

STAFF REPORT: DECEMBER 13, 2023 MEETING

PREPARED BY: A. DYE

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2023-00135

ADDRESS: 1364 – 1368 LABROSSE

HISTORIC DISTRICT: CORKTOWN

APPLICANT: JOHN BIGGAR, STUDIOZONE, LLC

PROPERTY OWNER: 5 ON 8TH

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: NOVEMBER 20, 2023

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: NOVEMBER 29, 2023

SCOPE: ERECT 5-UNIT TOWNHOUSE DEVELOPMENT

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The side-by-side lots of 1364-1368 Labrosse are located at the northeast corner of Labrosse and 8th Street. There is no visible rise in grade from the sidewalk. An assortment of trees and shrubs exist on both lots, but are predominately located near the outer edges of 1368 Labrosse. The combined width/frontage is 50' (1364 is 20' wide; 1368 is 30' wide); the depth for each lot is 160'. A two lane alley, which is entered from 8th Street, is at the north edge/rear of the property. The two addresses reflect that the lots remain separate parcels, according to Detroit Parcel Viewer.



Staff photos, November 29, 2023. The photo was taken from Labrosse, looking north through the site to the alley. 1356 Labrosse is partially shown.

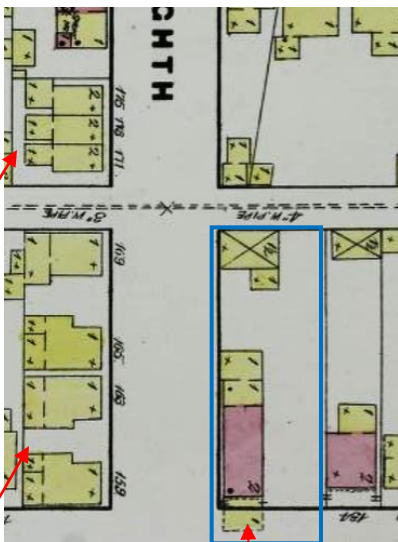
The photo was taken from 8th street, looking eastward down the alley. The rear of 1364 and 1368 Labrosse is on the far right.

PROPOSAL

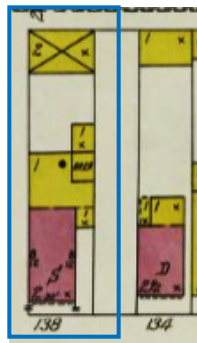
- Erect a five (5)-unit, 3-1/2 story, townhome development on two parcels.
- The structures will be sited to face 8th street in order to fit the development on the narrow, long lots.
- Five at-grade surface parking spaces will be placed at the north end of the property and will be accessible directly from the alley.
- The development will sit high on the lots so partially raised basements, with large windows and rear stair access, are a component of each townhome.
- Roof decks, integrated in the overall building footprint, will be on the third floor facing 8th street. Raised decks, constructed of composite materials, will extend from the rear elevations at the second floor. Concrete steps, wing walls, and elevated landings will lead to the front doors directly from the 8th street sidewalk.
- Exterior cladding materials include oversize brick, wood siding (vertical orientation), cementitious siding (horizontal orientation), metal panels, and a flat membrane roof.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Corktown Historic District was established in 1984.
- According to the Corktown Historic District Final Report:
 - In the late 1840s significant development began in the Labrosse and Baker Farms.
 - In 1849, the city limits were extended to include the area up to the east line of the Woodbridge Farm, at approximately 8th Street.
 - Although all of Corktown was included in the city limits by 1857, development in the Woodbridge Farm, from approximately 8th to 10th Streets, occurred between 1860 and 1880.
 - Labrosse Street was named after Dominique Labrosse, the owner of the farm when the Federal Land Board was confirming titles in 1808.
- The below Sanborn maps illustrate the development of 1368 Labrosse (original address was 138 and then 1364). 1364 Labrosse was never developed and had a historic address of 1362. Also shown in the 1884 and 1921-1950 maps, are the properties directly across from, and kitty-corner to, 1368 Labrosse.



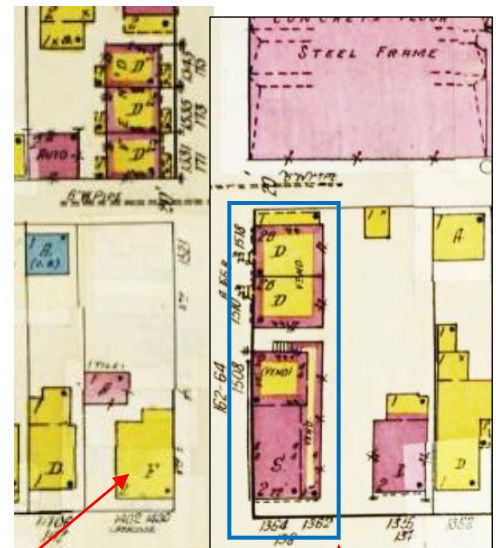
Vol. 1, 1884, Image 31



Vol. 1, 1897, Image 21



Vol. 1, 1921, Image 23



Vol. 1, 1921-1950, Image 22 (left) and 23 (right)

The 1884 Sanborn map shows a two-story masonry structure at the NE corner of Labrosse and 8th street, with single story wood-frame additions at the rear. Wood-framed accessory structures were located at the rear/alley.

Free-standing wood-framed structures were located at the NW corner of Labrosse and 8th and faced 8th street.

The three wood-framed attached structures at the upper left of this map (171, 173, 175) remain in situ. A photograph of these dwellings is on the following page.

(Note: The wood framed buildings were covered with brick veneer between 1897 and 1921, similar to the changes shown for the structures at 1364 (1368) Labrosse.

Comparison - 1897 and 1921 maps for the NE corner Labrosse.

The footprint of the attached wood-framed additions was altered and expanded, and the additions were clad in brick veneer by 1921.

At the rear of the property, by 1921, two, 2-story attached dwellings, which faced 8th street, had taken the place of the accessory structures.

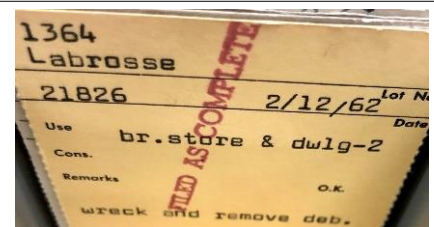
The depth of the lot was now filled with structures, all of which were located at the west property line.

The 1950 map reflected no changes to the property at the NE corner of Labrosse.

The NW corner of Labrosse shows that the four, 8th street-facing wood-framed structures had been demolished and a two-story wood-framed dwelling facing Labrosse had been erected.

Shown below is the permit card that confirms the structures at 1364 (1368) Labrosse were demolished in 1962.

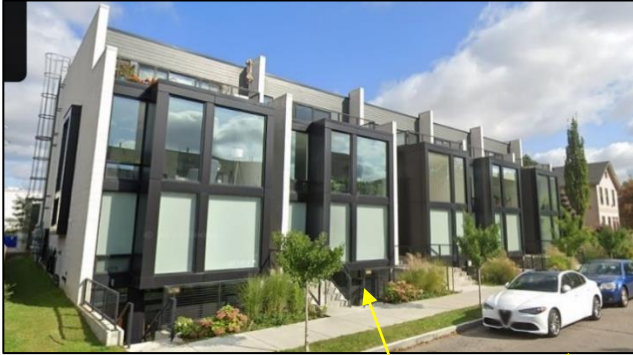
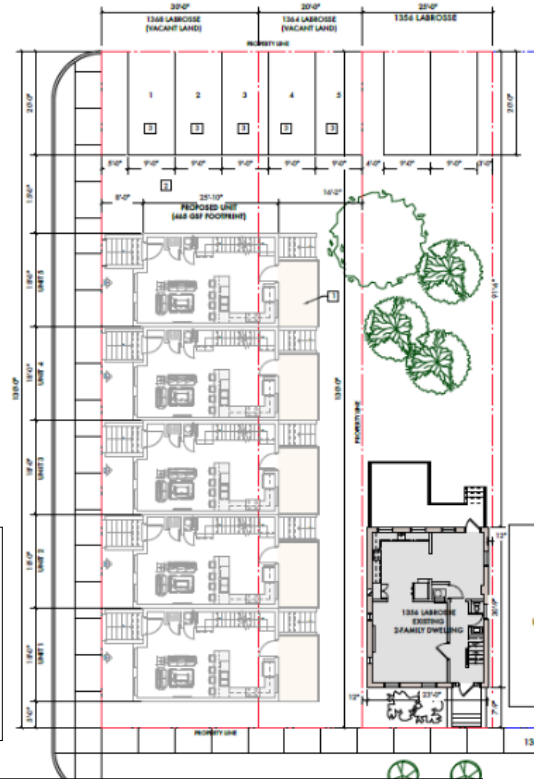
Also in 1962, this parcel received a permit for a BZA variance to allow commercial parking (which was renewed multiple times). This likely explains why there is a curb cut opening onto Labrosse, which is visible in the photo on page 1.



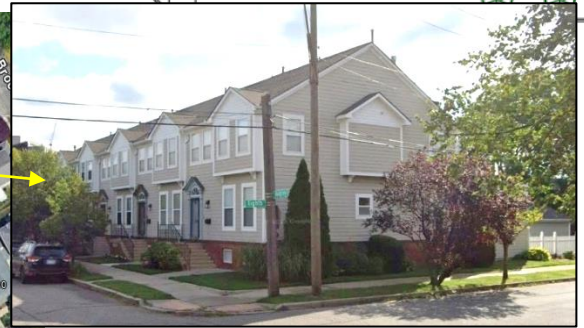
BSEED building permit card.

- The Sanborn maps confirm that residential units facing 8th street is an established residential pattern for this area.
- 1364 Labrosse was never developed, and 1368 Labrosse has been a vacant lot for over 60 years. The erection of attached townhomes facing 8th street will reestablish the street wall at this intersection.
- There are several attached residential developments nearby. The narrow frontage of the proposed units, at an 18' width, creates a strong vertically within the larger horizontal massing.

Applicant site plan.



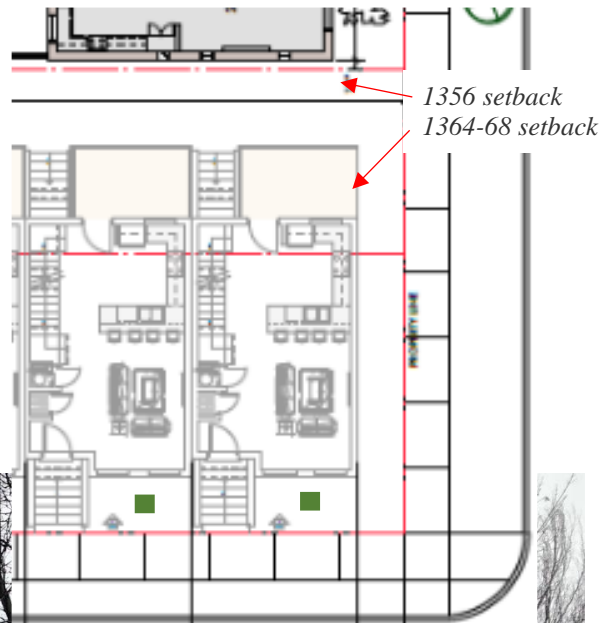
BAGLEY STREET
Left: 10-unit, 3-story development, 2016/2018.
Below right: 6-unit, 2-1/2 story development, 1997.



8th STREET
Above Left: 3-unit, 2-1/2 story, development, pre-1884.
Above right: Proposed 5 unit, 3-1-2 story development.

- The stairs to the front doors directly abut the sidewalk; the recessed façade of the structure allows for a small patch of lawn in front of each unit.
- The southern wall of the proposed development has a 5'-0" setback from the interior edge of the Labrosse sidewalk. The neighboring house, which is partially shown in the image at right, has a setback of 7'-9". The below photo existing street wall and setbacks.

Applicant site plan.
 ■ Front lawn



Staff photos, November 29, 2023. 1356 Labrosse and 1344 Labrosse have a similar setback, but the gable's eaves extend forward from the facade.

- This angled streetscape photo shows how several properties adjacent to the proposed development have raised entrance porches/platforms that start at the sidewalk. Similarly, the three attached residential developments on 8th street and Bagley, shown on the previous page, also have raised entrances.



- Initially staff believed the monolithic installation of the cementitious siding spanning three elevations of the rear elevation might need a visual break between floors. Upon further review, staff reads the expansive mulled window openings at the second floor as a subtle and effective visual break. The extension of raised rear decks and the break in grade for stairs leading to basement doors will offer additional contrast to the otherwise flat elevation wall.



Applicant drawing – rear elevation.



Applicant drawing – front elevation

- Most of the buildings in this district have asymmetrical elevations. Coupled with the diversity of architectural styles and building uses, this district has a level of eclecticism that is unique. However, it is staff’s opinion that the historic asymmetrical designs throughout the district use a conventional patterning, which creates an undercurrent of consistency throughout the neighborhood. The occasional, yet repeated askew placement of small square windows on the front and rear elevations create an uneven pattern of openings that, in staff’s opinion, fall outside of the consistent rhythm of openings found on buildings in the district. As these elements are relatively small, staff placed this comment under staff observations, rather than issues, as the overall composition of the development is not demonstrably inappropriate for the district.
- The front elevation rendering shows differently colored entry doors. The suggestion is that the individual owners can select the paint color for their door, but it must be selected from Color System B. A copy of the color palette is shown on the following page.
- The applicant stated the vertical wood paneling at the front elevation (wood species not yet selected) will be given a natural stain so that it offers a contrast of hue against the dark brick and window frames.
- Metal awnings are shown on the front elevation drawing, as they are being considered. The applicant confirmed they would be faced with metal to match the material/color of the panels specified for the third story walls.

Finishes – taken from the Applicant’s responses to staff questions

- **Entry Doors** – Front & Rear – Custom Door by RJ Raven/Summerland Architectural Products, LLC, painted in field, Front Door, 42” x 96”, Rear Door, 36” x 96”, door exterior painted, Historic Commission Color System ‘B’
- **3rd Floor Metal Panels** – ATAS Versa-Lok Reveal System ®, Natural Metal, Grey/Zinc (50), 12” x 36”
- **Rear cementitious siding** – Hardi Plank, Harris Crème color, 6” exposure
- **Brick**– Belden, Norman Size [3 5/8 deep x 2 ¼” tall x 11 5/8” long], Color: 830 Dark-Tex, running bond, 3/8” mortar joint, concave shape, Integrity History mix (Type N)
- **Glass Handrail** - ½” Tempered glass, 14” above stone coping, 44” above roof deck
- **Masonry Accent** – Indiana Limestone, 8” tall x 4’ lengths
- **Deck** – Wood posts, wire cable, Trex Composite Deck Boards, Enhanced Series, “Rocky Harbor” color

Face Brick



Belden, 830, Dart-Tex
Anderson Window Frame

Cementitious Siding

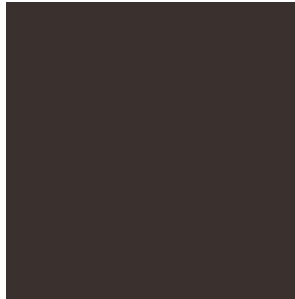


Harris Cream
Trex Decking

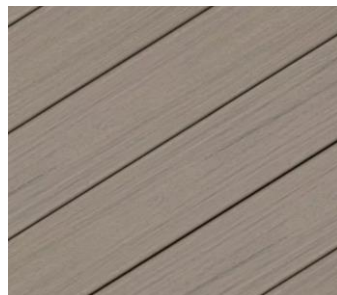
Metal Panels, Atas Int’l.



Natural Metal, Gray/Zinc



Dark Bronze



Rocky Harbor

Finish colors copied from
manufacturers’ websites.
Below: HDC Color System B

COLOR SYSTEM B

ACCEPTABLE COLOR COMBINATIONS *MS = MUNSSELL STANDARD

BODY	TRIM	SASH	CORNICE/ PORCH	IRON CRESTING
Any System B Color EXCEPT A:7, A:8, A:9, B:19	Any System B Color	Match trim color or A:9, B:12, B:18, B:19	Match trim color or stone detailing	A:8, B:8, B:11 or B:19
Shingles: Stained or painted any System B Color ESPECIALLY Dark Greens, Olives, Browns and Yellows EXCEPT A:7, A:8, B:19	Any System B Color	Match trim color or A:9, B:12, B:18, B:19	Match trim color or stone detailing	A:8, B:8, B:11 or B:19
Existing brick or stone	Any System B Color darker than the brick or stone body. ESPECIALLY B:6, B:8, B:11, B:18	Match trim color or A:9, B:12, B:18, B:19	Match trim color or stone detailing	A:8, B:8, B:11 or B:19

 A:7 Bluish Gray MS: 10B 5/1	 A:8 Blackish Green MS: 2.5BG 2/2	 A:9 Moderate Reddish Brown MS: 7.5R 3/6	 B:1 Light Yellowish Brown MS: 10YR 6/4	 B:2 Dark Yellow MS: 5Y 6/6	 B:3 Light Yellow MS: 2.5Y 8/6
 B:4 Moderate Yellow MS: 2.5Y 7/6	 B:5 Light Brown MS: 7.5YR 5/4	 B:6 Moderate Brown MS: 7.5YR 4/4	 B:7 Moderate Yellowish Brown MS: 10YR 5/4	 B:8 Grayish Brown MS: 5YR 3/2	 B:9 Moderate Yellow Green MS: 2.5GY 6/4
 B:10 Grayish Green MS: 10G 5/2	 B:11 Grayish Olive Green MS: 5GY 4/2	 B:12 Grayish Green MS: 10G 4/2	 B:13 Moderate Olive Brown MS: 2.5Y 4/4	 B:14 Dark Grayish Olive MS: 10Y 2/2	 B:15 Dark Grayish Yellow MS: 5Y 6/4
 B:16 Light Grayish Olive MS: 7.5Y 6/2	 B:17 Light Olive MS: 10Y 5/4	 B:18 Dark Reddish Brown MS: 2.5YR 2/4	 B:19 Black MS: N 0.5/	<p>FIND OUT MORE! www.detroitmi.gov/hdc</p>	

Elements of Design

- It is important to review new construction in context to its immediate environment, as well as the district at-large. Listed below are the Corktown Elements of Design that staff believes relate most closely with the proposed townhouse development.

1) Height. Most residential buildings in the district range from one-story to 2½ stories tall. However, an apartment building on Porter Street and a multi-unit building on Fourteenth Street are comprised of four stories each. Commercial and industrial buildings range in height from one to five stories tall; the Victorian commercial buildings are between two and three stories tall. Institutional buildings range from one to three stories.

At 3-1/2' stories, this development will be the tallest building on the block. However, the recessed third floor will allow the 2-1/2 story façade to be the dominant vertical element facing 8th street and will not be out of context in comparison to the 2-1/2 story residential building directly across 8th street, as well being adjacent to the 3-story masonry dwelling at 1356 Labrosse.



Google street view, 1402 Labrosse, across 8th street from 1364-68 Labrosse



Applicant drawing, 1356 Labrosse above

2) Proportion of buildings' front façades. Proportion varies in the district, depending on the age, style, and type of building. One-story workers' cottages are slightly wider than tall to the peak of the gable; two-story pre-1880's residential buildings are generally taller than wide. Side-by-side duplexes are either wider than tall or square in proportion; terraces or attached rowhouses, when grouped together, are substantially wider than tall, although the individual units may appear taller than wide.

The individual front elevations design are vertical in nature, due to the taller-than-wide windows and vertical wood siding.

3) Proportion of openings within the façades. Window openings are usually taller than wide, but there are also square openings and transom window openings which are wider than tall. Several windows are sometimes grouped into a wider than tall combination. Window openings are almost always subdivided; the double-hung sash is the most common window type.

In staff's opinion, the use of clear glass in window openings is appropriate for this modern design. Vertically stacked windows with horizontal mullions create patterned openings that are similar to historic window openings.

6) Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections. Most houses in the district have projecting front porches, usually on one side of the front façade and sometimes wrapping around to the side, especially on corner lots.

The development doesn't have front porches, but the front entrance steps project forward of the building.

7) Relationships of materials. The great majority of buildings in the district are wood frame structures originally clad in clapboard with wooden skirting or brick foundations.... There are some brick residential buildings in the district, the majority of these being duplexes and multi-unit dwellings. The small commercial buildings, the industrial buildings, the fire station, and most of the institutional buildings in the district are brick. Roofing material is primarily asphalt shingles, although a few wood shingle roofs and one slate roof exist in the district.

Brick veneer is proposed for the front and side walls of the development. Wood is also specified for the front façade, and cementitious lap siding is proposed for the rear elevation.

- 8) *Relationship of textures.* The most common relationship of textures in the district is that of clapboard to the smooth surface of wood trim. Aluminum or vinyl siding of the same width as the original clapboard siding that does not alter the relationship of the siding to the functional trim and architectural detail of the building can sometimes contribute to textural relationships. Porches are usually in wood, although some have brick piers. Steps are either in wood, which was the original material, or concrete. Where wooden shingles, carvings, or other decorative wooden details exist, they add significantly to the textural interest of the building. Asphalt shingles or rolled asphalt roofs generally have little textural interest, while wood shingles have considerable interest. Detailed brickwork on brick buildings contributes to textural interest when it exists.

Materials proposed for the development include cementitious and wood siding, brick, metal panels (third floor only) and concrete steps. The flat roof will be covered with a membrane material.

- 9) *Relationships of colors.* Paint colors in the district generally relate to style. Earlier buildings usually display muted colors, such as earth tones and shades of yellow, while Italianate and Queen Anne-style buildings sometimes display richer and darker colors, such as browns, golds, grays, and blues. Common trim colors include shades of cream, yellow, gray, brown, green, and white. Window sashes are frequently painted white, deep red, brown, and gray. Asphalt siding is either red or brown brick color.

The exterior color palette falls within Color System B, which is related to the Queen Anne and Victorian architectural styles and are the dominant architectural styles within this district.

- 12) *Walls of continuity.* The major wall of continuity is created by the buildings, with their fairly uniform setbacks within blocks.

This development will re-establish a wall of continuity that has been absent for sixty years.

- 13) *Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments.* The typical treatment of individual properties is a shallow flat front lawn area in grass turf, subdivided by a concrete walk leading to the front entrance and sometimes a concrete walk leading to the side entrance. Short concrete walks from the curbline to the public sidewalk are also frequent in the district. Foundation plantings and evergreens are typical plantings in front yards.

The development proposes shallow front lawn areas that are subdivided by concrete stairs leading from the sidewalk to the individual front entrances.

- 15) *Scale of façades and façade elements.* The majority of buildings in the district are small in scale, with the exception of multi-story industrial buildings and apartment buildings, which are medium to large in scale and, therefore, do not comply with the original scale of the neighborhood. Façade elements, such as bays, steep roofs, gables, and/or verandas, are moderate in scale. Details within these elements are generally small in scale.

The façade elements for this 5-unit building are within the scale of other multi-story contemporary townhouse developments.

- 16) *Directional expression of front elevations.* One-story residences are usually slightly wider than tall but their directional expression is vertical due to the gable of the steeply pitched roof. Two-story, Italianate and Greek Revival single-family residences are vertical in directional expression, while duplexes in those styles are usually neutral. Two-story Queen Anne buildings are either neutral in directional expression or have vertically expressed front façades, depending on the projection of gables and/or roof slopes.

The five-unit attached townhouses create a wider than tall massing. However, the individual entrances with projecting front stairs, vertical wood siding, and taller-than-wide window openings, will create a vertical expression to the front façade of the structure.

- 17) *Rhythm of building setbacks.* Setbacks vary from area to area within the district, although they are usually consistent within blocks. In general, buildings have very shallow front yards, although buildings may relate to the building lines differently due to porch projections and bays where they exist. Buildings on the north-south streets and corners are very close to the front lot lines. Some industrial and commercial buildings are situated directly on the front lot line.

This development is on the NE corner of Labrosse and 8th Street; the setback from Labrosse to the building's side elevation is five feet. The new building will sit a few feet closer to Labrosse than the adjacent Labrosse-facing structures; however, those structures have stairs and sometimes front porches that reduce the open space of those buildings' setbacks.

20) *Orientation, vistas, overviews.* In general, buildings east of Rosa Parks Boulevard are oriented toward the east-west streets, with Trumbull Avenue, Eighth Street and Sixth Street being exceptions.

The development is located at the NE corner of Labrosse and 8th and will face 8th street.

21) *Symmetric or asymmetric appearance.* Most buildings in the district are asymmetrical in appearance but result in balanced compositions.

ISSUES

- The surface finish of the cementitious siding has not been specified. It is staff's opinion the smooth finish is appropriate for use in local historic districts as it better emulates new real wood siding (which doesn't have a visible grain).

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the proposal will not alter the features and spaces that characterize the property and district and therefore recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Elements of Design for the district.

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

- The cementitious siding will have a smooth surface.