

STAFF REPORT: 2/8/2023 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: D. RIEDEN

APPLICATION NUMBER: #23-8201

VIOLATION NUMBER: #400

ADDRESS: 761 WHITMORE

HISTORIC DISTRICT: PALMER PARK APT. BUILDINGS

APPLICANT: KEVIN BRANDON

PROPERTY OWNER: ROBERT CRISTOPH RCI – 17664 MANDERSON LLC

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 1/16/2023

DATES OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 2/1/21, 11/5/21, 1/24/23

SCOPE: INSTALL VINYL WINDOWS, REPLACE DOORS (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1948, the property at 761 Whitmore, The Rosemor Apartments, is a two and one-half story garden court apartment building designed by Wiedmaier & Gay architects. On the corner of Whitmore Road and Third Street, this Modernist thirty-unit apartment building faces Third Street with the courtyard facing west leading to the main entrances. A secondary entrance opens onto Whitmore, on the north side of the building. All entrances have wood panel detailing and side lites with transoms. The original wood doors had 3x6 divided light glazing with wood panel at the base. These doors, panels and side lites have been removed and replaced with temporary security doors by the owner without approval. All windows have been replaced by the owner without approval: most were 2/2 double hung wood windows, which have been replaced with 2/2 vinyl windows with muntins between the glass. The original wood trim and mullions have been replaced with vinyl. The building is clad in buff brick under a hip roof. Walkways lead to the sidewalks to the north and west sides of the building. A parking area is located along the south side of the building, and the east side has a pass-through sidewalk between this site and the neighboring building to the east but is currently enclosed in temporary fencing during construction. The landscape is primarily open lawn and concrete walkways with an occasional evergreen foundation planting.



Site Photo 1, by Staff January 24, 2023: (West) Front elevation and courtyard on 3rd Street, showing vinyl window installation.



Site Photo 2, by Google Street Sept 2009: (West) Front elevation on Third Street, showing original windows.

This property has the following Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) and violations on the Detroit Property Information System (DPI):

- September 2019 COA: Rebuild brick wall at north elevation, east courtyard to match existing, remove and replace existing roof (fire damage), install gutters and downspouts
- February 2021 Violation: Unapproved replacement/removal of doors/windows.



Site Photo 3, by Staff January 24, 2023: (North) side elevation on Whitmore, showing vinyl window installation.

Aerial 1 of Parcel # 02002581-2, by Detroit Parcel Viewer.



Site photo 4, by Google Street, September 2009: Whitmore (North) elevation, showing 2/2 horizontal muntin, double hung wood windows, and 3x6 front door glass and wood panel entrance.



Site photo 5, by Google Street, June 2019: Third street (west) front elevation, showing windows and doors boarded up, and property overgrown with inactivity.

PROPOSAL

The proposed work consists of the replacement of all windows and replacement of all exterior doors, which is work completed (windows) or started (doors) without Historic District Commission approval.

WINDOWS

The replacement windows are double hung vinyl units with between the glass muntins. See attached window schedule and plan with window locations and installation photos.

Product Data- See drawings for additional information:

- Windows: Manchester Series by Quaker, double hung, vinyl composite with a 2/2 horizontal muntin bar between the glass.
Color: Earthtone

DOORS/ENTRANCES

The proposal also consists of the rebuilding of four exterior door entrances as shown in the attached drawings and replacing the original wood doors (currently temporary security doors) with insulated hollow metal with three equally sized glass lites as shown in the attached drawings. Eight new insulated hollow metal patio doors with six equally sized glass lites will be installed as shown in the attached drawings. The remaining two utility doors for the back stair and basement would have no glass, and consist of insulated hollow metal. All doors will be custom made and their associated entrances would be painted Sherwin Williams (SW7593) Rustic Red.

Product Data- See drawings for additional information:

- Door Frames (4), Doors (10): painted Sherwin Williams (SW7593) Rustic Red



Door 4 – Existing prior to securing.



Door 2 – Existing prior to securing.

Detail Photos 1&2, by applicant, in courtyard (west elevation), showing 2 entrances prior to securing.

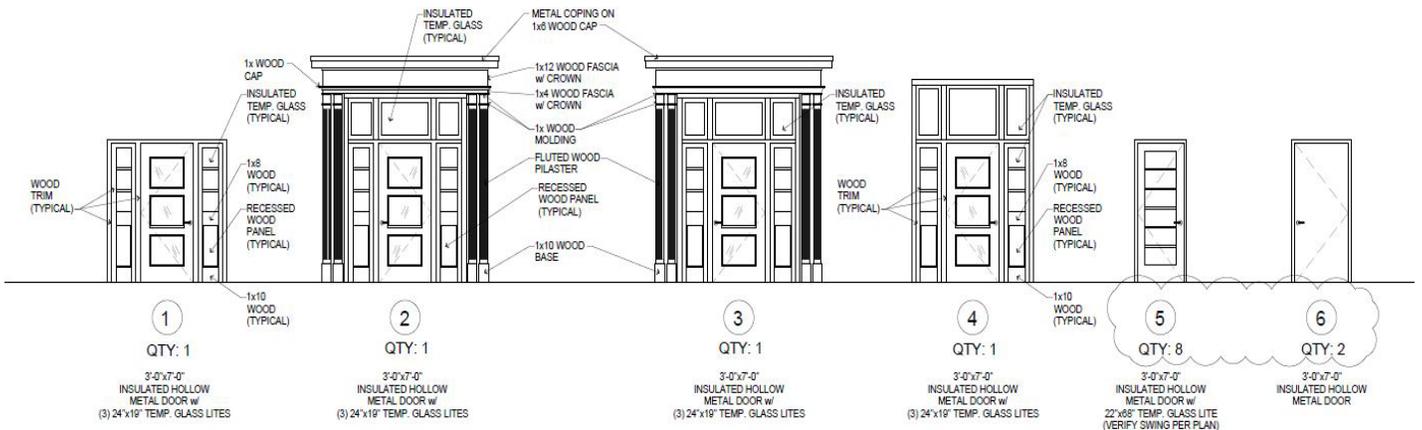


Figure 1, by applicant, showing proposed 4 entrance designs, 6 door type designs for all 14 doors. See also drawing A700

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Palmer Park Apartment Buildings Historic District was established in 2012.
- Staff requested the applicant to provide documentation of the original condition of the windows and doors. The applicant stated that both were removed before he was involved with this project. He stated that the contractor believed the entries were beyond repair with rotted wood. The applicant provided some photos of these doorways (*see detail photos 1&2*). The applicant confirmed that no documentation of the original condition of the windows and doors exists. The applicant also confirmed that the original brick moulds were replaced with aluminum brick moulds. (*See detail photo 3*)
- Staff observed from Google Street View, that in September 2009, a vast majority of the original windows appeared to be in place. Staff observed that the building was vacated since at least July 2011 with the windows and doors boarded up. (*See site photos 4&5*) Staff observed that the Buildings, Safety Engineering and Environmental Department (BSEED) shows a Vacant Property Registration issued in March 2012.
- Staff observed that the original wood windows were double hung with a horizontal muntin in both the upper and lower sash, creating a 2 over 2 configuration.
- According to the applicant's provided window schedule, all windows are vinyl, Manchester Series by Quaker, color earthtone with matching aluminum brake aluminum surrounds where the original brick mould has been removed. All windows are double-hung. All windows have no true divided lights, but instead have a single horizontal muntin between the glass in the upper and lower sash.
- Staff has the opinion that the original wood windows with true-divided light and original wood brick moulds were distinctive, character-defining features that were lost when replaced with the current vinyl windows and the installation of the thick, aluminum brick moulds.
- Staff observed that the original wood doors for the four entrances had a 3x6 glass configuration over wood paneling. The applicant's design reduces the configuration to 3 glass panels for the four front entrances, which changes the configuration of their original design. It is staff's opinion that changing the original door material from wood to metal will not cause an adverse impact and is an appropriate material. However, it is staff's opinion that the configuration and scale of the glass panels can be more appropriately designed to their original configuration to approximate the scale, design or arrangement of the 3x6 original glass configuration. Staff has no issue with the patio door's 6 panel glass configuration or the solid configuration for the two utility doors.



Detail photo 3, by applicant: Third street (west) front elevation, showing where original brick mould was replaced with aluminum brick mould and horizontal muntin between the glass.



Detail photo 4, by applicant: Custom metal door with 3 panels of glass, proposed to be installed for the four entrances. (This photo is not on site and is shown as an example.)

ISSUES

- All window and door entry replacement work in this application was completed or started without Historic District Commission (HDC) approval.
- Staff did not receive complete photo documentation of the original conditions of the original windows and doors before they were removed and discarded.
- Vinyl is not a historically appropriate material for the Palmer Park Apartment Buildings Historic District or this particular property.
- Staff identifies that both the removal of wood windows and wood brick moulds and the installation of vinyl windows and aluminum brick moulds are inappropriate as they introduce a material and design that greatly diminishes the historic character of the property (Standards 2 and 3), destroyed distinctive features of the building (Standard 5), and does not match the old character-defining feature of the original windows (removed without permit) in design, texture, and other visual properties (Standard 6).
- While staff has no issue with the proposed door entrance design and materiality, staff does offer the opinion that the four front door's window configuration, which contribute to the character defining features of the mid-century modern architecture and the adjacent pattern of the side lites, could be more appropriately designed to resemble the 3x6 glass panel arrangement of the original front entrance doors.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation #1: Installation of vinyl windows (work completed without approval)

Staff finds that the replacement of the original wood windows and wood brick moulds with vinyl windows and aluminum brick moulds does not meet the Secretary of Interior Standards for the following reasons:

- The windows that were removed without approval were a distinct historic feature that characterized the property. The windows dated to the building's original construction and included divided lite, 2/2 double-hung wood units.
- The application does not include documentation that the windows removed without approval were deteriorated beyond repair to an extent that merited their replacement.
- Vinyl material is not an appropriate material for the Palmer Park Apartment Buildings Historic District or this particular property.
- The introduction of between the glass muntins, which replaced the true divided light of the original wood windows, is not an adequate match for the original true divided lite of the original windows.
- The current large aluminum brick moulds creates a blocky appearance that destroys the refined dimensions and craftsmanship of the original wood brick moulds.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the proposed window replacement, as it does not the district's Elements of Design nor meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standards:

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.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a 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.

Recommendation 2: Replace doors (work started without approval)

It is staff's opinion the proposed installation of the 14 doors and the 4 doorways is appropriate. Staff therefore recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed because it meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.

Staff recommends the Certificate of Appropriateness be issued with the following conditions:

- Applicant supply HDC staff with modified design for the four front entrance doors' window configuration for approval and before installation.