

**STAFF REPORT:** 12/11/2024 REGULAR MEETING

**PREPARED BY:** G. LANDSBERG

**APPLICATION NUMBER:** HDC2024-00613

**ADDRESS:** 3960-66 W. 7 MILE RD.

**HISTORIC DISTRICT:** SHERWOOD FOREST

**APPLICANT:** JAMES HOLLAND (CONTRACTOR), UNITED BUILDING SERVICE

**PROPERTY OWNER:** JURLENE HURST

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION:** 11/18/2024

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT:** 11/08/2024

**SCOPE:** REPLACE WINDOWS



*View of the duplex at 3960-66 7 Mile. Staff photo, November 8, 2024.*

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Built in 1951, the property at 3960-66 W. 7 Mile Road is a two-story duplex that features a cross-gabled asphalt-shingled, roof with an asymmetrically placed front gable. The eaves slightly project out over the second story and feature dentils and a curved fascia along the first-floor porch roof. The house is clad in red brick with lap siding around the second-floor protruding gable. All original wood double-hung, 2/2 true divided-light windows are still in place, featuring a horizontal muntin in the upper and lower sash, and have a cast stone sill with wood shutters on the second floor. The slightly raised front porch is shared by two entrance doors, each with wood paneling on the door and on each side of the door. The porch roof is supported by modest wood columns. A half-circle concrete walkway joins the main entrances' front step to a singular walkway that leads from a slightly raised garden bed, through the front lawn to the public sidewalk. Tightly trimmed evergreens are planted along the front foundation. Property files indicate that there are no violations or former Historic District Commission (HDC) approvals found.

The property was reviewed for several alterations at the October 2024 meeting. Denied scopes of work included addition of vinyl siding and replacement of the windows.

**PROPOSAL**

The current resubmitted scope of work is for the replacement of the windows with Pella Lifestyle aluminum-clad wood windows, which is a revision to scope that was denied at the October 2024 Regular Meeting. A new package of aluminum-clad windows has been proposed, now incorporating a horizontal divided lite at both the upper and lower sash. The door is not included. At the suggestion of Commissioners during the October meeting, HDC staff visited the property in early November and was granted access to carefully inspect the existing windows.

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- After invitation by the property owner, staff inspected the existing windows in person, both at the interior and exterior. While originally high-quality features of this building, the windows, as anticipated by some Commissioners at the October meeting, are an “off the shelf” or “unitized” 1950s era product and do not exhibit the custom and particular features of pre-war windows which make repair economically and technically feasible, in that partial replacement of sash or sub-parts thereof (typically deteriorated bottom or meeting rails) is not possible for these units without an extraordinary and infeasible degree of custom work unlikely to be undertaken by an experienced contractor in a satisfactory manner. The entire unit must therefore be replaced to correct operational problems, similar to a modern factory-built unitized window that has worn out.
- As opposed to a pre-war window, it is staff’s opinion that these windows were designed to be consumables with a long but ultimately limited lifespan, which has now been exceeded. The wooden sash, while carefully detailed, is lightweight and designed to run against (and be held in place by) friction-inducing metal channels that have corresponding grooves in the sash. This is in strict contrast with most historic windows reviewed by the Commission, which are of heavy, durable wood, are run on/held in place by cords/weights, and can usually be disassembled and repaired in a feasible manner indefinitely, when properly maintained.
- Staff additionally inspected and reviewed the operation of these windows, and found such operation to be difficult or impossible in most cases, with warping and racking of sash/frames preventing proper operation on the built-in aluminum channels (these windows, as described above, do not feature the pulleys and ropes of pre-war examples). Although physical deterioration due to moisture is only observable in some areas, staff recognizes that deterioration does not have to be limited to degradation of material or loss of integrity, but can also include inability to operate.



*Detail view of window showing unitized nature (note aluminum channels). These windows are much tighter and stiffer than comparable pre-war wooden windows, and do not operate well. Staff photo, November 8, 2024.*



*Detail view of a second floor, front window showing some visible deterioration at meeting rail. Staff photo, November 8, 2024.*



*Detail view of another window showing incorporated sliding surfaces (aluminum channels) on which the unitized operation depends. Staff photo, November 8, 2024.*

- Per the above observations, staff revises its earlier position concerning the windows, now finding after staff field inspection that the windows are reasonably beyond feasible repair, and replacement is necessary.
- The new window proposal has also been revised by the applicant to include simulated divided lites (SDLs), and a horizontal division of both the upper and lower sash, to replicate the existing historic expression at this property. The proposed aluminum-clad windows are of acceptable quality and appearance for the historic integrity of the building and the district, and “match” the historic prototypes.
- Staff finds the proposed replacement of these irreparably deteriorated windows with matching replacement units to be consistent with National Park Service Guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards.

## **ISSUES**

- None. Original wooden brick moulds, where present, are important for historic character and should be retained or replaced in kind.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission**

Staff recommends that the proposed work should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and the Sherwood Forest Historic District’s Elements of Design, with the condition that

- The brick moulds be reconstructed if no longer present, and no aluminum coil stock is used to cover the brick mould.