west) façade only, and a six-foot-high chain-link fence was installed. Both work items were done without Historic District Commission approval. For the latter item, an application was submitted on April 3, 2001. The Commission issued a Certificate of Appropriateness for the fence on May 10, 2001, with the condition that it be *either* reduced to four feet in height *or* moved back to the façade line of the house. However, the fence was never reconfigured to meet this condition; it remains in violation.

In 2018, the Historic District Commission issued a Certificate of Appropriateness for a proposal to substantially rehabilitate the exterior of the house. However, the work was never performed. (Both prior COAs are posted to the Historic District Commission property page for reference.)



Left: November 2020 photo from Google Street View. Right: Image from 2023 application documents, view from the north. Note that the pyramidal roof tower is missing; red arrow is added by staff to indicate former tower location.

At some time between May 2019 and November 2020¹ a fire damaged the second story and attic half-story. The fire caused damage to the interior framing of the building, as seen in a photo provided by the applicant, and also caused damage visible on the building exterior.

In 2023, staff observed extensive work completed at the property without Historic District Commission approval. Perhaps most noticeably, the attic half-story had been shortened, eliminating its pyramidal tower, front-facing gable, north-facing cross gable, and south-facing dormer. The fenestration pattern had been altered, with many window openings reduced in size or eliminated altogether. The footprint of the north wall was expanded slightly, eliminating a recessed central section and creating a solid plane. The north-facing box-bay window had been reduced from two stories to one, and the front-facing box-bay window had been altered by either removing or covering over a Classical entablature with dentils and adding a gable to the top of its second story. Expanses of building paper suggest that much of the historic siding had been removed as well. A few historic, wood, one-over-one or two-over-two windows remained on the building, along with Classical trim on the historic porch and what remained of the north-facing box bay window.



October 11, 2023, photo by staff.

On October 11, 2023, staff encountered the property owner and provided a brochure explaining the Application for Work Approval requirements for properties in City of Detroit historic districts. The Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department inspected the property on October 16, 2023, and finally posted a Stop Work order on March 5, 2024 after multiple requests by Historic District Commission staff.

By the time of the Stop Work order, additional work had been done on the house. The porch is now removed entirely, replaced with a gable-roof porch. The remaining historic windows are removed, with vinyl slider and sash windows installed. The windows are trimmed with what appears to be aluminum or vinyl. The Classical trim on the north-facing bay window has been either removed or covered with a hip-roof projection.

¹ According to Google Street View images. City of Detroit records do not provide a date for the fire.

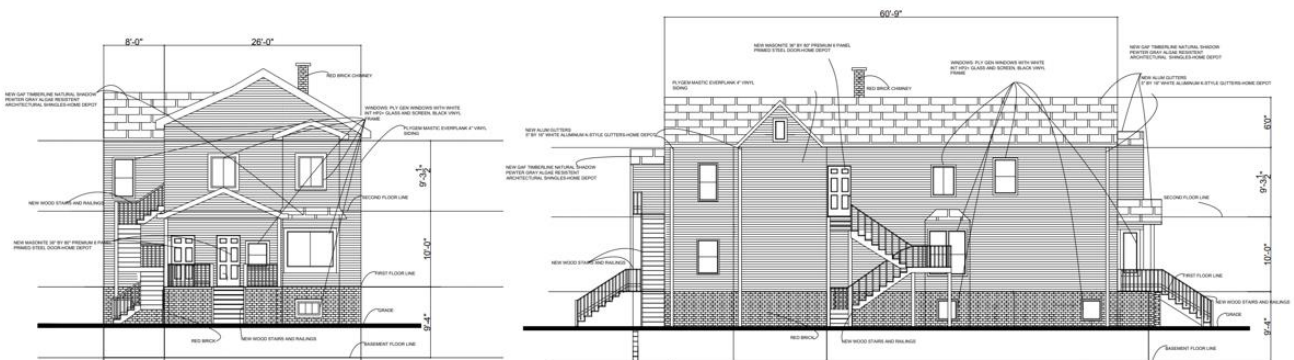
After the Stop Work order, staff observed additional work on the house: New electrical service connections were added to the exterior, north elevation. This work was visible on April 5, 2024, but not present on March 28, 2024.



April 2024 staff photo; new electrical service connections visible at bottom right.

April 2024 Historic District Commission Review and Determination

Staff received an Application for Work Approval on October 11, 2023; this application was considered by staff to be provisionally complete upon receipt of additional information on March 23, 2024. At that time, the applicant sought to retain the work already completed and also to complete additional cladding and finish work.



West (left) and north (right) elevations of work from March 23, 2024, application, largely completed without approval. This application received a Denial.

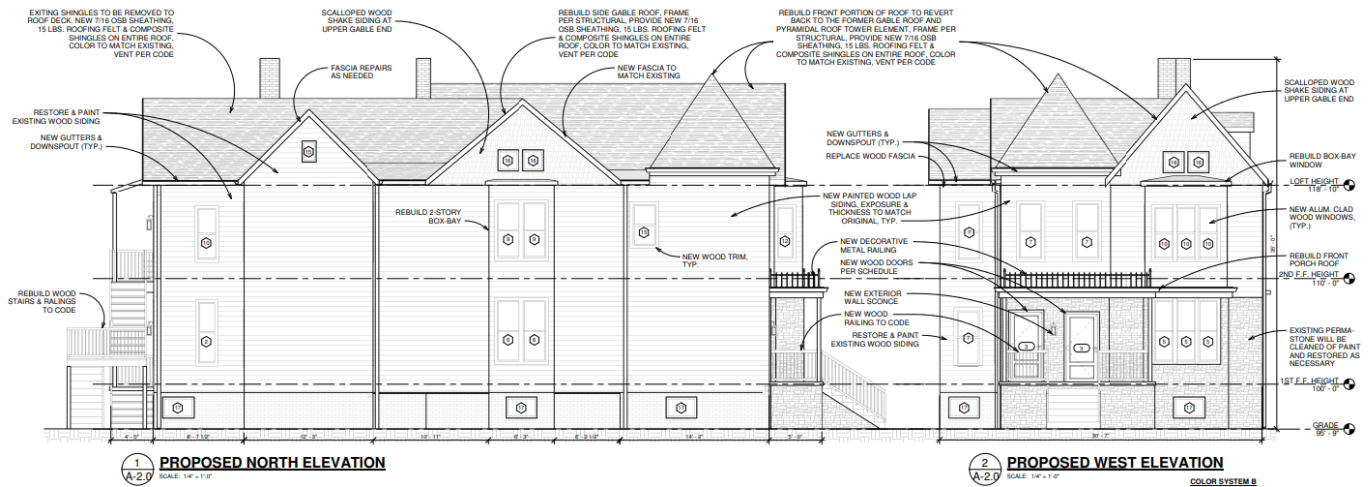
At its April 10, 2024, meeting, the Commission issued a Denial for the proposed (largely already completed) work, citing the following reasons:

- The proposed work removes distinctive and character-defining features from the building (such features must be preserved; if beyond repair, they may be replaced with matching new features). These features include the front porch, decorative trim on bay windows, wood siding, and wood scalloped shingles.

- The proposed work alters historic features and spaces by fundamentally changing the form of the building. Inappropriate spatial alterations include reducing the height of the building, converting the historic roof form with tower, front gable, side gable, and side dormer to a gable roof, increasing the footprint of the building on the north wall, adding a gable top to the west-facing bay window, converting the north-facing bay window from two stories to one, and altering the fenestration pattern.
- The proposed work adds an incompatible new front porch to the building.
- The proposed work adds historically inappropriate vinyl materials to the building

PROPOSAL

The submitted proposal acknowledges the prior Stop Work and Denial notices and states, “this proposal looks to amend these issues.” The proposed work would, in part, recreate the historical appearance of the building by restoring much (but not all) of its prior form and massing and replicating some (but not all) of the lost character-defining details. Specific scope items are described under “Staff Observations and Research,” below.



Proposed front (west) and side (north) elevations. Drawings from application materials.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Hubbard Farms Historic District was established by Ordinance 01-93 in 1993.
- Hubbard Farms is one of seven historic districts in Detroit that have been “certified” by the National Park Service for purposes of the federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit.² This credit has provided tangible benefits to the community including, in just the last few years, the rehabilitation of 3615 West Vernor, 461–465 West Grand Boulevard, and 1441–1453 Hubbard, sponsored by the city’s Housing Revitalization Department in conjunction with private partners. Staff is concerned that, over time, each building in the historic district that is destroyed or inappropriately altered brings the district closer to a loss of certification and, consequently, a loss of the eligibility of buildings within the district for the associated credit. For that reason, it is particularly important that buildings inappropriately altered without approval be returned to their prior character.
- The Final Report for the Hubbard Farms Historic District provides a Period of Significance of 1870

² Robb McKay, Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, email to staff, July 25, 2014. (The other certified districts are the Berry Subdivision Historic District, the Cass-Henry Historic District, East Ferry Avenue Historic District, the Madison-Harmonie Historic District, the New Center Area Historic District, and the Peterboro-Charlotte Historic District.)

through 1930. The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-157 [d]) are intended to guide additions and new construction in the district and assist the Historic District Commission in identifying existing character-defining features of each building that require preservation. Pertinent Elements of Design are excerpted as follows:

- *Height.* The majority of residential buildings are either two or two and one-half stories tall, meaning they have two full stories with an attic or finished third floor within the roof.
- *Proportion of openings within the façade.* Proportion varies according to building type, age, and style. Generally, window openings in the district are predominantly taller than wide; several windows are frequently grouped into combinations wider than tall. Window openings are most often subdivided, the most common window type being double-hung sash, whose area is generally further subdivided by muntins ... In general, buildings have between 15 percent and 35 percent of their area glazed.
- *Rhythm of solids to voids in front façades.* Window openings are usually regularly arranged by floor, although there is most often variety between floor levels. In the Queen Anne and Richardsonian Romanesque style buildings, openings are often irregularly arranged ... Many of the residential buildings have dormers or gables that are fenestrated.
- *Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections.* Placement of entrance and porch projections vary from building to building, usually depending on type, size, and style. In general, a great variety of porches and entrances characterize Hubbard Farms ... Porches on houses built around the turn of the twentieth century tend to be large, sometimes stretching along most of the first story ... Most of the houses in the district have rear porches.
- *Relationship of materials.* Brick and wood are the primary building materials originally used ... Wood trim is most commonly used for window, porch, and functional elements as well as decorative trim; some lintels and sills also exist. Front porch step materials are either wood or concrete.
- *Relationship of textures.* A variety of rich textural relationships exist in the district—those created by the juxtaposition of various materials, such as brick, stone, stucco, and/or wood, and those created by the repetition of the materials themselves, such as clapboard, wood fish scale shingles or decorative brick.
- *Relationship of colors.* 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 architectural details.* Architectural details generally relate to style ... Porches are commonly treated and usually have columns of a classical order. 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 ... In general, the Hubbard Farms District is extremely rich in architectural detail.
- *Relationship of roof shapes.* Queen Anne and other Victorian substyles exhibit greater heights, intersecting planes, and steep slopes.
- *Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments.* The majority of fences are of the chain link variety; four-foot chain-link fenced front yards are seen throughout the district but to a lesser degree at the south end of Hubbard and Vinewood.

- *Scale of façades and façade elements.* On Victorian buildings decorative detail tends to be small in scale, while façade elements, such as bays, dormers and towers, are large in scale.
 - *Degree of complexity within the façade.* The Victorian substyles tend to be more complex, complicated by towers, gables, and decorated porches.
 - *Symmetric or asymmetric appearance.* Other styles [than Classical] are generally asymmetric but result in balanced compositions.
- It appears from photographs (see page 3) that an extensive rebuilding of the second floor and attic half-story would have been required after the recent fire damage. The scalloped shingles on the attic story and many of the windows on the upper levels were likely beyond repair. However, within a historic district, such work is generally required by both state law and the City Code to meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, including Standard #6: “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.” For fire damaged features, some flexibility is warranted regarding their replacement (see National Park Service, *Preservation Briefs 16: The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors*, updated in 2023).
 - Due to level of deterioration visible on this building even prior to the inappropriate 2023–2024 work, National Park Service guidance on “reasonableness” and “cumulative effect” may play a role in the Commission’s analysis. According to the National Park Service, the Standards “are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.”³ Also, “A project meets the Standards when the overall effect of all work—the cumulative effect—is consistent with the property’s historic character. ... In some cases, a single aspect of a project may not be consistent with recommendations found in the Guidelines, yet its impact on the character of the property as a whole is small enough that the overall project meets the Standards.”⁴ Staff offers the following for the Commission’s consideration:
 - The historic character of the building was already compromised at the time the Hubbard Farms Historic District was designated in 1993, with largely non-historic, incompatible, front and rear porches and non-historic, incompatible siding.
 - A prior rehabilitation proposal (subject of the 2018 Certificate of Appropriateness) never came to fruition; the building has since sat vacant.
 - A fire severely damaged the building around 2020, resulting in the loss of additional character-defining features (scalloped shingles, some windows, and damaging the tower) and presenting an additional economic challenge to future rehabilitation of the building.
 - Realtor.com estimates the building has a value of \$103,056. According to the website, this is “based on tax assessment records, recent sale prices of comparable properties, and other factors” and likely assumes a building in habitable condition. In early 2023, the building sold for \$57,500.
 - Overall, the proposed work repairs much of the circa 2020 fire damage and undoes much of the inappropriate 2023 and early 2024 work, restoring or replicating much of the building’s prior character. Further, new features proposed to be added are largely compatible and appropriate, in staff opinion. However, some proposed scope items fall short of appropriateness, in staff opinion. The table below summarizes the proposed changes, with staff analysis following:

³ 36 CFR § 67.7(b)

⁴ <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/cumulative-effect-and-historic-character.htm>.

Feature	Historic or Character-defining	2023–2024 work	October 2024 proposal	Staff opinion
Overall form and massing	Yes	Altered without approval	Restore, in part	Appropriate, with exceptions
Fenestration (window placement/size)	Yes	Altered without approval	Restore, in part	Appropriate, with exceptions
Front porch	Yes	Altered without approval	Restore	Appropriate
Rear porch	No	Removed without approval	Install new	Appropriate
Wood siding	Yes	Unchanged	Repair/replace	Appropriate
Simulated masonry cladding	No	Unchanged	Repair	Appropriate
Architectural details and trim	Yes	Removed without approval	Unchanged	Inappropriate
Windows	Yes	Replaced without approval	Replace	Appropriate
Doors	No	Replaced without approval	Replace	Appropriate

Overall form and massing

Roof form

- The alteration of the roof shape is, in staff opinion, the most severe and inappropriate component of the prior work completed without approval. The work was contrary to Standard #2, which requires that “the alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.”
- This current proposal substantially reconfigures the roof form to restore its prior geometry and appearance, replacing the lost tower, front gable, side gable, and side dormer. Although exact measurements of the lost roof features are not available (the features were destroyed without having been documented), the proposed work appears to closely match the prior appearance of the roof shape, based on available photos.

Bay windows

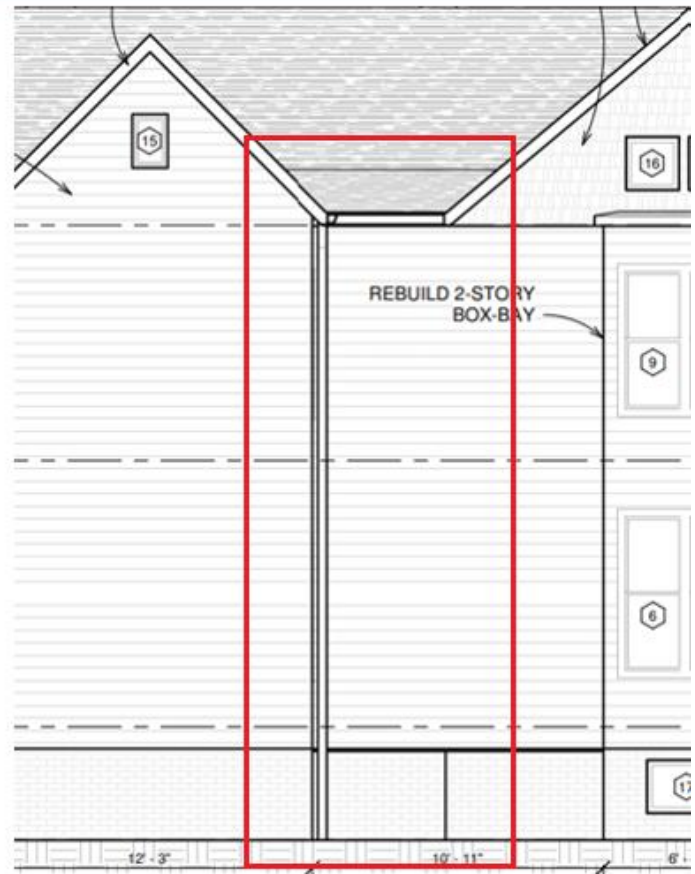
- Two box-bay windows were also inappropriately altered by the prior work, adding a gable top to the west-facing bay window and converting the north-facing bay window from two stories to one. The proposed work also remedies this condition, returning those elements as closely as possible (again, exact measurements are not available) to its pre-violation condition.

Building footprint and massing

- The prior, unapproved work changed the overall footprint of the building by the elimination of a recessed, central portion of the north wall.
- The proposed work does not restore this feature to the pre-violation condition, and would therefore allow an unapproved “alteration to features and spaces that characterize the property,” per Standard #2, to persist. The application narrative states:

“The scope also includes the update of the North (side) elevation, where the footprint of the north wall was expanded slightly, eliminating a recessed central section and creating a solid plane. An attempt is made to provide the sense of the former side gable & box-bay window, while maintaining the infill work completed to date. The proposed roof line of the side cross gable will match what was there before.”

- Staff suggests that the “cumulative effect” guidance quoted on page 8 may apply to this feature, as its contribution to the historic character of the building is minimal.

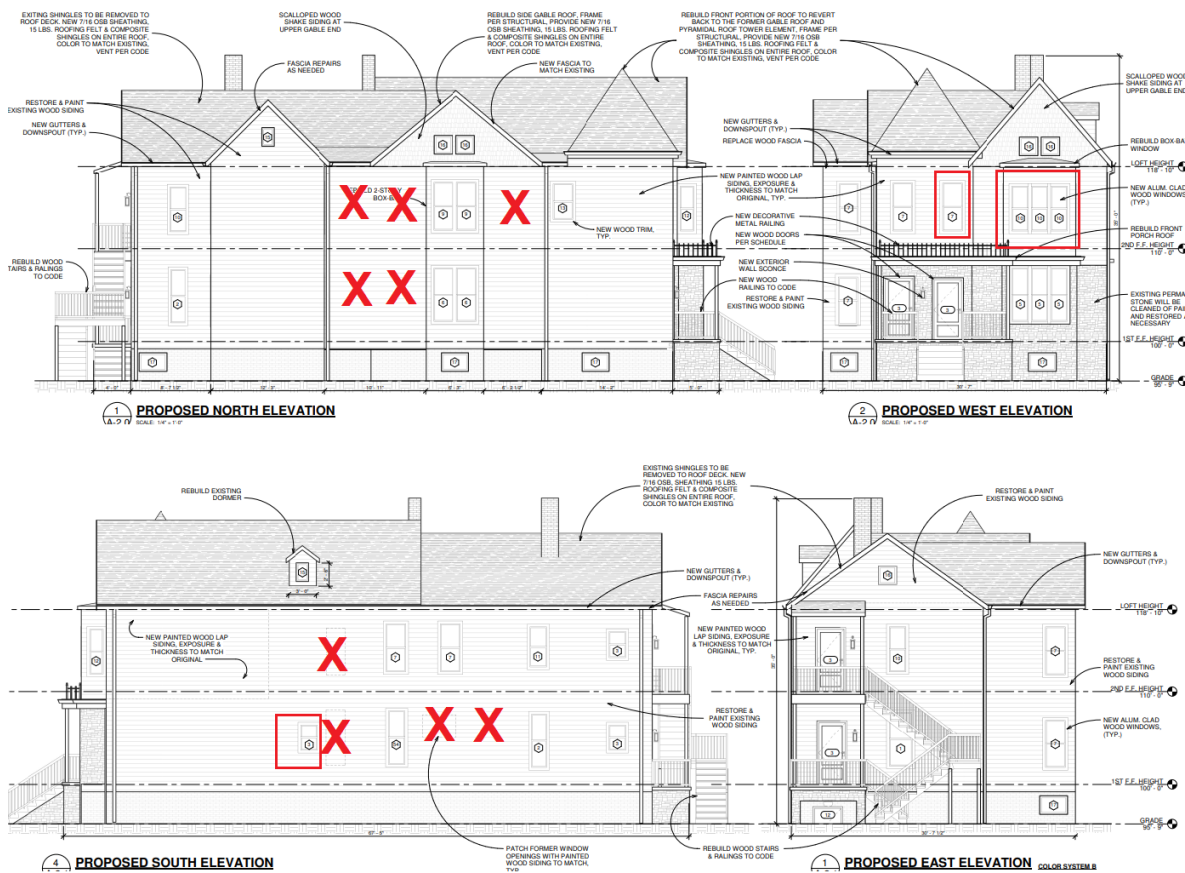


Recessed area between gabled bays on side (west) of building, indicated by red boxes added by staff. Left: historic condition (Google Maps 2023); Right: proposed work (from application drawings, cropped by staff).

Fenestration

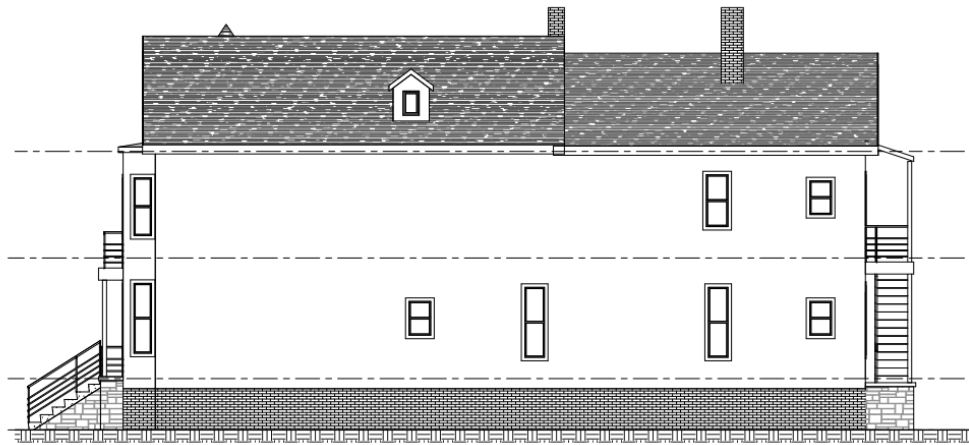
- Another component of the unapproved work greatly reconfigured window openings by reducing some openings in size or eliminating some openings altogether. Again, this was contrary to Standard #2, which requires that “the alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.”
- The proposed work returns many, but not all, of the window openings to their pre-violation condition.
- The application narrative argues the following:

“The majority of the windows to be modified [from the historical condition] are kept to the South side of the building which is less than (4) feet from its neighbor and not easily seen from the street. One of the windows to be closed is a newer addition and the rest are required to accommodate the new kitchens. In other areas the modified windows are required to meet egress for sleeping rooms.”



Elevation drawings from application, marked in red by staff. X represents prior window openings proposed for elimination. Boxes indicate prior window openings proposed to be resized.

- Staff’s ability to determine the appropriateness of the proposed placement of window openings is hindered by a lack of historical documentation, especially on the side and rear elevations, which were not captured in 1993 designation photos or in prior HDC application documents. In more recent photos, the openings are boarded up and fire damaged. However, staff provides the following observations:
 - The prior placement of openings on the north (side) elevation may not reflect the condition during the period of significance. 2023 (pre-violation) Google Maps photos show seven openings on the westernmost gabled bay, but no openings at all on the easternmost gabled bay. This arrangement would be unusual in a 1900-era building. More likely, some of the openings were door openings reflecting the mid-twentieth-century conversion of the building to apartments; other openings may have been closed over time.
 - The historical arrangement of openings on the south (side) elevation is not known. However, the application documents associated with the 2018 COA depict fewer window openings than today. Of note, the windows proposed for elimination in the current application are not shown in the 2018 drawings, suggesting that *either* those windows did not exist historically, *or* the Commission, at the time, considered them not to be important, character-defining features requiring preservation.



South elevation showing proposed (approved, but never completed) work from the 2018 COA. Image from 2018 application documents.

- Based on the above observations indicating that the window openings are not known to be historic, character-defining features, and the applicant’s statement that the window openings facilitate adapting the building to its new occupancy, staff suggests that, in general, the proposed reconfiguration of the window openings on the side elevations is appropriate, with some exceptions (see “Issues,” below).
- However, staff also believes that the overall reduction in the number of window openings creates expanses of blank wall that are not compatible with the character of the building or the district, contrary to Standard #9: “exterior alterations ... shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment” (again, see “Issues,” below).
- Staff suggests that the conversion of the second-floor, front (west) door opening to a window is appropriate as it is unclear if the door is a historic feature and its elimination does not substantially change the character of the building.
- Further, the “cumulative effect” guidance quoted on page 8 may apply here as well, as the contribution of individual openings, in the already irregular fenestration pattern of the side elevations, to the historic character of the building is minimal.

Front Porch

- At the time the Hubbard Farms Historic District was established in 1993, the base and supports of the porch had already been replaced with non-historic materials, leaving only the upper portion remaining.
- The remaining upper portion was removed without approval in 2023 or 2024.
- The proposed work closely recreates the upper portion of the porch, while adding an appropriate and compatible base, supports, and railing in painted wood.

Rear Porch

- The prior rear porch and stairway was a non-historic feature composed of unpainted, dimensional lumber. The feature was removed without approval in 2023 or 2024. The proposed new rear porch

and stairway is compatible, in staff opinion.

Wood siding

- Historic wood siding had been covered with non-historic cement-asbestos siding prior to the unapproved 2023 and 2024 work. Now that the historic siding has been exposed, the application proposes to repair and repaint the siding where it remains, and install new wood siding where the historic siding is missing. This is the preferred and most appropriate architectural treatment, per National Park Service guidance.

Simulated masonry cladding

- Simulated masonry cladding on the front porch foundation is proposed to be retained and repainted. This work constitutes “ordinary maintenance” and is appropriate. However, staff also suggests that it is a non-historic feature and its removal would also be appropriate, subject to Historic District Commission approval.

Architectural details and trim

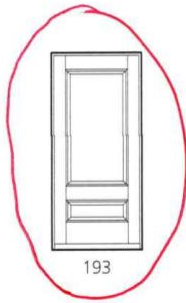
- The decorative trim including Classical dentils and curved Queen Anne brackets on the porch and bay windows, window casing on the front (west) and side (north) bay windows, and wood scalloped shingles at the gable ends, were distinctive features that are unique and important to the building’s historic appearance. Standard #5 requires that “distinctive features ... shall be preserved.”
- The unapproved work inappropriately removed these features, contrary to Standard #5. The proposed work restores the scalloped shingles but omits the other features.

Windows

- The 2018 Certificate of Appropriateness (18-5866) for the property allowed for the replacement of historic windows with matching aluminum-clad wood windows (that is, windows of the same configuration in the same size and location). Staff considers the proposed aluminum-clad wood windows in this application (Anderson 400 Series double-hung sash windows, with casement windows at the attic story) to be consistent with the 2018 COA. Further, staff considers the rationale behind the 2018 COA to be equally applicable to present-day conditions, especially considering the additional deterioration and fire damage that has occurred since 2018.
- Glass-block basement windows, as proposed, are generally consistent with the HDC *Glass Block Guidelines*.

Doors

- From photos, it appears that the historic doors most likely were already lost at the time the Hubbard Farms Historic District was so designated in 1993.
- The proposed new doors, Andersen Straightline full panel wood doors, are compatible and appropriate, in staff opinion.



Andersen Straightline door. Image from submitted product specifications.

Other work items

- Other, relatively minor, scope items include a metal handrail atop the front porch canopy, asphalt roof shingles, gutters, downspouts, paint colors following Color System C, and a rear parking pad. Staff opinion is that these items are appropriate.

ISSUES

- The proposed work creates large expanses of blank wall that are incompatible with the building and the district, contrary to Standard #9.
- The proposed elevation drawings show the three box-bay windows on the second floor, west (front) elevation to be reduced in height from the historic condition.
- Specifications are not provided for the proposed scalloped shingles.
- The proposed work does not replace the decorative trim—including Classical dentils and curved Queen Anne brackets on the porch and bay windows, and complex window surrounds on the front (west) and side (north) bay windows—that was eliminated without approval, contrary to Standard #5. These items may need to be fabricated, off-the-shelf products are unlikely to match the dimensions and profile of the lost historic elements.
- It is unclear if the basement windows would be recessed as directed by the *HDC Glass Block Guidelines*.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78: Determinations of Historic District Commission

Staff recommends that the Commission issue a *Certificate of Appropriateness* for the proposed work as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, with the following conditions:

- Additional window openings shall be added to the north elevation, subject to staff approval.
- The three windows on the second floor, west (front) elevation, box-bay shall be increased in height to match the historic condition, subject to staff approval.
- The selection of scalloped shingles shall be subject to staff approval.

- Decorative trim, including Classical dentils and curved Queen Anne brackets on the porch and bay windows, and window casing on the front (west) and side (north) bay windows, shall be added, subject to staff approval.
- The basement windows shall be installed according to the HDC *Glass Block Guidelines*.