

**STAFF REPORT:** 08/13/2025

**PREPARED BY:** L. SAINT JAMES

**APPLICATION NUMBER:** HDC2025-00113

**ADDRESS:** 8715 WOODWARD

**HISTORIC DISTRICT:** ST. JOHN C.M.E. CHURCH

**APPLICANT:** ALBERT BENEZRA / WEATHERGARD WINDOWS

**PROPERTY OWNER:** ST. JOHN'S C.M.E. CHURCH

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION:** 07/15/2025

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT:** 07/27/2025

**SCOPE:** REPLACE HISTORIC WOOD & STEEL WINDOWS

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The St. John C.M.E. Church, originally the North Woodward Congregation Church, was built in 1909 and designed in a Gothic style by architect Hugh Barret Clement and features red brick construction accented with limestone detailing. Unlike many traditional Gothic churches, this building is relatively low in height, notably missing a bell tower or lantern. Additionally, the historic property encompasses nine adjoining row houses situated along Gladstone Avenue, which incorporate elements of Prairie and Arts & Crafts design



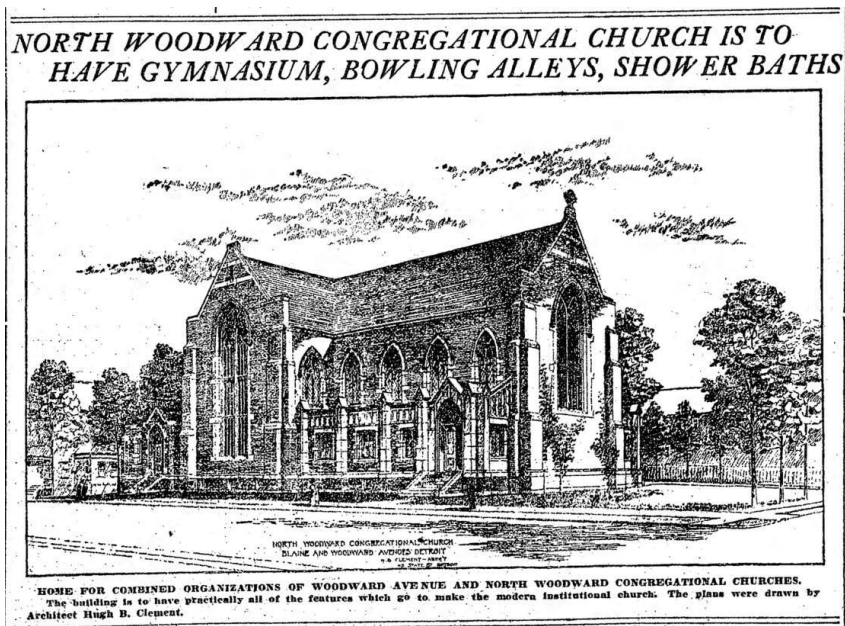
*Staff photo, 07/27/2025*

## **PROPOSAL**

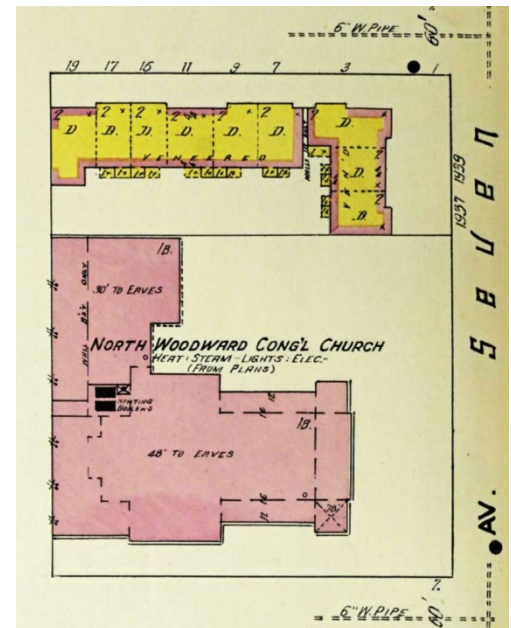
- Replace historic windows with vinyl windows and aluminum wrap
  - 2 fixed leaded glass, wood windows
  - 2 sets of steel casement windows

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The St. John C.M.E. Church Historic District was designated in 1988.



*Detroit Free Press, 1909*



*Sanborn Map, Vol. 6, 1910*



*Wayne State University. Virtual Motor City History Collection, 1915*



- There are four (4) window groupings that are proposed to be replaced.



*Diagram made by staff*



*The Crusader, 1984*

- Windows #1 and #2 face Woodward Ave and are visible from the sidewalk and the street.



*Photos from application*

- Although the existing steel casement windows are distinctive, character-defining features, considering the amount of bowing, deterioration from rust, and alteration to include the AC unit, it is staff's opinion that the existing historic steel casement window units are beyond repair.
- The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-150) mention that "metal occurs in doors and in window frames in some openings in the church complex."

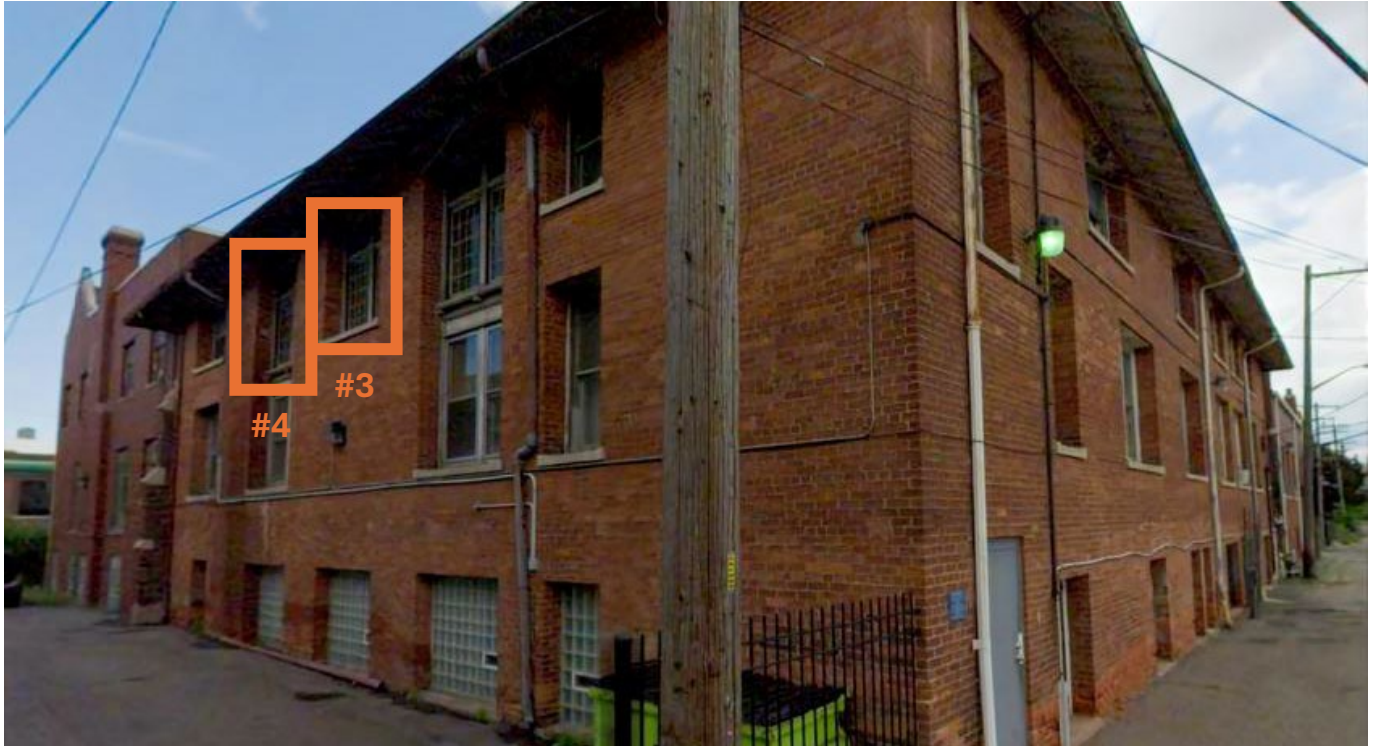
**PROPOSED** →

*Vinyl "endvent" slider in white  
with white aluminum wrap*





- Windows #3 and #4 face North toward the shared parking space between the church and the townhomes.



*Mapillary, 2023*

**WINDOW #4**



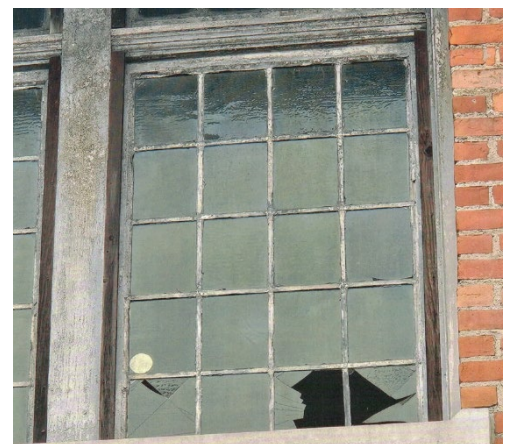
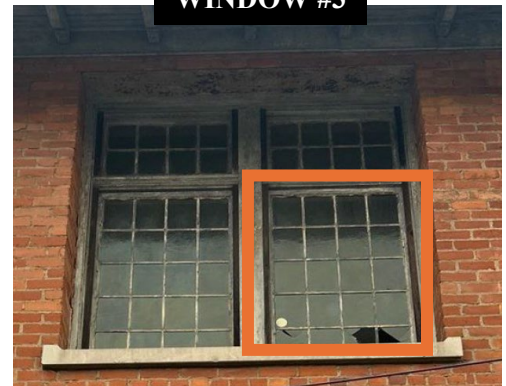
*Photos from application*



**PROPOSED**

*Fixed vinyl window in white  
with white aluminum wrap*

**WINDOW #3**



*Photos from application*

- Photos provided with the application show relatively minor deterioration of the wood windows, such as peeling paint and broken panes of glass.
- The installation of the vinyl windows and aluminum wrap does not follow NPS guidelines for replacement windows. As stated on the [Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards](#), “When historic windows exist, they should be repaired when possible. When they are too deteriorated to repair, selection of the replacement windows must be guided by Standard 6. Design, visual qualities, and materials are specific criteria provided by the Standard that are pertinent to evaluating the match of a replacement window. Evaluating the adequacy of the match of the replacement window involves the consideration of multiple issues.” Specifically, referencing the factors to consider in evaluating the match of a window:
  - **Glass size and divisions.** Muntins reproduced as simulated divided lights – consisting of a three-dimensional exterior grid, between-the-glass spacers, and an interior grid – may provide an adequate match when the dimensions and profile of the exterior grid are equivalent to the historic muntin and the grid is permanently affixed tight to the glass.
  - **Materials and finish.**
    - While it may be theoretically possible to match all the significant characteristics of a historic window in a substitute material, in actuality, finish, profiles, dimensions and details are all affected by a change in material.
    - Secondary window elements that do not match the finish or color of the window can also diminish the match. Examples include white vinyl tracks on dark-painted wood windows.

## ISSUES

- The historic leaded glass, wood and steel casement windows are distinctive, character-defining features of the property. The historic leaded glass, wood windows are not documented to be beyond repair.
- If replacement windows were warranted (that is, if the historic windows were demonstrated to be beyond repair), the new windows would be required to “match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, and where possible, materials” (Standard #6, quoted in full below).
- The vinyl windows and aluminum wrap are not compatible with the overall historic character of the building. Specifically, through limits of fabrication and material, vinyl, and materials alike, are not appropriate for historic districts.
  - Vinyl windows, wrapped brickmould, and poly-products offer a plasticity and flat/thick appearance that does not adequately match the profile/dimensionality and appearance of historic windows, such as wood.
  - Consumer grade vinyl windows weather poorly, deteriorate rapidly, and exhibit poor detailing and detracting color/sheen.
  - The framing material, glazing, and seals (which keeps the argon gas intact between the insulated glass) of vinyl windows break down more quickly in ultraviolet light than wood or steel-framed windows.
  - Vinyl also lacks rigidity and can expand and contract more greatly than wood and steel. This can result in discoloration and warping of the vinyl frames, as well as condensation between the glass layers.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

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

#### **Recommendation 1 of 1 – Denial – Replace historic windows**

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the St. John C.M.E. Church Historic District's Elements of Design, specifically:

*Standards #:*

*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.*

*Elements of Design #:7, 10*

For the following reasons:

- The historic leaded glass, wood and steel casement windows are distinctive, character-defining features with the leaded glass, wood windows not proven to be beyond repair.
- Though the existing historic steel windows appear to be deteriorated beyond feasible repair, the proposed windows are not in-kind matches to the historic windows at this property.
- Due to limitations in material quality and fabrication, vinyl windows are not appropriate for use in historic districts.