

STAFF REPORT: DECEMBER 13, 2023 MEETING

PREPARED BY: A. DYE

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2023-00143

ADDRESS: 1423 (1425) SIXTH STREET

HISTORIC DISTRICT: CORKTOWN

APPLICANT: LEONARD LAZICH

PROPERTY OWNER: LEONARD LAZICH

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: NOVEMBER 20, 2023

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: NOVEMBER 29, 2023

SCOPE: REPLACE WINDOWS AND VINYL SIDING (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The structure at 1423-25 Sixth Street is a 2-1/2-story, two-family dwelling that is located on the west side of Sixth Street between Porter and Labrosse. The front façade is symmetrical in design. The placement of four large single window openings (double-hung operation, with decorative muntin design in the top sash) at the first floor are mirrored at the second floor by single and mulled double-hung window openings. Raised front porches are accessed by wood stairs, and Tuscan wood columns support the flat roofs. Above each porch, on the recessed front walls, is one small eight-over-two patterned window, which has a highly stylized window casing topped with pedimented arched trim.

The front walls are clad with narrow wood siding, and wide wood horizontal banding denotes the first and second floors and cornice, which includes elongated dentil trim. The side and rear walls are covered with vinyl siding and window openings are not symmetrically placed. The windows at the front elevation are wood sash, whereas the side and rear elevation windows are contemporary replacement units. The building has a flat roof. The at-grade area at the front of the house is enclosed by a low decorative fence, and a gate opens to a lowered grade where stairs lead down to full-height basement doors.



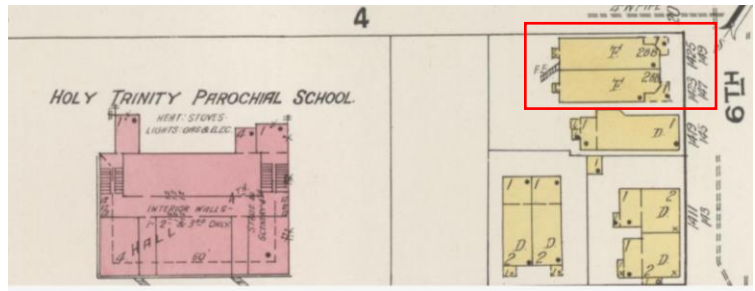
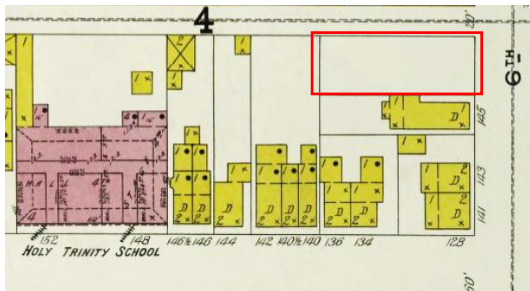
Staff photo, November 29, 2023.

PROPOSAL

- Replace existing vinyl siding (north elevation) with new vinyl siding.
- Install nine Anderson wood windows on north elevation. Anderson series of windows not specified.
- 2015 installation of Anderson windows and doors at rear elevation.

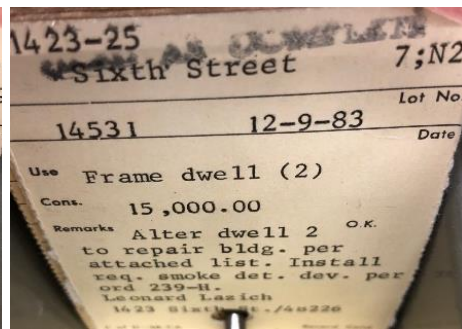
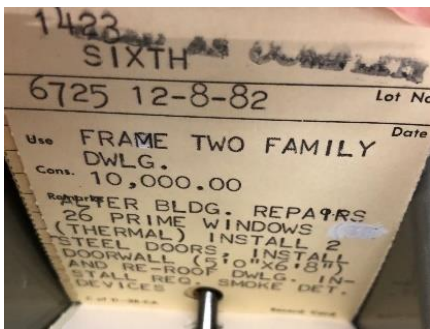
STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Corktown Historic District was established in 1984.
- According to the Corktown Historic District Final Report, the city limits were extended to approximately Seventh Street in 1824; surveying and construction of Chicago Road (Michigan Avenue) took place one year later. Only minor development occurred in Corktown until well into the 1830s, most of which took place between Sixth and Eighth Streets.
- There is no city documentation confirming the date of construction for the 2-family dwelling, but Sanborn maps confirm it was erected after 1897 and before 1921. Based on the architectural design and window casing style, staff believes the structure was likely erected around 1900.



Vol. 1, 1897 Sanborn map, Image 21. 1423-25 is denoted by the red box. Vol. 1, 1921 Sanborn Map, Image 23.

- Review of the building permit cards shows multiple permits were issued for the property within a few years' time. Issued permits doesn't guarantee that work is performed. However, the 1985 city program scope of work (listed on the following page), along with the homeowner's testimonial that the existing work is almost 40 years old, offers strong evidence that the recently replaced windows were installed in 1985.



BSEED permit cards – the October 1985 permit coordinates with a May 1985 scope of work that was listed on a city grant/loan program, which is discussed on the next page.

- The 1984 designation photos confirm that historic wood siding was intact at the front elevation and vinyl siding was in place at the north side elevation.



Designation photos, 1984. HDAB.



- Staff located paperwork from a May 1985 Community and Economic Development Department Loan and Rehabilitation Construction Contract which listed the following exterior scope of work. A copy of the construction contract is included with the staff report.
 - Rebuild masonry foundation and tuckpoint
 - Repair cornice, new dentil trim – all to match existing
 - New gutters
 - New doors – north and south elevations
 - Rebuild front porches (including flat roof) with wood to match existing, reinstall 3 Tuscan columns and 1 new column to match existing, install new soffit, fascia and crown moulding to match existing
 - Erect wood stairs and railings – reinstall salvaged deck rail end posts
 - Install new wood Marvin double-hung windows – install new exterior trim and sills at each window with same size and configuration as existing
 - Erect new wood cellar stairs and concrete pad
 - Exterior painting

Staff didn't find a Certificate of Appropriateness attached to the grant application, however, as noted on page two of this report, a building permit was issued on October 22, 1985 for repair work with an estimated cost of \$21,000.

Comparing the 1985 scope of work with existing conditions (not including work at the north wall which is part of this application), it appears that the existing aluminum porch railings replaced 36-tall wood railings and most specifically the character-defining wood corner posts (which were individually identified in the 1985 grant for salvage and reinstallation.)

- The applicant states in his 12/8 reply to staff questions, that the corner posts were destroyed when a fire occurred at the company's shop who was crafting new wood posts to match the deteriorated historic posts. He states the existing aluminum railings have been in place since 1993. Staff believes they are a sympathetic contemporary design and are not demonstrably inappropriate; they also wrap around the corner posts so that the historic components/features remain intact and unaffected by the railings.

Designation photo, 1984. Circled is the corner post that was to be reinstalled upon installation of a new wood porch and stair railing. An identical post was similarly in place at the adjacent porch.



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Staff photo, November 2023.

- The windows recently removed from the north elevation were contemporary replacement window units. Therefore, the installation of the Anderson windows did not remove historic material or character-defining features of the property.
- This dwelling is around 120 years old and vinyl siding has been installed on the side elevation (and possibly the rear and south side elevations) for 40+ years. This fact does not automatically allow for vinyl siding's continued use, i.e., the new installation, without the review and approval of the Historic District Commission.
- Staff has listed excerpts from the National Park Service document [Evaluating Substitute Materials in Historic Buildings](#).
 - Substitute materials, like all replacements, must closely match the design, color, surface texture, reflectivity, finish, details, and other qualities of the material or element to be replaced.
 - Many modern materials used as substitutes are promoted as maintenance-free. Historic materials that require maintenance offer the possibility for indefinite life spans sustained by the renewal of maintenance. Materials that are maintenance-free have more limited life spans, with replacement being the only response to deterioration.
- Staff also reviewed the National Park Service [Preservation Brief 8: Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings](#)
 - Changes to the character-defining features of a building, such as distinctive clapboarding and other wall surfaces and decorative trim, always have an impact on more than just that building; they also alter the historic visual relationship between the buildings in the district.
 - Because substitute siding is usually added on top of existing siding, details around windows and doors may appear set back from the siding rather than slightly projecting; and if the relationship of molding or trim to the wall is changed, it can result in the covering or removal of these historic features.
 - Therefore, the underlying issue in any discussion of replacement materials is whether or not the integrity of historic materials and craftsmanship has been lost.
 - For historic residential buildings, aluminum or vinyl siding may be an acceptable alternative only if:
 - (1) the existing siding is so deteriorated or damaged that it cannot be repaired;
 - (2) the substitute material can be installed without irreversibly damaging or obscuring the architectural features and trim of the building; and
 - (3) the substitute material can match the historic material in size, profile, and finish so that there is no change in the character of the historic building.
 - In cases where a non-historic artificial siding has been applied to a building, the removal of such a siding, and the application of aluminum or vinyl siding would, in most cases, be an acceptable alternative, as long as the abovementioned first two conditions are met.
 - There are, however, also certain disadvantages in the use of a substitute material such as aluminum or vinyl siding, and these factors should be carefully considered before a decision is made to use such a material rather than the preferred replacement with new wood siding duplicating the old.
 - The implication often is that the new material is an economical and long-lasting alternative and therefore somehow superior to the historic material. In reality, historic building materials such as wood, brick, and stone, when properly maintained, are generally durable and serviceable materials. Their widespread existence on tens of thousands of old buildings after many decades in serviceable condition is proof that they are the original economic and long-lasting alternatives.

ISSUES

- While vinyl siding was present on the north elevation at time of designation, the historic wood window trim was intact and fully covered. The features and dimensions of the side windows more closely matched those at the front elevation. The 2020 photo shows a similar appearance to the 1984 designation photo (with the exception of the trim being painted black).

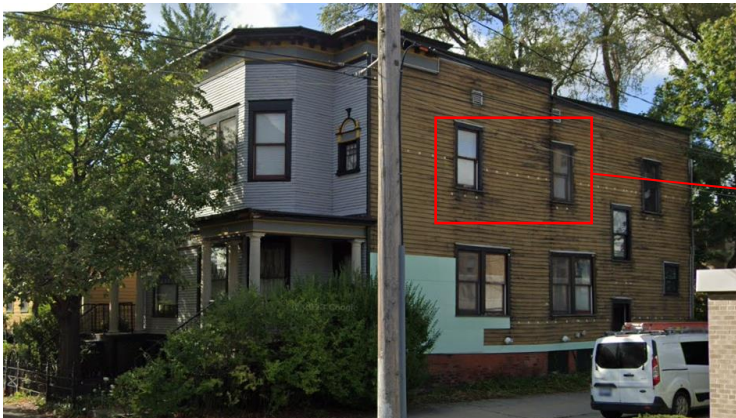


North elevation, Google street view, October 2020.



North elevation, designation photo, 1984.

- The work within the current application began a few months ago and was captured in progress by Google street view cameras. The close-up view shows some of the historic window trim and wood siding. Staff identifies the wood window trim as a distinctive character-defining feature. When the historic wood siding was re-exposed, there was an opportunity for staff to assess its condition and determine the level of repair and replacement needed. The photo does show some level of water damage, most notably at the wall corners and around/under the window openings.



Google street view, September 2023.



- The photo of the existing conditions shows how the historic wood window casings were wrapped with aluminum and their dimensions and configuration were significantly altered.



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Staff photos, November 29, 2023.

- This corner photo offers a clear comparison of historic window trim and the newly wrapped window trim.



Staff photo, November 29, 2023.

- The north-side elevation is a highly visible wall due to its location abutting an alley. The applicant confirmed the
- Similar vinyl siding and aluminum wrapped windows casings are present at the rear elevation. The applicant confirmed in the 12/8 reply document that new windows and doors were installed in 2015.



Staff photo, November 29, 2023.

- Staff emailed the applicant to confirm if this photo shows exposed wood siding, or if this is wood underlayment on which the insulation is being installed.



Google street view, September 2023.

- It is staff’s opinion that vinyl siding is not an appropriate replacement product as it does not match the surface texture, reflectivity, finish, edge details, and at times width and reveal, of original wood clapboard siding. Additional details, such as vertical joints in the cladding and protrusion of the siding (either past or in-line with the window casings) further obliterates the “matching” look of wood siding and trim.
- Should the Commission consider the continued installation of vinyl siding at the north wall, the aluminum wrap over the window casings should be removed and the historic wood window trim be re-exposed to match the wall condition that was present at time of designation.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation One – Denial – Installation of vinyl siding at north elevation and the wrapping of window trim with aluminum, north and west/rear elevation

Staff finds that the proposal for the installation of vinyl siding and the wrapping of window casings does not meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the following reasons:

- The historic wood window trim is a distinctive character-defining feature for this dwelling and offers a dimensionality, proportionality, and placement against the wall’s siding that is identifiable to late 19th and early 20th century buildings.
- The thickly wrapped, uniformly dimensioned aluminum casings are a contemporary design for window openings and has altered the features that characterize this property.
- Vinyl siding is not an appropriate replacement product as it does not match the surface texture, reflectivity, finish, edge details, and at times width and reveal, of original wood clapboard siding. Additional details, such as vertical joints in the cladding and protrusion of the siding (either past or in-line with the window casings) further obliterates the “matching” look of wood siding.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the work as proposed, as it does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standards 2, 5, and 6:

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 Two – COA – Installation of Anderson windows at the north elevation and doors and windows at west elevation

Staff finds that the proposal for the installation of wood replacement windows at the north elevation 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.