

STAFF REPORT: 7/10/2024 MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

ADDRESS: 1628 LEVERETTE

APPLICATION NO: #HDC 2024-00113

HISTORIC DISTRICT: CORKTOWN

APPLICANT: ALEXANDER BELILOVSKI

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 6/25/2024

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: (NOT COMPLETE)

SCOPE: REHABILITATE EXTERIOR

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The resource located at 1628 Leverette is a one-story- single family home that was erected ca. 1880. The building features a cross-gabled roof main/central mass with lower, rear gabled-roof wings. A shed-type porch roof on wood posts has recently been added to a partial width porch at the building's east wall. Asphalt shingles and new wood fascia board have recently been installed at the roof. All exterior siding has also been removed from the front façade and the south portion/half of the west wall. The original, lapped wood siding remains at the rear half of the west wall, the east wall, and the rear. A bay window at the front façade appears to have been recently rebuilt, while the historic bay at the east wall's porch area appears to remain intact, albeit damaged by a recent fire. All exterior doors and a number of window units are missing in their entirety/to the rough opening, to include sash and trim/casing. Remaining windows appear to be wood-double hung units.



1628 Leverette, current conditions facing northeast. Staff photo taken 6/25/2024



1628 Leverette, current conditions facing northwest. Staff photo taken 6/25/2024



1628 Leverette, current conditions facing south. Staff photo taken 6/25/2024



1628 Leverette, 1884. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map



1628 Leverette, 1897. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

PROPOSAL

Per the submitted drawings and narrative, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval of the following work items:

- Build a new partial-width, shed roof wood porch at front façade
- Build a new partial-width, shed roof wood porch at east side (work initiated)
- Rebuild a canted bay window at the front façade (work initiated)
- Remove all siding (work initiated) and replace with new cement fiber lapped siding
- Replace all existing windows with new, double-hung, aluminum-clad wood units (work initiated). The windows will have a 1/1 light configuration
- At roof, replace existing asphalt shingle with new asphalt shingles (work completed), existing fascia with new fascia board (work completed), and install new aluminum gutters and downspouts
- Install new exterior doors

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Corktown Historic District was established in 1983.
- The below designation photo, taken in 1983, indicates that the house was clad with asphalt faux brick asphalt/"Insulbrick" siding at that time. A review of the address's property file indicated that the HDC issued a Certificate of Appropriateness for the removal of this siding in 2003.



1628 Leverette, photo taken in 1983 by HDAB. Note that any exterior decorative detailing/trim is covered by the siding

- See the below image dating from 2016, outlining the distinctive, character-defining features that were revealed as a result of the 2003 siding removal, to include decorative detailing at the front façade and east side wall. Also, the original lapped wood/clapboard siding was exposed at that time. The image also indicates that the front and side porch posts, piers, decking, and steps which were extant in 1983 had been replaced by 2016, likely during the 2003 exterior rehabilitation project.



Appearance in 2016, after faux brick asphalt siding was removed. Note exposed decorative detailing at front gable end, above the front door, at the front porch roof and bay window, and at the side porch roof and bay window. Also, the front and side porch posts, piers, decking, and steps which were extant in 1983 have been replaced by this time. Source: Google Streetview



Appearance in 2018, after faux brick asphalt siding was removed. Google Streetview

- Building department records indicate that the building suffered a fire on January 5, 2019. In May 2019, concerned residents contacted HDC staff to note that the building had been placed in the Dangerous Buildings review process as a result of the fire damaged conditions that had gone unaddressed by the property owners. The following photos, taken in May 2019, illustrate the building's conditions after the fire. Note the damage at the front and east sides.



Side porch and bay window remain in fire damaged condition Siding at this wall also remains in damaged condition

Conditions in 2019. Photo taken by Debra Walker, facing northwest.



At front façade, bay window, siding, and stepped fascia/soffit gable end detailing remain in heavily fire damaged condition. Porch steps also remain, however all other elements of the porch were destroyed by the fire

Conditions in 2019. Photo taken by Debra Walker, north.

Note remaining elements at side porch

At front façade, bay window, siding, and stepped fascia/soffit gable end detailing remain in heavily fire damaged condition. Porch steps also remain, however all other elements of the porch were destroyed by the fire



Siding, windows, and fascia/soffits remain at west side

- Staff does acknowledge the community’s/neighborhood’s expressed concern re: the building’s condition and their desire that this building be rehabilitated versus demolished
- On 2/1/2024, the Detroit building department notified HDC staff that the following exterior work was underway at 1628 Leverette:
 - New asphalt shingle roof and fascia
 - New east side porch
 - New front façade bay

HDC staff reviewed our records and noted that the work had not received an approval. Staff also noted that siding had also been removed. See the below pictures from 2023 and the 2/1/2024 staff visit to the site. Photos taken on 6/25/2024 indicate that

additional exterior work has been undertaken at the site without HDC approval, after the 2/1/2024 violation was recorded and reported to the Detroit building department.



Appearance in 10/2023. Prior to unapproved work. Google Streetview



Appearance in 2/2024, after unapproved work. HDC staff



Current appearance, facing northwest. Photo taken by HDC staff on 6/25/2024



Rear, photo taken by HDC staff in 2/2024. Note that the window to the left was removed without HDC approval sometime between 2/2024 and 6/2024.

- Staff notes the following regarding the damage caused by the 2019 fire:
 - With the exception of the wood steps, which were added ca. 2003, all portions of the front porch were destroyed by the fire.
 - At the front façade, the roof fascia/soffit, siding, window units and trim/casing, bay, door and door trim remained but were deteriorated beyond repair as a result of the fire
 - At the east side wall, the roof fascia/soffits, porch, bay, and siding were heavily damaged by fire. It appears that most historic elements could have been retained and repaired in kind where required. The condition of any remaining windows at this wall is unclear to staff as they were boarded up in the 2019 photos and the current application does not provide a clear account of their condition.
 - At the west side, wall elements, roof elements, and windows appear intact/undamaged by the fire
 - At the rear, wall elements, roof elements, and windows appeared intact/undamaged by the fire

Per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, Standard #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.

It is staff's contention that the Standards require that the missing historic character-defining features/those which were **completely destroyed** by fire need not be replicated. Rather, the replacement feature can be **compatible** with the property's historic character. However, damaged historic character-defining features which remained after the fire should be

retained and repaired where possible. If deteriorated beyond repair, they must be replicated in kind/to match existing. Therefore, according to the Standards:

- A compatible new front porch can be installed as the 2019 fire destroyed all of the porch's historic elements
- The remaining character-defining elements which were damaged by the fire (as outlined in the above annotated images to include the windows, front façade bay, the east side bay and porch, the siding and associated decorative detailing, roof fascia and soffit) must be retained and repaired where possible. If these elements cannot be repaired, they must be replicated in kind
- The current application proposes to install a new front porch to replace the porch that was destroyed by the fire. It is staff's opinion that the proposed porch appears to be an acceptable, compatible new element. However, the submitted drawings do not include enlarged drawings depicting dimensions, materials, and details of the proposed conditions of the new porch. Staff recommends that the applicant submit this information for review and approval prior to the permit issuance to insure the proposed new porch will meet the Standards
- The front façade bay was not destroyed by the fire. Therefore, it must be repaired where possible or replicated in kind where necessary to match its historic appearance. While the current application proposes to rebuild the bay, the drawings do not include enlarged drawings depicting dimensions, materials, and details of the proposed conditions at this location. Staff is therefore unsure if this scope item meets the Standards
- As the side porch and bay were not destroyed by the fire, they must be repaired where possible or replicated where necessary to match their historic appearance. Although a new porch is under construction at this location, the current application does not include enlarged drawings specifying dimensions, materials, and details of the proposed conditions. Staff is therefore unsure if this scope item meets the Standards
- Re: the proposed exterior doors, located at the front and east walls:
 - The current drawings do not specify dimensions, materials, and details of the proposed new doors.
 - The original primary entrance had a transom window above the door. The current application does not propose to replicate this distinctive, character-defining element. It is staff's opinion that this element should be replicated in the proposed new front entrance
 - The east wall doors appear to be full light, sliding glass doors. It is staff's opinion that this work item is not compatible with the building's historic appearance.
- The current application proposes to replace the distinctive, character-defining lapped wood siding with new cement fiber siding. As much of the siding remains and appears to be in repairable condition, it is staff's opinion that this work item does not meet the Standards. New wood siding to match existing can be acquired and installed to replace areas where the cladding has been deteriorated beyond repair. The distinctive corner and frieze boards should also be retained and/or replicated where necessary
- The applicant has proposed to replicate the distinctive decorative horizontal wood siding elements at the front gable end with cement fiber siding. As the submitted drawings do not include enlarged drawings depicting dimensions and details of the proposed conditions at this location, staff is not confident that they can be replicated in cement fiber siding. Staff therefore recommends that they be replicated using wood siding.
- Regarding the distinctive, character-defining jigsaw pedimented wood trim/window surround that was once present at the front façade gable end, staff notes that it was present after the fire, though deteriorated beyond repair. Although the element should be replicated according to the Standards, staff does acknowledge that the cost to match the trim would

be high and that it would be difficult to identify a contractor who has the required expertise to adequately accomplish the work. Staff also acknowledges the applicant's desire to rehabilitate this fire damaged building and the community's stated desire that it not be demolished. It is therefore staff's opinion that it would be reasonable if a new pediment of a design which matches the original in dimension and material, but displays more simplified detailing, would meet the Standards as long as all other elements of the work meet the Standards/the overall effect of the project is consistent with the property's historic character. However, note that the current application does not provide a detailed enlarged drawings depicting dimensions and details of the proposed conditions at this location.

- The current work/application has replaced the distinctive roof fascia/soffit with a basic wood frieze board. As these elements remained after the fire, it is staff's opinion that the proposed work item does not meet the Standards. Rather, the wood fascia/soffits which were removed without approval should be replicated to match the building's historic appearance.
- Regarding the windows at the side and rear walls, the current application proposes to install new aluminum clad wood windows because the units that remain were damaged by the fire. However, the application does not provide a full account of each remaining window's material and condition, to include sash and trim. Also, the current application does not include typical dimension details/specifications for the existing and proposed windows and trim. Staff is therefore unsure if this work item meets the Standards.
- Note that staff did reach out to the applicants to request the above-listed missing items on two occasions prior to the completion of this report. However, the applicant did not provide the additional documentation.

ISSUES

- The current application is lacking enlarged drawings depicting dimensions and details of the proposed conditions of the new front porch. Staff recommends that the applicant submit this information for review and approval prior to the permit issuance to insure the proposed new porch will meet the Standards
- The front façade bay was not destroyed by the fire. Therefore, it must be repaired where possible or replicated in kind where necessary to match its historic appearance. While the current application proposes to rebuild the bay, the drawings do not include enlarged drawings depicting dimensions, materials, and details of the proposed conditions at this location. Staff is therefore unsure if this scope item meets the Standards
- As the side porch and bay were not destroyed by the fire, they must be repaired where possible or replicated where necessary to match their historic appearance. Although a new porch is under construction at this location, the current application does not include enlarged drawings specifying dimensions, materials, and details of the proposed conditions. Staff is therefore unsure if this scope item meets the Standards
- Re: the proposed exterior doors, located at the front and east walls:
 - The current drawings do not specify dimensions, materials, and details of the proposed new doors.
 - The original primary entrance had a transom window above the door. The current application does not propose to replicate this distinctive, character-defining element. It is staff's opinion that this element should be replicated in the proposed new front entrance
 - The east wall doors appear to be full light, sliding glass doors. It is staff's opinion that this work item is not compatible with the building's historic appearance.
- The current application proposes to replace the distinctive, character-defining lapped wood siding with new cement fiber siding. As much of the siding remains and appears to be in

repairable condition, it is staff's opinion that this work item does not meet the Standards. Also, if the current lapped wood siding does need to be replaced wholesale, it should be replaced with new wood clapboard siding which matches the existing in exposure and profile. It is staff's opinion that fiber cement siding is not an adequate replacement for lapped wood siding for the following reasons:

- The product presents a regular, machined appearance versus traditional wood siding
- The product presents unnatural "imprinted" wood grain versus the smooth surface that painted wood siding displays
- The product is thinner than traditional wood clapboard therefore does not provide the profile, shadow lines, and depth typical of lapped wood siding
- The applicant has proposed to replicate the distinctive decorative vertical wood siding elements at the front gable end with cement fiber siding. As the submitted drawings do not include enlarged drawings depicting dimensions and details of the proposed conditions at this location, staff is not confident that they can be replicated in cement fiber siding.
- The current work/application has replaced the distinctive roof fascia/soffit with a basic wood frieze board. As these elements remained after the fire, it is staff's opinion that the proposed work item does not meet the Standards. Rather, the wood fascia/soffits which were removed without approval should be replicated to match the building's historic appearance.
- Regarding the remaining windows at the side and rear walls, the current application proposes to install new aluminum clad wood windows because the units that remain were damaged by the fire. However, the application does not provide a full account of each remaining window's material and condition, to include sash and trim. Also, the current application does not include typical dimension details/specifications for the existing and proposed windows and trim. Staff is therefore unsure if this work item meets the Standards.
- Regarding any missing windows/windows destroyed by the fire, the current application does not include typical dimension details/specifications for the proposed new windows and trim. It is therefore unclear if the new units are compatible with the building's historic appearance.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation - Section 21-2-78 -Certificate of Appropriateness – Erect a new front porch

It is staff's opinion that the proposed new front porch is generally compatible with the building's historic character and therefore meets the Standards and is in keeping the district's Elements of Design. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issues a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work with following conditions:

- The new front porch shall be wood/incorporate new wood columns, steps, decking, and handrails/balustrade/guardrails. The handrails/balustrade/guardrails shall be no higher than the minimum height required by building code.
- Enlarged drawings depicting dimensions, materials, and details for the new porch shall be submitted to HDC staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of the project permit

Recommendation - Section 21-2-78 - All remaining work items – DENIAL

It is staff's opinion that the application's remaining work items are not appropriate for the following reasons:

- The front façade bay was not destroyed by the fire. Therefore, it must be repaired where possible or replicated in kind where necessary to match its historic appearance. While the current application proposes to rebuild the bay, the drawings do not include enlarged

- drawings depicting dimensions, materials, and details of the proposed conditions at this location. It is therefore unclear that the work proposed work item meets the Standards
- As the side porch and bay were not destroyed by the fire, they must be repaired where possible or replicated where necessary to match their historic appearance. Although a new porch is under construction at this location, the current application does not include enlarged drawings specifying dimensions, materials, and details of the proposed conditions. It is therefore unclear that this work meets the Standards
 - Re: the proposed exterior doors, located at the front and east walls:
 - The current drawings do not specify dimensions, materials, and details of the proposed new doors.
 - The original primary entrance had a transom window above the door. The current application does not propose to replicate this distinctive, character-defining element. Therefore, the work as proposed does not meet the Standards
 - The east wall doors appear to be full light, sliding glass doors. Therefore, this work item is not compatible with the building's historic appearance and does not meet the Standards.
 - The current application proposes to replace the distinctive, character-defining lapped wood siding with new cement fiber siding. As much of the siding remains and appears to be in repairable condition, its replacement does not meet the Standards. Also, fiber cement siding is not an adequate replacement for lapped wood siding for the following reasons:
 - It presents a regular, machined appearance versus traditional wood siding
 - The product presents unnatural "imprinted" wood grain versus the smooth surface that painted wood siding displays
 - The product is thinner than traditional wood clapboard therefore does not provide the profile, shadow lines, and depth typical of lapped wood siding
 - The applicant has proposed to replicate the distinctive decorative vertical wood siding elements at the front gable end with cement fiber siding. As the submitted drawings do not include enlarged drawings depicting dimensions and details of the proposed conditions at this location, it is not clear that these elements can be adequately replicated in cement fiber siding. As this element was not destroyed by the fire, it should be replicated in kind/using wood
 - The current work/application has replaced the distinctive roof fascia/soffit with a basic wood frieze board. As these elements remained after the fire, their replacement does not meet the Standards. Rather, the wood fascia/soffits which were removed without approval should be replicated to match the building's historic appearance.
 - Regarding the existing windows at the side and rear walls, the current application proposes to install new aluminum clad wood windows because the units that remain were damaged by the fire. However, the application does not provide a full account of each remaining window's material and condition, to include sash and trim to establish that they are deteriorated beyond repair.
 - Regarding any missing windows/windows destroyed by the fire, the current application does not include typical dimension details/specifications for the proposed new windows and trim. It is therefore unclear if the new units are compatible with the building's historic appearance.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission deny the work because it does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular, Standards #2, 5, 6 and 9, which state that:

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