

REVISED STAFF REPORT: JUNE 11, 2025 MEETING

PREPARED BY: A. DYE

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00274

ADDRESS: 1760 WABASH

HISTORIC DISTRICT: CORKTOWN

APPLICANT: TIM FLINTOFF, 4545 ARCHITECTURE

PROPERTY OWNER: DETROIT DEVELOPING PROPERTIES LLC

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: MAY 19, 2025

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: MAY 29, 2025

SCOPE: INSTALL ALUMINUM-CLAD WOOD WINDOWS AND REPLACE HISTORIC WOOD SIDING (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The two-story wood-framed dwelling is located on the east side of Wabash Street, between Marantette and Bagley. The dwelling was erected ca. 1889 and the rear addition erected in 2024. New lap siding on each side of the house was installed within the last year (**subject of this application**), and some historic details within the front and (south) side gables will be rebuilt, as will the front-facing gable window that was removed (without HDC approval) in 2024. New windows were recently installed without HDC review and are the subject of this application.



Facade and south-side walls. HDC staff photo, May 29, 2025.



PROPOSAL

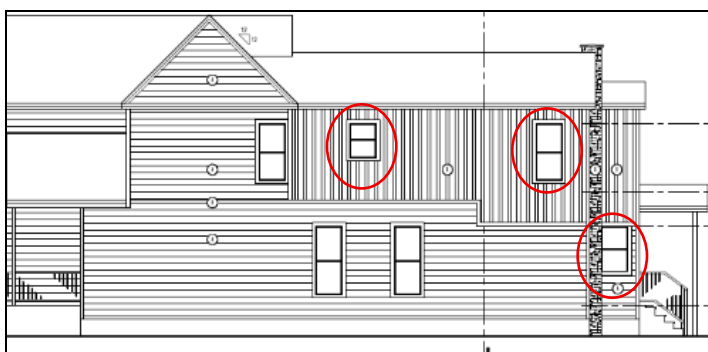
Per the submitted drawings and documents, the applicant proposes the following:

- Replace vinyl double-hung windows with aluminum-clad wood windows on entire house. Already completed.
- New aluminum-clad wood casement window opening in attic at front elevation. Historic window opening had been removed without HDC approval.
- Replace existing double-hung windows at front of house, second floor, with aluminum-clad wood double-hung windows – location and size to match the original window openings.

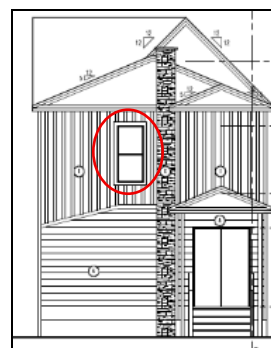
- Remove historic wood siding and install new wood lap siding on all sides of house. Already completed.
- Repair/replace recently installed wood lap siding as needed due to installation issues.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Corktown Historic District was enacted on December 24, 1984 and expanded on September 25, 1998.
- At the Commission's initial review of this property for the erection of a rear, two-story addition (HDC2024-00031 – February 13, 2024 meeting), the applicant proposed to install Anderson E-series aluminum-clad wood double-hung windows, color: black, within the window openings of the new construction. The existing vinyl windows on the historic house were to remain in place (and had been in place prior to district designation).



South-side wall

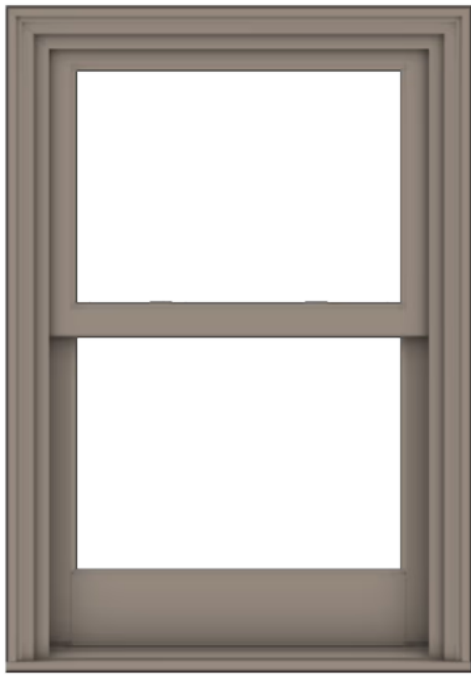


Rear wall

Above are two of the applicant's elevation drawings from the February 2024 HDC review. The Commission placed some conditions on the project, so the final design was modified slightly from the above drawings. However, this gives an indication of where the new openings were to be located (circled) and Anderson windows installed.

- This current application states Anderson E-series windows were installed within most of the openings on house (historic and new openings), but it is staff's opinion that the installed windows do not match the dimensions and profile of an Anderson E-series window, as the installed are exceptionally thin and minimally profiled window frames. Additionally, the approved cladding color for the new windows was black. Bright white window frames, as installed, are a contemporary color and offer too high a contrast against this 19th century dwelling. Victorian houses were replete with multiple color exterior palettes, but bright white was not historically used. Staff copied the available color selection offered within the Anderson E-series line. The majority of the colors available (outside of the bright whites and possibly cardinal red) could be appropriate for this dwelling and are readily available through the manufacturer.

E-SERIES DOUBLE-HUNG WINDOW



Anderson E-series window from company's website. A similar photo was included in the applicant's 2024 HDC application. Sandtone is shown as it allows for full visibility of the dimensionality of this window line.



Close-up of installed window, at second floor rear (new construction). Staff photo, March 26, 2025.



Anderson E-series exterior cladding colors options as listed on the company's website.

- In addition to the bright white color, the installation location of the windows on each side of the house is not consistent. Most of the windows are in plane with the wall, creating an ahistorical “flatness” to the buildings. Historically, buildings were designed as highly dimensional structures. Windows were consistently recessed within walls to create a differential of wall planes so each element (wall and window) would have equal visual presence on an elevation and create a visual relief to an otherwise monolithic wall form. The recessed placement of windows is a distinctive character-defining feature and must be retained.
- The National Park Service’s guidelines “*Replacement Windows that meet the Standards*” state:
 - *Replacement windows for missing or non-historic windows must be compatible with the historic appearance and character of the building.*
 - *The appearance of the replacement windows must be consistent with the general characteristics of a historic window of the type and period but need not replicate the missing historic window.*
 - *Replacing existing incompatible, non-historic windows with similarly incompatible new windows does not meet the Standards.*



Comparison #1 - “after” and “before”. Above: Staff photo, May 2025 // Below: Staff photo, February 2024. The majority of the windows (at the front and side walls) in the above 2025 photo are in line with the wall surface. Whereas the below windows, likely the historic openings but filled with non-historic vinyl windows, are all recessed. Even in partial visibility, you can notice the recessed windows at the second floor on the front façade.





Comparison #2 - “after” and “before”. Above left: Staff photo, May 2025 // Above right: Staff photo, February 2024. The close-up view of the 2025 south-side wall shows inconsistent window placement. All of the openings (except one which is circled) have windows installed at the front of the window opening; the window trim actually extends past the flat window casings. Conversely, the windows in February 2024 were uniformly recessed, which is the appropriate placement for windows within historic dwellings. Even windows in the new construction should be recessed to be compatible with the historic window openings. Please note: the construction of flat window casings was denied by the Commission and the applicant must still build new dimensional casings similar to the pattern seen in the February 2024 photo. The Commission also placed a condition that the new casings be constructed of solid wood.

- The “Replacement Windows that meet the Standards” document also states, “replacement windows on secondary elevations that have limited visibility must match the historic windows in size, configuration, and general characteristics, though finer details may not need to be duplicated and substitute materials may be considered.”
- **Window Casings** – If the Commission approves the scope item for the windows, staff recommends that a condition be added that the angled joints as depicted on Page A4.1, must be horizontal butt joints at the top corners of the window openings.

- **Lap Siding** - The house's vinyl siding was removed and the original wood siding was revealed and was in good condition. That original historic wood siding was removed, insulation and a vapor barrier were installed, and new wood siding was installed, all without commission approval. The siding now in place is buckling in places and in need of repair. The replacement wood siding was included in an application reviewed at the HDC's regular April 2025 meeting, but was withdrawn by the applicant and so was never approved. Staff visited the site with the architect and reviewed the existing siding in its materiality and condition (warped areas on north wall). It is staff's opinion the existing siding does not meet Standard #6 for the following reasons:
 - The historic siding was intact and not beyond repair.
 - The existing siding does not meet the dimensions, profile (new siding is flatter, not similarly angled so the shadow lines are reduced) and surface finish (planed surface not entirely smooth).
 - As the historic wood siding was a distinctive, character-defining feature and the dominant surface feature on the dwelling, it is staff's opinion that the existing wood siding should be removed in its entirety and another wood siding product should be installed (new or possibly reclaimed historic wood siding) that more closely matches the siding removed without approval. A physical sample must be submitted to staff for review. A scheduled site visit to compare the proposed siding against the installed siding may be required.
- **Gables** – At their April 2025 regular meeting, the Commission issued a COA for work proposed at the property, to include the restoration of decorative detailing at the house's front and side gables. However, the Commission determined that the submitted "...front gable sketch included with the application was not sufficiently detailed for construction purposes." Therefore, the COA issued at the 4/2025 meeting included a condition that the applicant provide "...dimensioned drawings and wall sections should be created for the front and side gables, noting all elements within each gable and specifications for painting (colors/sheen) will be included on the drawings and submitted for staff review." However, please note that the drawings submitted with the current application do not provide the required detail drawings for the gable ends. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission add the following condition if an approval is issued for the current application:
 - The applicant shall revise Page A3.1, the south elevation drawing, to include details for reconstructed gable (similar to what is shown on south elevation, minus the window opening). A wall section of the proposed reconstructed gables shall also be submitted

ISSUES

- The installed windows have exceptionally thin and minimally profiled window frames and don't match the more robust dimensions and depth of profile of a historic wood window at this property.
- The new windows have altered the features and spaces that characterize the property.
 - Recessed placement of windows is a distinctive character-defining feature. The majority of new windows were installed in plane with the exterior walls. This created a monolithic, "flat" wall form and the window frames sitting forward of the window trim. The appearance and placement of the replacement windows is not consistent with the general characteristics of a historic window of the type and period of this 19th century dwelling, and with the historic placement of windows at this property in particular.
 - Bright white windows were installed; bright white is a contemporary color and offers too high a contrast and is not compatible with exterior color palettes of Victorian-era houses.
- Regarding the unapproved removal of the historic wood siding and its replacement with the current lapped wood siding:
 - The work has altered the features and spaces that characterize the property.
 - The historic siding was intact and not beyond repair.
 - The existing siding does not meet the dimensions, profile (new siding is flatter, not similarly angled so the shadow lines are reduced) and surface finish (planed surface not entirely smooth).
 - As the historic wood siding was a distinctive, character-defining feature and the dominant surface feature on the dwelling, it is staff's opinion that another wood siding product should be located (new or possibly reclaimed historic wood siding) that more closely matches the siding removed without approval, and a physical sample must be submitted to staff for review. A scheduled site visit to compare the proposed siding against the installed siding may be required.
- The drawing set submitted with the current application does not include the details for the front and side

gables as required by the COA that was issued for the property's rehabilitation at the Commission's 4/2025 regular meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation 1 of 1, Denial

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Corktown Historic District's Elements of Design, specifically:

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.*
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.*

For the following reasons;

- The installed windows have exceptionally thin and minimally profiled window frames and don't match the more robust dimensions and depth of profile of a historic wood window at this property.
- The new windows have altered the features and spaces that characterize the property.
 - Recessed placement of windows is a distinctive character-defining feature. The majority of new windows were installed in plane with the exterior walls. This created a monolithic wall form and the windows frames sitting forward of the window trim. The appearance and placement of the replacement windows is not consistent with the general characteristics of a historic window of the type and period of this 19th century dwelling, nor is it consistent with the historic placement of windows at this particular property.
 - Bright white windows were installed; bright white is a contemporary color and offers too high a contrast and is not compatible with exterior color palettes of Victorian-era houses.
 - Regarding the unapproved removal of the historic wood siding and its replacement with the current lapped wood siding:
 - The work has altered the features and spaces that characterize the property.
 - The historic siding was intact and not beyond repair.
 - The existing siding does not meet the dimensions, profile (new siding is flatter, not similarly angled so the shadow lines are reduced) and surface finish (planed surface not entirely smooth).
 - As the historic wood siding was a distinctive, character-defining feature and the dominant surface feature on the dwelling, it is staff's opinion that another wood siding product should be located (new or possibly reclaimed historic wood siding) that more closely matches the siding removed without approval, and a physical sample must be submitted to staff for review.