

**STAFF REPORT: 8/09/2023 REGULAR MEETING**

**PREPARED BY: J. ROSS**

**ADDRESS: 104 EDMUND PLACE, AKA LUCIEN MOORE HOUSE**

**APPLICATION NO: #23-8480**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT: BRUSH PARK**

**APPLICANT: ROBERT BERRO (CONTRACTOR) AND DOMINIC GILLETTE (OWNER)**

**OWNER: MAXWELL MORGAN AND DOMINIC GILLETTE**

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 7/18/2023**

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 7/10/2023**

**SCOPE: ALTER FRONT PORCH (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)**

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Erected ca. 1885, the building located at 104 Edmund Place is known as the Lucien Moore House. The building features a hipped-roof central/main mass with a lower hipped-roof addition at the rear. Gabled dormers and prominent brick chimneys top the roof. A projecting, three-story wing which is capped with a bell cast roof and a flat-roof, two-story, projecting bay is located at the front elevation. Exterior walls are red brick with stone at window sills and lintels. Rusticated stone is also present at the building's raised basement. The building underwent an extensive rehabilitation ca. 2010 which included the installation of 1/1, double-hung, aluminum windows with wood trim/brickmould. The current wood roof at the building's front elevation porch was also added during the ca. 2010 rehabilitation effort. However, the porch's wood newel posts, railing, steps, deck, and columns were added ca. 2023.



**104 Edmund Place, current appearance. Staff photo taken on 7/18/2023**

## PROPOSAL

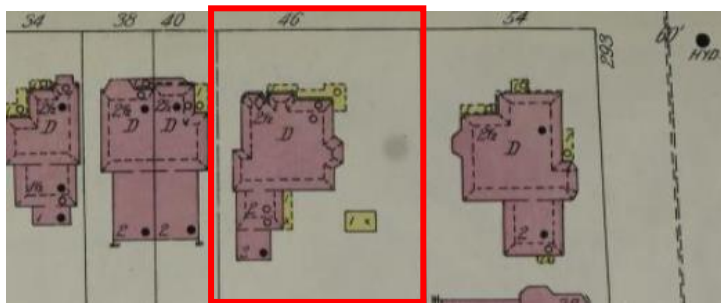
Per the current submittal, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval of the current newels posts, railing, deck, steps, and columns at the front porch. These elements were installed in 2023 without HDC review and approval (see the below photo). Note that the newels posts, railing, deck, and steps are unpainted. The applicant has stated that they will paint these elements (colors not specified) once the wood has seasoned.

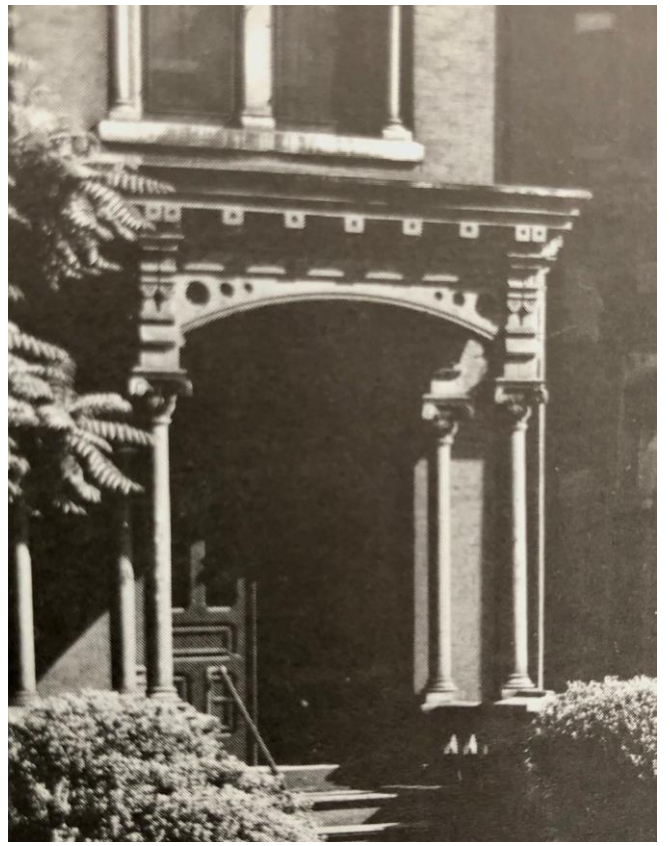


Current appearance. Staff photo taken on 7/18/2023

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- See the below images which documents the front porch's appearance over time:





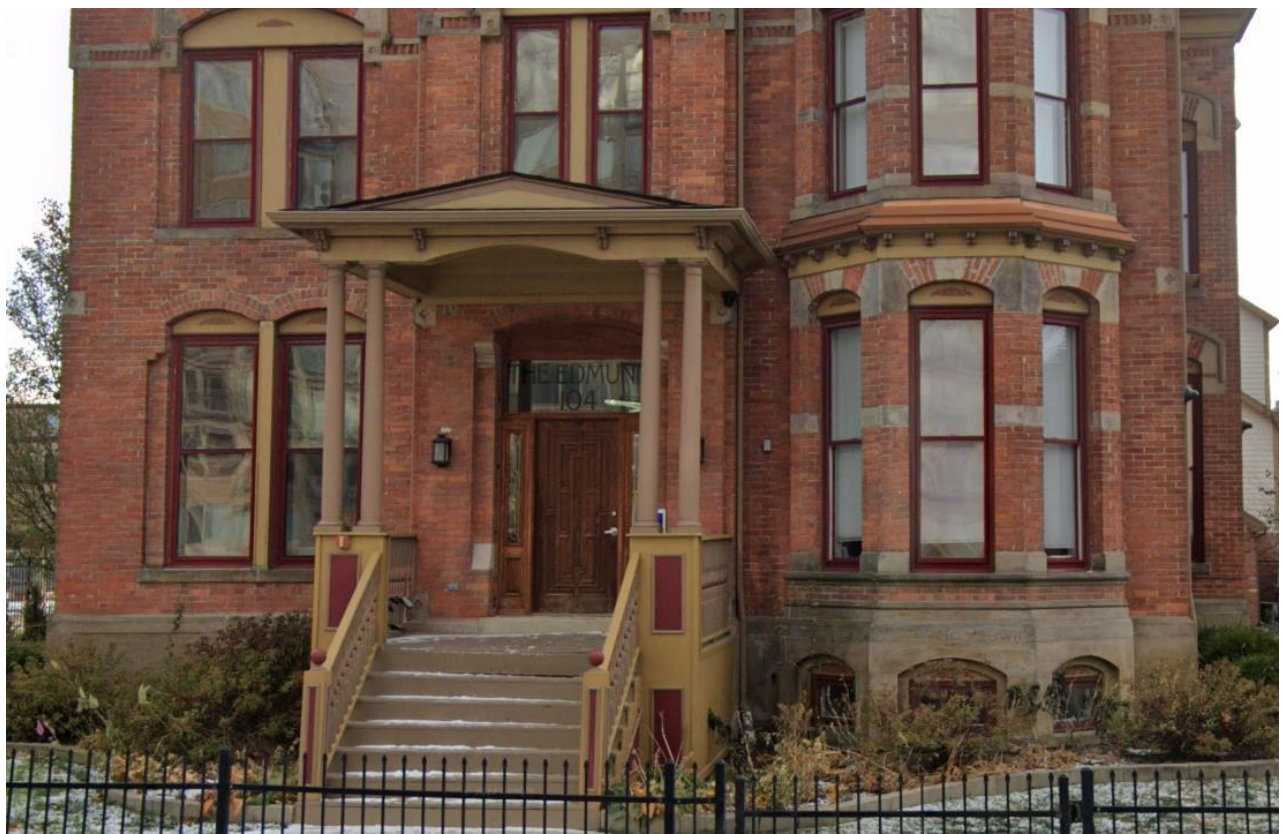
104 Edmund place, early 20<sup>th</sup> century, photos showing original porch



104 Edmund Place, appearance ca. 1980



104 Edmund Place, appearance in 2004 (from HDC staff report/application for building rehabilitation



Google Streetview images from 2022 showing porch that was installed during ca. 2010 rehabilitation. The newel columns, posts, railings, deck, and steps were removed without HDC approval. In 2023



**104 Edmund Place, current appearance. Staff photo taken on 7/18/2023**

- The Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board designation report for the district, which dates to 1980, describes the building as a “ruin” at that time. Per the above photos, the original porch had been removed by the 1970s. By 1980, a front porch was no longer extant at the property.
- An application was submitted to the Commission in 2004 for the rehabilitation of the building, which included the erection of a new porch at the front elevation. See the attached 2004 staff report for the conditions of the building at that time. Per the 2004 report, HDC staff recommended that the design of the new front porch be “...simplified in design and detail since the porch cannot be duplicated to match the original.” The Commission approved the proposed 2004 rehabilitation scope. The porch was subsequently erected per the appearance depicted in the above 2022 Google Streetview images. It is staff’s opinion that the porch that was erected as a result of the 2004 rehabilitation (2022 Google Streetview images) was compatible with the building’s historic appearance.
- In 2019, HDC staff issued a COA for an application to retain and repair the front porch. Please see the attached 2019 scope and COA. However, per the applicant’s current proposal, when they attempted to initiate the repair per the 2019 COA, “...it snowballed into a full teardown and rebuild.”
- The applicant has stated that he intends to paint the current porch railings, deck, and steps when the wood has seasoned. However, the current application does not include a color palette or a specific time frame for completing the work.

## **ISSUES**

- As previously noted, the front porch that was removed and replaced without HDC approval was not historic age/was erected ca. 2010. Also, as an application for a repair had been submitted to staff in 2019, only nine years after the porch was installed, it is likely that the porch was of poor construction. However, the porch was esthetically compatible with the building’s historic character, in staff’s opinion.

- As the original porch had been removed by the 1970s, the Standards do not require that a new porch match the original. Rather, the porch must be compatible with the property's historic character. It is staff's opinion that the new/current bright white, bulky, square porch columns are visually incompatible with the building's late Victorian/Ruskinian Gothic stylistic detailing/historic character. Also, staff does note that it appears the current newel posts, deck skirting, and stringers are made of plywood with applied details meant to approximate the appearance of the more substantial beadboard deck skirting and paneled stringer and new posts which were removed as a result of the current unapproved work (see the photos of the former porch included with the 2019 application). It is staff's opinion that the white columns in addition to the current newel posts, deck skirting, and stringers present a plastic, awkward incongruent appearance and might be better suited for a modern home versus this carefully-detailed, late 19<sup>th</sup> century dwelling. Staff recommends that the current unapproved columns be replaced with columns which display a more slender/refined appearance and that the current plywood newel posts, deck skirting, and stringers be replaced with wood elements of a quality and design that is more compatible with the building's historic character.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Section 21-2-78. Determination of the Historic District Commission – DENIAL**

The porch that was erected without HDC approval/the current porch does is incompatible with the building's historic character as the new/current bright white, bulky, square porch columns, the current newel posts, deck skirting, and stringers present an awkward incongruent appearance better suited for a modern home versus this carefully-detailed, late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Victorian/Ruskinian Gothic style dwelling. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the current proposal because the work does not conform to the district's Elements of Design and does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. In particular, SOI Standard #9, which states the following:

*New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*