STAFF REPORT 11/16/2022 MEETING **PREPARED BY**: J. ROSS
APPLICATION NUMBER: #22-8125 - #22-8133
ADDRESS: 4000-4060 W. VERNOR HIGHWAY
HISTORIC DISTRICT: HUBBARD FARMS
APPLICANT/OWNER: EDWARD POTAS (OWNER)
DATE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION: 10/17/2022
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 10/31/2022

SCOPE: REVISION TO PREVIOUSLY APPROVED DESIGN

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The project area includes an open parcel of land which expands an entire city block between 4000-4060 W. Vernor. The adjacent/nearby existing building fabric within the Hubbard Farms Historic District boundaries is dominated by two and three-story, early 20th-century masonry commercial structures. The adjacent neighborhood, directly across W. Vernor, features a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational uses.

4000-4060 W. Vernor Highway, current conditions (staff photo)

PROPOSAL

The Historic District Commission approved a proposal for the erection of a new mixed-use building at 4000-4060 W. Vernor at their 2/13/2019 regular meeting. Specifically, the new building would be erected according to the following description:

> The building will feature an irregular plan, which includes a 4-story central/main mass that measures 45' in height, lower 1-3 story masses which project off the main mass towards W. Vernor and step down to address/conform to the adjacent 1-3 story historic building, and covered parking to the rear. The projecting wings also allow for the insertion of two paved plaza areas to serve as the building's "front yard." Neutral color brick clads the building's front and side elevations. Decorative metal fins, found at the building's 1-story community space, are painted blue and provide a point of visual interest at the primary elevation. Stucco, brick, and cement panels are

located at the rear elevation. The building's roof is flat with green roofs located at the 1-3 story primary elevations wings. Windows are aluminum, combo fixed and awning units and storefront windows and doors are aluminum. A landscaped, fenced parking lot located to the rear of the building will complement the 1-story covered parking spaces.

The applicant subsequently appeared at the **02/10/2021** regular HDC meeting seeking this body's approval to revise the building's original design re: the exterior cladding, plaza surface materials, and exterior fenestration. The Commission approved the revisions. See the attached staff report from 2021 which indicates that the following exterior cladding revisions approved by the Commission in 2021:

Rear/North Elevation

- The original proposed brick and fiber cement panel at the second, third, and fourth story shall be replaced by metal panels. The panel is a "standing seam" product by ATAS, which will have varied widths to pick up on the rhythm of the windows. The pattern will be "staggered" at each floor level. One portion of the North façade will be white to relate to the lighter gray brick volume. The other portion of the North façade will be matte black, to relate to the dark brick volume.
- At fitness room wing, the stucco and brick originally proposed will be replaced with metal panels
- At the first story, stucco is proposed for addition at the stair tower
- At the first story, the original fiber cement siding shall be replaced with Stone Gray to Watsontown brick
- At fitness room wing, remove windows proposed at that elevation to simplify mass

Front/South Elevation

- The grey brick product proposed for installation at the south and west elevation will be changed from Glen Gery - Stone Gray to Watsontown Brick Company - Limestone KT.

West Elevation

- The grey brick product proposed for installation at the south and west elevation will be changed from Glen Gery - Stone Gray to Watsontown Brick Company - Limestone KT

With the **current proposal**, the applicant is seeking to revise the exterior cladding palette for a second time per the below:

Rear/North Elevation

- Install dark grey colored thin brick (HEBRON BRICK COMPANY OPUS - THIN BRICK) in the place of previously approved matte black standing seam metal panel siding
- Install light grey colored thin brick (BRICK TECH ARCHITECTURAL MORA SILVER SMOOTH - THIN BRICK) in the place of previously approved white standing seam metal panel cladding

Front/South Elevation

- Install dark grey colored thin brick (HEBRON BRICK COMPANY OPUS - THIN BRICK) in the place of previously approved matte black standing seam metal panel siding at storefront volume
- Install light grey colored thin brick (BRICK TECH ARCHITECTURAL MORA SILVER SMOOTH - THIN BRICK) in the place of previously approved Watsontown Brick Company - Limestone KT full wythe brick.

- Install dark grey colored thin brick (HEBRON BRICK COMPANY OPUS - THIN BRICK) in the place of previously approved dark grey colored, full wythe brick (HEBRON BRICK COMPANY OPUS – FULL WYTHE)
- Install white colored thin brick (BRICK TECH ARCHITECTURAL EDCP GLAZED WHITE - THIN BRICK) in the place of previously approved white glazed brick (GLEN GREY FULL WYTHE BRICK)

Side/West Elevation

- Install light grey colored thin brick (BRICK TECH ARCHITECTURAL MORA SILVER SMOOTH - THIN BRICK) in the place of previously approved Watsontown Brick Company - Limestone KT
- Install dark grey colored thin brick (HEBRON BRICK COMPANY OPUS - THIN BRICK) in the place of previously approved dark grey colored, full wythe brick (HEBRON BRICK COMPANY OPUS – FULL WYTHE)

Side/East Elevation

- Install dark grey colored thin brick (HEBRON BRICK COMPANY OPUS - THIN BRICK) in the place of previously approved dark grey colored, full wythe brick (HEBRON BRICK COMPANY OPUS – FULL WYTHE) and matte black standing seam metal panel siding
- Install white colored thin brick (BRICK TECH ARCHITECTURAL EDCP GLAZED WHITE - THIN BRICK) in the place of previously approved white glazed brick

The current application also proposes to reduce the amount of glazing at the front and side elevations of the building's storefront volume.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- Please see the following link to the Hebron thin brick veneer specs (which is the product proposed for installation at 4000-4060 W. Vernor), which outline the manner in which proposed product can be installed at the exterior of stud wall and CMU wall systems Thin-Brick-Tech-Notes.pdf (hebronbrick.com). Specifically, there are four primary methods for the installation of adhered thin brick veneer: thick set, thin set, modular panels and prefabricated panels. In regard to the current project, it is unclear to staff how the brick veneer cladding will be installed. Note that staff does recommends supports an installation which relies on modular panels and prefabricated panels as those methods would be more durable than the thin and thick set applications.
- As previously noted, the applicant is currently seeking an approval to replace the previously approved standing seam metal cladding and full wythe brick throughout with thin brick (colors grey, light grey and white). Please note that the following will details will be "lost" as a result of the proposed material change to thin brick:
    - The variety of textures as the standing seam metal panels provided an interesting textural contrast to the proposed brick cladding
    - The shadow lines which result from the seams/ribs at the standing seam metal panel siding.
    - The depth of the mortar joints associated with the solid/full wythe brick.
    - Solid/full wythe brick is also more durable and is easier to maintain than thin brick. This will impact the building's appearance in the long term
    - Staff has reached out to the design team and has inquired if the change in material will result in a loss of depth and the building's fenestration openings. The applicant has noted that she will discuss this question with the project architect. Staff has not yet received an answer to this question as of the date of the report's completion.

- It is staff's opinion that the previously approved exterior cladding was of a higher quality than the currently proposed thin brick veneer cladding. However, staff does feel that the thin brick cladding is not inappropriate in the context of a modern, new building. and is not demonstratively incompatible with the district's historic character

ISSUES

- None

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78. Determination of the Historic District Commission – Certificate of Appropriateness

It is staff's opinion that the revisions to the project as depicted in the current drawings and attached scope meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Elements of Design for the historic district. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed.