

STAFF REPORT: NOVEMBER 16, 2022 MEETING

PREPARED BY: B. BUCKLEY

APPLICATION NUMBER: 22-8108

ADDRESS: 2066 ATKINSON AVE.

HISTORIC DISTRICT: ATKINSON AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

APPLICANT: ZISHAN SUMBAL

PROPERTY OWNER: DETROIT REAL ESTATE VALUE FUND II

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: SEPTEMBER 27, 2022

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: OCTOBER 25, 2022

SCOPE: PAINT DWELLING

EXISTING CONDITIONS

2066 Atkinson Avenue is a two-and-a-half story, eclectic Tudor Revival dwelling constructed ca. 1920. The building's façade is formed by two projecting half-timbered gables that represent a unique design within the district. The half-timbering is accented by wood trim details such as brackets in the eaves, turned spindles in the gable peaks, and decorative recessed panels within the half-timbering. Significant alterations over the second half of the 20th century include the addition of a steel porch roof and an imitation-stone stucco application at the façade bay window and porch skirt.



Figure 1: Current image of 2066 Atkinson Ave.



Figure 2: Image of 2066 Atkinson ca. 1985. HDAB

PROPOSAL

The applicant is seeking approval for work that has been completed. The scope of work includes the painting of the exterior trim and siding. The stucco areas have been painted a deep blue, while the wood trim pieces and window surrounds are painted a cream color. This color scheme was applied to each elevation.



Figure 3: East elevation.



Figure 4: Rear elevation.



Figure 5: Color swatches.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Atkinson Avenue Historic District was established in 1984.
- Available historic photographs indicate the stucco areas of the dwelling were previously painted white while the trim was painted black. This color scheme represents a more traditional approach to Tudor Revival architecture.
- 2066 Atkinson Avenue presents primarily as a Tudor Revival dwelling due to the ubiquitous half-timbering on each elevation and the prominent steeply pitched façade gables. However, the building has unique details more typically associated with the Eastlake or Queen Anne styles, such as overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails and brackets, as well as decorative recessed panels formed by carved wood trim. The building also features divided-light wood sash windows instead of the leaded glass windows commonly associated with Tudor Revival houses in Detroit. The building’s current appearance highlights these atypical details.

ISSUES

- As noted in the Elements of Design for Atkinson Avenue (Detroit Municipal Code Sec. 21-2-139), “Where stucco and concrete exists, it is usually left in its natural state or painted in a shade of cream.” The proposed color scheme reverses the traditional relationship of lighter colored stucco contrasting with darker trim features outlined in the elements of design.
- The Historic District Commission’s Color System D addresses the appropriate color scheme for Tudor Revival dwellings. It suggests the wood framing be “painted to look like weathered English oak; black, dark brown, or perhaps dark green.” Likewise, the stucco infill should be “painted white, as so many English originals are, to suggest the lime rich plastering which is naturally white or one of the river sand stuccoes which are more nearly yellow or cream when left in their natural state.” As painted, the dwelling’s color scheme is inappropriate under Color System D.
- As noted above, 2066 Atkinson Avenue. displays some atypical features not characteristic of Tudor Revival buildings. An argument can be made that the house could be appropriately painted using the Historic District Commission’s Color System B that applies to Eastlake and Queen Anne buildings. However, the saturated blue color currently applied to the building would also be inappropriate under System B, which recommends more historically available earth tones.

RECOMMENDATION

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

It is staff's opinion the proposed painting project will alter the features and spaces that characterize the property. Staff therefore recommends the Commission issue a Denial for the work as proposed because it does not meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Elements of Design for the district, specifically Standard 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.”