

STAFF REPORT 11-10-2021 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG

APPLICATION NUMBER: 21-7579

ADDRESS: 2238 WABASH

HISTORIC DISTRICT: CORKTOWN

APPLICANT/OWNER: MATT SACHSE

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 10-17-2021

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 11-02-2021

SCOPE: REMOVE NON-HISTORIC SIDING, REPRODUCE AND INSTALL TRUE WOOD WINDOWS AND OTHER DETAILS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

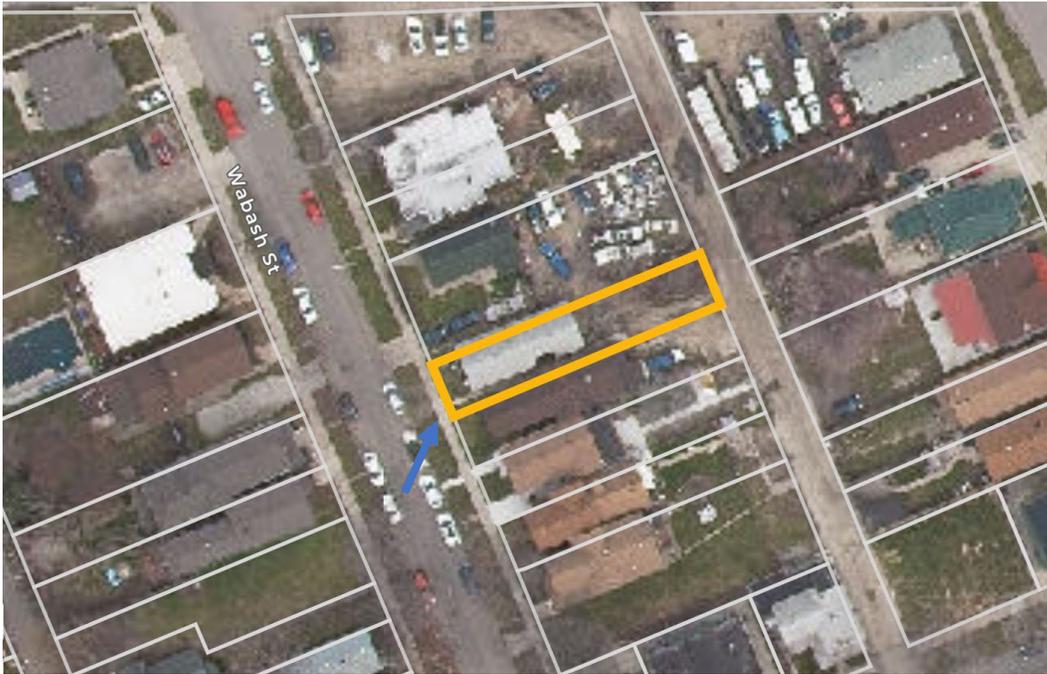
The subject property is a small, circa 1880 single-story nineteenth-century workers cottage on Wabash Street, featuring historic wood clapboard siding, some modest ornamentation at the porch roof, and a prominent bay window. Its current condition is a marked improvement over just a few years ago, when it was shrouded in incompatible asphalt siding which concealed most of its historic character.



View of existing conditions at 2238 Wabash. The current skirt boards are temporary plywood enclosures. Staff photo, November 2, 2021.



1950 Sanborn view of vicinity, 2238 Wabash indicated.



Parcel view of vicinity, subject parcel outlined in yellow. Blue arrow shows location of photo from previous page.



Google Street View shows property with incompatible asphalt siding as it appeared in July 2016.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to legalize already completed work including the removal of the incompatible exterior finishes, as well as the proposed recreation of historically appropriate 2/2 wood windows, which will be custom built out of old-growth long-leaf pine. Additional proposed work includes the repair and recreation of the period-correct wood skirt, a vanishingly rare feature in the district, and other ornamental wood features.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The work performed in removing the asphalt siding was done without approval. Additional unapproved work included the removal of the pressed metal skirting around the foundation, which imitated a “cinder block” foundation. The combination of a fake “block” skirting with fake “brick” siding was a common intervention in the mid-century era on older frame residential structures to attempt to move the property upscale, with typically unconvincing results. In almost no cases have such modifications earned their own historic significance or integrity. As such, staff finds that the removal of these incompatible layers was, and is, appropriate.
- In many cases, though the decades of concealment obscures original wood character, it ironically helped protect the original materials from weathering. The removal in this case, as has occurred at other houses in Corktown, has revealed a well-preserved original clapboard finish which only required nominal repairs and painting.
- Per the applicant, the original 2/2 wood windows were lost as part of the preparation work for an emergency demolition circa 2007, which was ultimately postponed. The current owner acquired the property in 2013.
- The applicant, in his application narrative, exhibits considerable technical expertise concerning the details of the windows and other elements proposed for repair; an excerpt:

The window sash will be built out of the same exact old-growth long leaf pine as they were at the time. The design and dimensions are identical to within 1/100 of an inch of what the original neighborhood joiner would have specced. I have restored many windows in this neighborhood (and sadly watched many more go), and there is a very specific profile that these windows of this vintage have -- a very slightly elongated ogee -- likely unique to a particular set of moulding planes, but that I have had recreated in various tooling over the years. The ‘horns’ at the bottom of the sash are I believe the best design of the local sashmakers. Were I rich enough to afford the luxury of glass back then, this is the sash I would have picked. This design prevents the racking failure at the bridal joint that is so often used as a reason that windows cannot be saved. My goal is to build windows that could be horribly neglected for a few decades and even then the owner would not be able to justify their removal!



Custom-built wood windows proposed for the house.

- Additional restoration work, proposed to be executed in similar reclaimed wood, include roof corbels at

the front façade which are modeled on existing prototypes and positioned via remnant paint lines. This is a textbook approach to proper historic preservation and should be commended.

ISSUES

- None. Staff enthusiastically supports this detailed and thoughtful proposal for this modest yet important contributing structure, and finds that the proposal should qualify for approval under the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.



View of existing conditions at 2238 Wabash, detail view of porch and bay window. Staff photo, November 2, 2021.

RECOMMENDATION

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

The proposed work is compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features of its environment, and preserves historic materials that characterize the property. Staff therefore recommends that the proposal should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Corktown Historic District's Elements of Design