

**STAFF REPORT: SEPTEMBER 13, 2023 REGULAR MEETING**

**PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO**

**APPLICATION NUMBER: 23-8521**

**ADDRESS: 401 W. GRAND BLVD.**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT: HUBBARD FARMS**

**APPLICANT: ZAC CRUSE, CRUSE CONSTRUCTION**

**PROPERTY OWNER: RACHEL PERSCHETZ**

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: AUGUST 16, 2023**

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: SEPTEMBER 1, 2023**

**SCOPE: ALTER FRONT PORCH, REPLACE REAR AWNING**

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

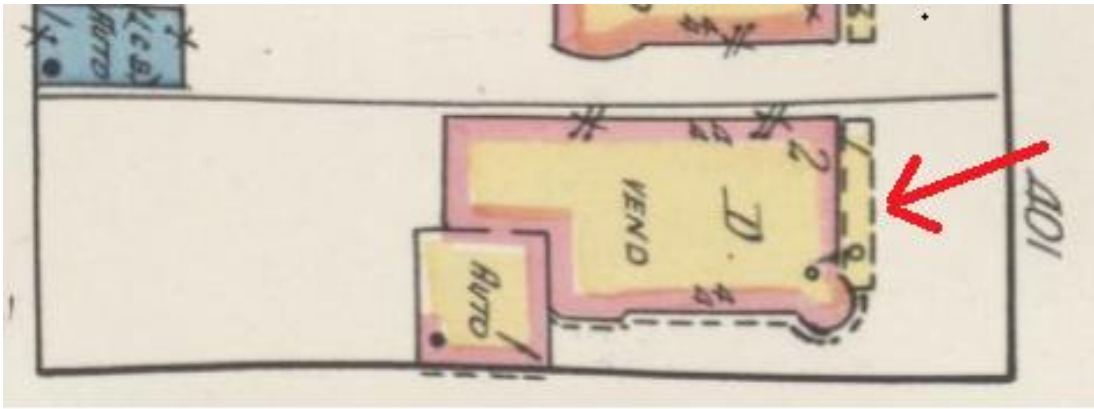
401 West Grand Boulevard is a two-story house with a high, fenestrated attic, facing east at the northwest corner of West Grand Boulevard and Shady Lane. Its southeast corner is anchored by a cylindrical tower. The orange brick building was built in 1900; cornice-line dentils place it within the Free Classic style, a subset of Queen Anne residential architecture that “became common after 1890 and has much in common with some early (asymmetrical) Colonial Revival houses.”<sup>1</sup> Pertinent to this application, the building formerly had a wide, single-story, wood front porch that extended from the north end of the front façade to encompass the northern third of the building’s tower. This is now missing, though the poured concrete deck and steps and the brick piers and wingwalls of the historic porch remain. A non-historic reinforced concrete overhang now shelters the front entrance.



*September 2023 photo by staff.*

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 2003, page 264–265.



*The subject property in 1922, with red arrow indicating original porch. Image: Sanborn Map Company.*

On the rear, a non-historic porch consisting of a concrete-block base with metal railings and supports and an aluminum awning is also subject of this application.



*Rear (west) porch. Image from application documents.*

Ongoing construction work, visible in the photos above, is the subject of April 2023 and June 2023 Certificates of Appropriateness to repair and replace wood trim, shingles, and gutters.

## **PROPOSAL**

The applicant proposes to alter the front (east) and rear (west) porches, as shown in the application documents and summarized below.



*Elevation (left) and section (right) of proposed pediment. Images from submitted drawings, cropped by staff.*

On the front (east) façade, a pediment is proposed to be added. The pediment would be composed entirely of wood, with an asphalt shingle roof, and painted in a color scheme matching the wood trim on the house. It would be supported by large, curved brackets and feature dentil trim.

On the rear (west) porch, the metal frame and awning would be replaced. The frame would be aluminum or steel painted black and the awning would be woven acrylic Cooper Black fabric.



*Cooper Black sample provided in application documents.*

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Hubbard Farms Historic District was established by Ordinance 01-93 in 1993. The Final Report provides a Period of Significance of 1870 through 1930. The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-157 [d]) provide the following pertinent observations:
  - Porches on houses built around the turn of the 20th Century tend to be large, sometimes stretching along most of the first story, while English and Arts and Crafts influenced buildings tend to have de-emphasized entrances (*Rhythm of Entrance and Porch Projections*).

- Wood trim is most commonly used for window, porch, and functional elements as well as decorative trim (*Relationship of Materials*).
- Architectural details generally relate to style. Colonial Revival buildings display classical details, often in wood. Porches are commonly treated and usually have columns of a classical order. Buildings of Victorian<sup>2</sup> substyles also tend to have details of wood located around the entrance, porch, windows, bays, towers, and dormers. Lathe-turned and jigsaw cut wooden elements and details are common. Prairie, and Arts and Crafts, style buildings tend to be simply stated, with architectural interest derived from the arrangement of elements and quality of design (*Relationship of Architectural Details*).
- Façade elements and details vary in scale and are generally dependent on style. Detail on Arts and Crafts influenced buildings tends to be architectonic in nature; on Victorian buildings decorative detail tends to be small in scale, while façade elements, such as bays, dormers and towers, are large in scale. Classically influenced buildings tend to have large scale elements, such as columns (*Scale of Facades and Façade Elements*).
- The degree of complexity has been determined by what is typical and appropriate for a given style. The classically inspired buildings usually have simple, rectangular façades with varying amounts of ornamentation. The Victorian substyles tend to be more complex, complicated by towers, gables, and decorated porches. The Arts and Crafts and bungalow-style houses are not complex (*Degree of Complexity Within the Façade*.)
- To provide context, staff surveyed buildings with similar massing to the subject property. Staff observed thirteen buildings in the Hubbard Farms Historic District in which a two- or two-and-one-half-story, cylindrical or multifaceted tower anchors one corner of the façade of an otherwise rectilinear primary mass. On twelve of these buildings, an asymmetrically balanced composition is created by adding substantial weight to the opposite end of the façade with a broad, columned porch, a prominent, cantilevered upper gable, or both (on the remaining building, the balance is achieved by a second tower). On the twelve buildings, additional balance is created by juxtaposing a strong, horizontal emphasis of porch elements with the vertical emphasis of the tower.



Above and next page: Buildings with towers in Hubbard Farms (only twelve are shown as the subject property is not depicted). September 2023 photos by staff.

<sup>2</sup> The Victorian era ended in 1901. The Arts and Crafts Movement, though prevalent in England starting in the mid-nineteenth century, influenced American residential architecture largely from the early 1900s until World War I and “deliberately turned its back on historical precedent;” it was a precursor to the Craftsman style and the Modern Movement (McAlester, 10, 454). The *Rhythm of Entrance and Porch Projections*, *Relationship of Architectural Details*, *Scale of Facades and Façade Elements*, and *Degree of Complexity Within the Façade* subsections of the *Elements of Design* create a meaningful contrast between the earlier “Victorian” styles and the Arts-and-Crafts-influenced styles that followed.



- In the case of 401 West Grand Boulevard, the balanced composition, formerly a character-defining feature of the building, is lost due to the missing, historic front porch. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation do not require the replacement of lost character-defining features, but does require that “exterior alterations ... be compatible with the massing, style, scale, and architectural features” of the property (Standard #9).
- National Park Service guidance recommends, under the heading “Designing and installing a new entrance or porch when the historic feature is completely missing or has been previously replaced by one that is incompatible:”

It may be an accurate restoration based on documentary and physical evidence, but only when the historic entrance or porch to be replaced coexisted with the features currently on the building. Or, it may be a new design that is compatible with the size, scale, material, and color of the historic building.<sup>3</sup>

- The proposed dentils express a Classical vocabulary that is appropriate to the house and the Free Classic style in general.
- Large, open brackets, such as the ones proposed, are commonly associated with Arts-and-Crafts-inspired buildings from the 1900s and 1910s in the Hubbard Farms Historic District. In two instances, somewhat similar brackets are found on earlier Queen Anne buildings. Free Classic buildings tend to employ Classical columns.

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<sup>3</sup> National Park Service, *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (chapter on Rehabilitation), 110.



*Example of open brackets on Arts and Crafts buildings. September 2023 photos by staff.*



*Open or perforated brackets on Queen Anne buildings. September 2023 photos by staff.*



*Classical details on Free Classic buildings. September 2023 photos by staff.*

- The existing rear porch is not a historic feature, as its materials clearly post-date the 1930 end date of the Period of Significance. Replacement with compatible elements is appropriate. Metal and woven fabric are appropriate materials, according to the *Sign and Awning Guidelines*. The location of the existing rear door and other physical evidence suggests that the existing porch is appropriate in scale and location.

## ISSUES

Staff opinion is as follows:

- The proposed pediment provides an additional, inappropriate, level of verticality to the façade, and is not of adequate scale and horizontal emphasis to express a balanced composition that is a hallmark of the Queen Anne and Free Classic styles. It is thus not “compatible with the *massing, size, scale, and architectural features*” (emphasis added) of the building, as directed by Standard #9. An appropriate element in this location would express balance via its horizontality and through its size or “weight.”
- The proposed dentils are oversized with respect to those historically found on the house and are thus not “compatible with the *massing, size, scale, and architectural features*” (emphasis added) of the building, as directed by Standard #9.
- The proposed pediment adds a style of brackets associated with later, Arts-and-Crafts-inspired and Craftsman architecture, and somewhat similar to those occasionally found on earlier Queen Anne (but not Free Classic) buildings, counter to Standard #3: “Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.” An appropriate element in this location would employ a Classical vocabulary.

## RECOMMENDATION

### Section 21-2-78: Determinations of Historic District Commission (Certificate of Appropriateness)

Staff recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work as it meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, with the following conditions:

- The proposed front porch alterations shall be designed in a manner that appropriately provides a horizontal emphasis, in an appropriate scale, with details reflecting a Classical architectural vocabulary, as determined by staff review.