

STAFF REPORT: JULY 9, 2025 MEETING
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00295
ADDRESS: 2814 OAKMAN BLVD

PREPARED BY: E. THACKERY

HISTORIC DISTRICT: OAKMAN BOULEVARD
APPLICANT: GREG TITTLE, TITTLE BROTHERS CONSTRUCTION
PROPERTY OWNER: VOLNA CLERMONT
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: JUNE 18, 2025
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JUNE 23, 2025

SCOPE: REPLACE ROOF; WRAP/COVER FASCIA, SOFFITS, AND FRIEZE BOARD

EXISTING CONDITIONS

This two-story brown brick house with steel windows with divided lights was built in 1941. It contributes to the Oakman Boulevard Historic District (see “Research” below). Two one-story volumes project from the front of the house—an entrance and a hipped-roof one-car garage. Behind the garage, what appears to be a two-story addition peers over the garage with a ribbon of four large square picture windows mulled together. The visible masonry appears to be in good condition but it appears that trees and shrubs are growing too close to the house. There are areas that can’t be seen from the sidewalk because of the shrubs and growth. The front elevation of the house (the south elevation) has heavy vine growth on the west end of the home, and the vines are taking advantage of a failed gutter to grow eastward. The house’s roofs are covered in brownish-red asphalt shingles.



Photo 1, 2814 Oakman Blvd, front (south) elevation, site visit 6/23/25, staff. The projecting volumes for entry and garage, along with the large windows over the garage, can be seen.



Photo 2, 2814 Oakman Blvd, front (south) elevation, site visit 6/23/25, staff. The character-defining steel windows with divided lights and the original modest garage with deep eaves are visible, along with the shrubs and heavy vine growth toward the western side of this elevation.



Photo 3, 2814 Oakman Blvd, front (south) elevation, site visit 6/23/25, staff. Closer view of the south elevation shows a broken gutter and heavy vines. The entry volume also appears to have more volume than originally thought. From the sidewalk, staff thought the entry was a small rectangle that balanced the garage, but in this view, it is clear that the entry volume extends forward into the front yard. Because of the shrubs, that more forward extension of the entry was not seen by staff initially.



Photo 4, 2814 Oakman Blvd, front (south) elevation, site visit 6/23/25, staff. Closer view shows more of the heavy vine growth, a little more of the entry volume extending forward toward the sidewalk, and the failing gutter on both the main house and the entry volumes. The character-defining steel windows are clear.



Photo 5, 2814 Oakman Blvd, front (south) elevation, site visit 6/23/25, staff. Detail of the failed gutter and heavy vines.



Photo 6, 2814 Oakman Blvd, front (south) elevation, site visit 6/23/25, staff. Detail of attached garage. The 1941 building permit on file notes that the house will have an attached garage. It appears to have dry tree debris, similar to dry evergreen needles, on the roof. The large, fixed windows over the garage look to staff to be part of a 1960s or 1970s addition. A two-story addition was applied for in the building permit files in 1970.



Photo 7, 2814 Oakman Blvd, site visit 6/23/25, staff, east portion of the south elevation and some of the east façade visible. Staff was trying to get a shot through the tree that would show the depth of the eave on the house, and whether there were gutters on this end. Staff appreciated afterward the dimensional fascia covering that is visible here above the large, fixed windows. It appears to be painted aluminum with an interesting profile that staff believes complements the 1970 addition.



Photo 8. 2814 Oakman Blvd., photo provided by applicant showing condition of soffit and gutter.



Photo 9. 2814 Oakman Blvd, photo provided by applicant, showing soffit.



Photo 10. 2814 Oakman Blvd., photo provided by applicant, showing frieze board, soffit, gutter.



Aerial view of 2814 Oakman from Google maps, 2025. The entry volume is visible here on the house's front (south) side and larger than staff imagined from the sidewalk. The house appears to have a scattering of square roof vents toward the rear (approximately 6 vents perhaps).



City of Detroit Parcel Viewer, the subject parcel, 2814 Oakman Blvd, outlined in yellow. The house faces south with its attached garage to the east and that garage is not very visible here under the tree cover. A narrow rectangle is visible next to the house and behind the garage and that addition to the east that appears to have a bright white roof is the two-story addition staff believes was permitted in 1970 and that peers over the garage.

PROPOSAL

- Tear off existing roof, replace OSB as needed.
- Reroof house and garage with Owens Corning TruDefinition Duration AR in Colonial Slate.
- Remove gutters and dispose.
- Install 5-inch gutters and 2x3" downspouts where current gutters and downspouts exist. Proposed is Musket Brown aluminum.
- Remove all fascia boards around entire house. Install new fascia boards. Wrap fascia and current frieze board in Musket Brown. The materials list shows aluminum trim coil in Musket Brown.
- Application doesn't describe removing soffits, but staff believes it is implied when applicant states that they will install 12" Ventura vented soffits in Musket Brown. Materials list shows this to be vinyl.
- Ventilation is not mentioned in the application, but staff notes that the applicant's materials list mentions:
 - 20 pieces of 4' Lomanco DA-4 Deck-Air Intake Vent(s)
 - 1 Kitchen and 1 Bathroom vents
 - 4 Whirlybird Turbine Vents (12" high)

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Oakman Boulevard Local Historic District was designated in 1989.
- The District's Final Report states that the Boulevard "remains one of Detroit's most impressive thoroughfares, representing the city's residential and industrial expansion of the 1920s" and that "The notable homes on Oakman Blvd. between Linwood and Davison are impressive examples of mid-to-upper class residential architecture built between the two world wars." Because of these statements and the district's historic context, staff considers this house to be contributing to the district.
- The city's building permit files show the following timeline:
 - 1941 permit application: brick veneer dwelling with garage attached
 - 1943: certificate of occupancy issued
 - 1965: application received to finish house's basement, but that it was not to be occupied for living purposes
 - 1970: application received to erect a 39' x 15' rear two-story addition as per plan
 - 1972: air conditioner added to front yard
 - 1972: application received to erect a 17' x 38' below-grade swimming pool
 - 1973: application received to add a rear one-story addition measuring 20'-2" x 6' on 42"-deep footing for new bathroom and dressing area
- The existing roof and gutters are no longer adequately protecting the house.
 - The roof proposed is a brown blend and staff would consider it a like-for-like replacement that meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.
 - Staff believes that the gutters and downspouts are like-for-like replacements that meet the Standards and Guidelines.
- The applicant is proposing to install vinyl soffits and wrap fascia and frieze boards in aluminum to protect them from weather. The following is staff's opinion with respect to the appropriateness of these proposals.
 - The house currently has wood soffits. The application is to replace the wood soffits with vinyl soffits that ventilate.
 - The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation require that "deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials." It is staff's opinion that the proposed **vinyl soffits** will have a plastic appearance that will not match the existing wood in texture or materials.

- The house appears to have simple, flat wood **fascia boards** with gutters mounted to them, except on the addition over the garage. The project proposes to install new wood fascia due to the element's current state of deterioration. The new fascia boards will be wrapped in aluminum before hanging gutters on them as a protective measure. It is staff's opinion that the proposed fascia treatment would not damage the building's historic character as the gutters currently obscure the existing fascia and the new aluminum-wrapped fascia would be similarly obscured by the new gutter system.
- The proposed wrapping of the **frieze board** is not appropriate, however, as it is a decorative historic wood element that is clearly visible from the right-of-way. Aluminum coilstock is not an adequate match for wood as it can warp, dent, or discolor over time. Any deteriorated portion of the existing wood frieze board should be replaced in kind.
- The applicant plans to ventilate the roof with shingle-over vents, bathroom and kitchen fan vents, and turbine vents. It is staff's opinion that the shingle-over vents and likely the fan vents will be unobtrusive and that they meet the Standards.
 - The applicant explained that the current building code would require 20 new box vents on the roof's surface to ensure adequate ventilation. The contractor further explained that he is instead proposing to install four Whirlybird turbine vents because the roof isn't big enough to accommodate 20 box vents and that he believes the turbine vents would look better.
 - Flat box or can rooftop vents are typically utilized within a residential setting in historic districts, whereas the proposed 12"-high turbine vents typically appear on roofs of barns or on industrial or commercial buildings. A Google streetview review of roofs in the near vicinity of 2814 Oakman further indicated that turbine vents are not common within the district. It is therefore staff's opinion that the proposed turbine vents are not appropriate to the building's historic character or its existing surrounds.

ISSUES

- The proposed vinyl soffits are not appropriate to the building's historic character because their material and texture does not match the existing wood.
- The historic wood frieze board is a decorative historic wood element that is clearly visible from the right-of-way. Aluminum coilstock at this location can warp, dent, or discolor over time, leading to an appearance that is not compatible with the property's historic character.
- The proposed rooftop turbine vents are not commonly found within residential settings in historic districts and are not extant within 2814 Oakman's near vicinity. The elements are therefore not in keeping with the building's historic character.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation # 1 OF 1– CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Oakman Boulevard's Historic District's Elements of Design, with the conditions that:

- Turbine vents cannot be installed at the property's roof. Rather, flat box or can vents shall be installed at the roof surface. Staff shall have the authority to review and approve the final ventilation plan.
- The existing wood frieze board shall not be wrapped in aluminum. Areas of deteriorated frieze board shall be replaced in kind to match existing.
- The existing wood soffits shall not be replaced with vinyl soffits. Areas of deteriorated soffits shall be replaced in kind to match existing.