

STAFF REPORT: 09/10/2025 MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

ADDRESS: 4000 TYLER

APPLICATION NO: HDC2025-00504

HISTORIC DISTRICT: RUSSELL WOODS-SULLIVAN

APPLICANT/OWNER: ALVARO ABRAMUK DE LA ROSA/ABRAMUK LLC

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 4/11/2025, 5/14/2025, 8/26/2025, AND 9/1/2025

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 8/18/2025

SCOPE: REBUILD BACK PORCH, INSTALL RAILINGS AT FRONT AND BACK PORCH, REPLACE GLASS AT FRONT FAÇADE WINDOWS (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Erected ca. 1920, the building at 4000 Tyler is a 1 ½-story, single-family dwelling. The building features a side-gabled main mass with projecting front gabled wings at the façade. Exterior walls are clad with red brick. Steel casement windows are found at all walls, while two fixed wood windows flank the building's primary/front door. These windows were recently installed without HDC approval. Partial-width, brick porches with concrete flooring, concrete steps, and wood railing are located at the front and rear and façades.



4000 Tyler. Current appearance. Photo taken by HDC staff on 8/26/2025



4000 Tyler. Showing rear porch. Photo taken by applicant

PROPOSAL

With the current submission, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval of exterior work which was recently completed without HDC approval to include the following:

- Repair damaged brick
- At front porch, install wood railing
- Repair masonry porch and rear and install concrete steps
- At front and rear porches, install wood railing (3'-0" high, per the submitted application) with integral ornamental light fixtures
- At front elevation, replace two historic fixed stained glass windows with lead coming (flanking the front door) with fixed wood windows
- At front elevation bay, remove stained glass steel transom with lead coming with fixed glass transom

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic district was designated in 1999
- In 2019, HDC staff issued a COA (HDC#19-6293) to undertake a rehabilitation of the property to include the following:
 - At the front porch, replace the existing concrete slab, repair the brick foundation
 - At the roof, replace damaged fascia and install new gutters and downspouts
 - Replace broken glass at windows
 - Stabilize/repair the garage and install a new overhead door
 - Replace chain link fence to match existing
- On 4/11/2025, HDC staff was made aware that new front and rear porch railing and a new front door had been added at the property without HDC approval. Staff subsequently notified the building department of the unapproved work. The building department issued a notice of violation on the property on 4/22/2025.
- A review of the property's designation photo, Google Streetview images, and files maintained by the HDC revealed the following with respect to unapproved work undertaken at the property **(see the below photos):**
 - At the time of the district's designation, the building had distinctive, character-defining windows with lead coming and stained glass at two locations: the two fixed windows that flanked the front door and in the transom at three windows at the front façade bay. Also, an historic 24"-high metal railing at the front porch was present.
 - Sometime between 2006 and 2013, the historic 24"-high metal railing was removed from the front porch without HDC approval
 - Sometime between 2013 and 2019, shrubs were removed from the property's front yard and a new asphalt shingle roof was installed without HDC approval. Also, a rear porch canopy had been removed by 2019
 - Sometime between 2019 and 2022, the garage was removed without HDC approval
 - In May 2025, the rear porch was repaired to include the installation of a new railing. A new railing was also installed at the front porch without HDC approval. Also, the non-historic wood front door was replaced with the current front door at this time.
 - Sometime between May and August 2025, the character-defining lead coming and stained glass which was present at the windows that flank the front door and in the transoms at the front façade bay was removed and replaced with clear glass. Staff does note that the 2019 COA did allow for the replacement of broken glass at windows. However, a review of photos of the house taken in May 2025 indicate that the lead coming and stained glass in the transoms at the front façade appeared to be in good condition (see below photos). Also, with respect to the condition of the lead coming and stained glass at the windows which flank the front door, staff notes that one window remained mainly intact/in good condition in May 2025, while the other maintained its historic stained glass and a portion of the lead coming. Therefore, the replacement of these elements with plain glass does not conform to the 2019 COA.
 - Staff notes that any unapproved alterations to the property remain as open violations which are subject to future enforcement from the building department

Designation photo, taken in 1999 by HDAB. Note that original front porch and windows remained, to include the decorative stained glass and lead coming in the front façade bay windows



Designation photo, taken in 1999 by HDAB. Note that original front porch railing was present (yellow arrow)



2009, Google Streetview image. Note shrubs are present and front yard and all original windows remain. Also, the front door is not of historic age. The house appears to be occupied at this time.



2009, Google Streetview image. Note that the original 24"-high metal railing was present at the front porch (red arrow)



2009, Google Streetview image. Note rear yard fencing, rear porch canopy, and 1-car garage at rear yard. The garage appears to be in poor condition



2011 Google Streetview image. Note overgrown foliage. The garage is still extant. The house appears to be vacant at this point.



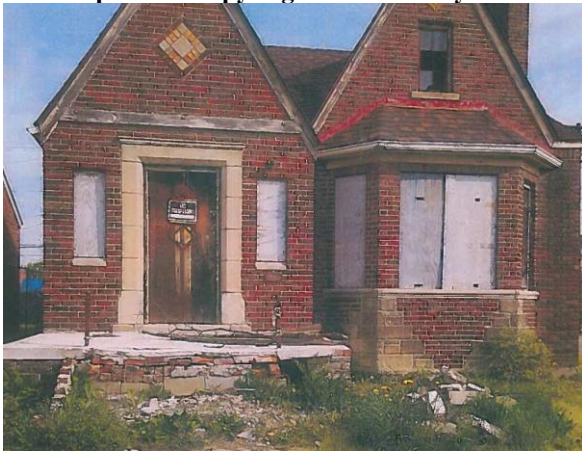
2011 Google Streetview image. Note overgrown foliage. The front door and windows have been boarded up. The house appears to be vacant at this point.



2013 Google Streetview image. Note the poor condition of the front porch and that the railing that was visible in 2009 is no longer present. Also, the front yard shrubs have been removed and a new asphalt shingle roof has been installed.



2019, photos submitted to HDC by a former owner. Note that all windows remain boarded up and the rear porch canopy is gone. The rear yard fence and garage remain, but are in poor condition



2022 Google Streetview images. Note that the garage and rear yard fencing are gone



May 2025 photos by HDC staff. Note new fence has been erected, a new front door has been installed, the front and rear porch decks have been repaired and new concrete steps added, new railing has been added to the front and rear porch, and the plywood has been removed from the windows. Also, the original fixed windows with lead coming and stained glass which flank the front door remain, although the window to the right appears to be in poor condition (see the red arrows). Finally, note that the lead coming and stained glass in the transoms at the front façade bay remain in good condition (see the yellow arrows).



Photos by HDC staff, taken on 9/2/2025, showing current conditions. Note that the character-defining lead coming and stained glass which were present at the windows that flank the front door was replaced with clear glass windows (red arrows) and the lead coming and stained glass in the transoms at the front façade bay (yellow arrows) were removed sometime after May 2025.



- As noted above, the current application includes work which has been completed without HDC approval, to include replacement of stained glass and lead coming at front façade windows, general brick repair, the repair of the rear porch to include the installation of a new railing, and the installation of a new railing at the front porch. Staff supports the “after the fact” approval of the general brick repair and the repair of the masonry at the rear deck.
- However, it is staff’s opinion that the railing that has been installed at the front and rear porches is incompatible with the building’s historic character for the following reasons:
 - The original railing which was removed without HDC approval sometime between 2009 and 2013 was a low, 24”-inch high metal guardrail with simple square balusters. Also, see the below Google Streetview images of houses directly next to and across the street from the subject property to note that they have simple, low, metal railings. The front and rear porch railings that were installed at 4000 Tyler without approval are inappropriately high and of an incompatible design to include the integrated light fixture and prominent newel posts (see below photos). Staff also notes that the lack of wingwalls at the stairs and the location of the bottom sub-rail on the outside of the stairs contribute to the discordant appearance of the new railing.

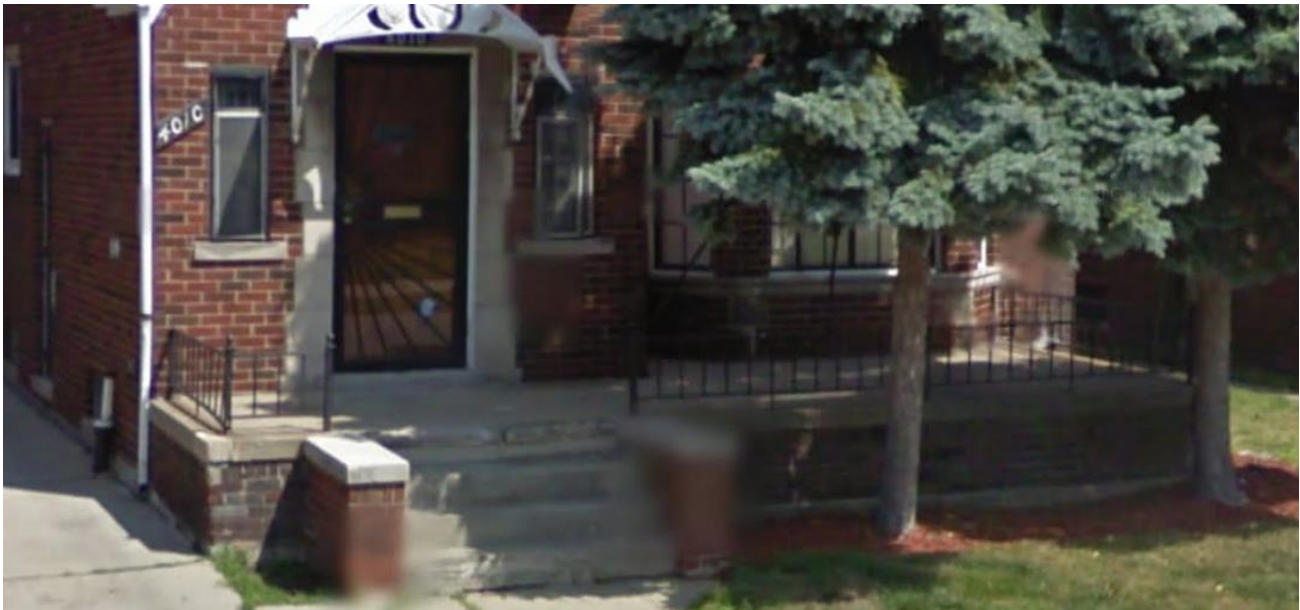


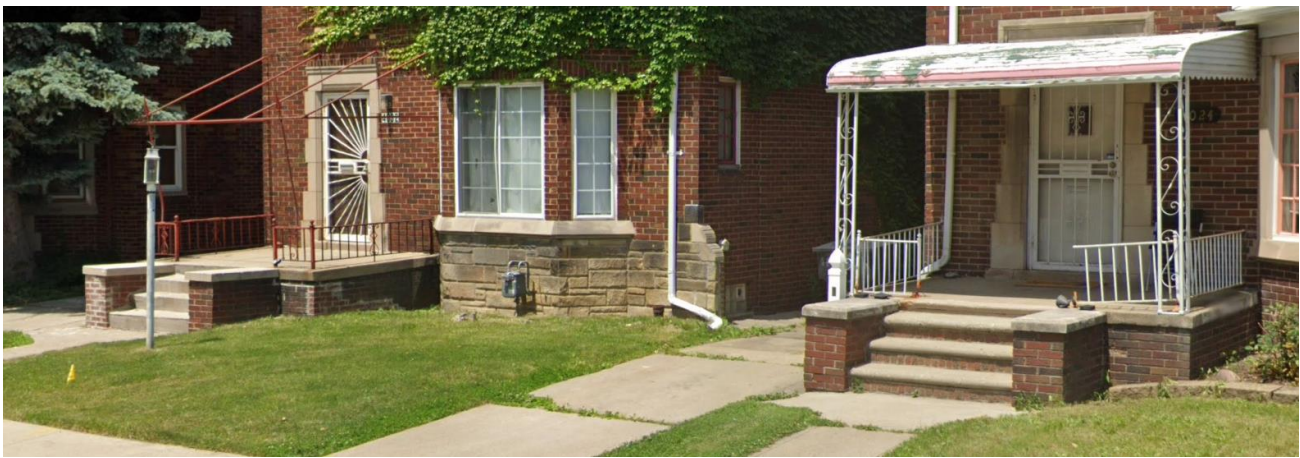
Original railing. Note the low height and simple design and wingwall (red arrows)



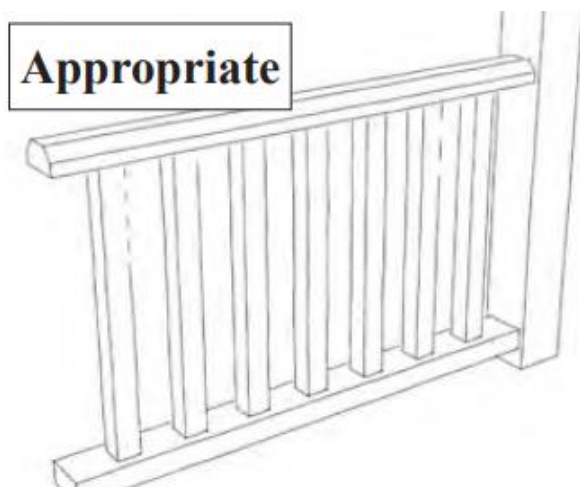
Current railing. Note height, the oversized/chunky newel posts, and the location of the bottom rail (yellow arrow)

Houses next to and across the street from 4000 Tyler. Note style, material, and height of the guard railing. Also, note the presence of the wingwalls that flank the stairs

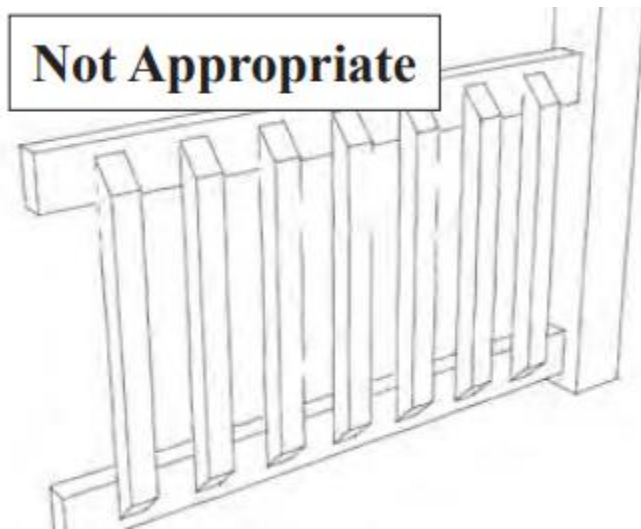




- Also, historic porch railing typically consists of balusters which are integrated into the top and bottom rails (see below graphic). The railings which were installed at the front and rear porches at 4000 Tyler have face mounted balusters, ie, the balusters have been attached to the outside of the bottom and top rails (see the below graphic and photo). Note that it is staff's opinion that face mounted railing systems are only appropriate for modern rear yard decks that represent a contemporary addition to a house and are not visible from the public right-of-way.



Historic porch railing. Note that the balusters are located between the top and bottom rails.



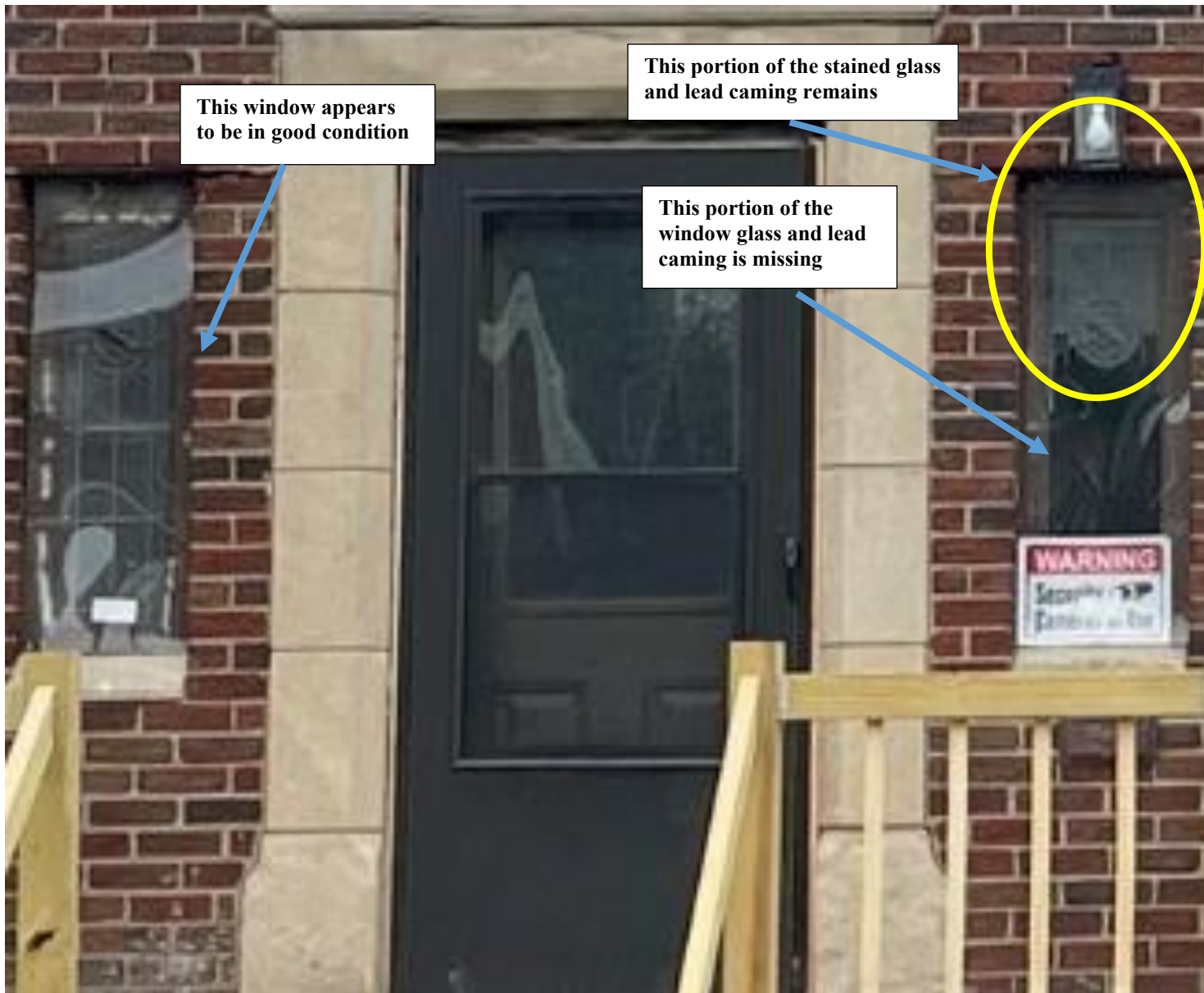
Railing that is typically installed at modern rear decks. Note that the balusters have been applied to the outer surface of the top and bottom rails. This type of railing is not appropriate for installation at porches in historic districts



Current railing design (at front and back porch). Note that the balusters have been applied to the outside of the top and bottom rails (see red arrow).

- As previously noted, the 2019 COA only allowed for the replacement of broken glass at the windows. A review of photos of the property taken in May 2025 indicates that one of the two windows which flank the front door and all of the windows at the transom at the front façade

bay appeared to be in good condition (see the below photos). However, while the lead coming and glass at the second window that flanks the front door was partially missing in May 2025, the decorative stained glass and lead coming above was still present. Staff notes that the 2019 COA covered the replacement of broken glass at the windows. Therefore, the recent replacement of the lead coming and stained glass that was present in May 2025 does *not* conform to the 2019 COA as the elements were not broken. It is staff's opinion that the recent removal of the distinctive, character-defining stained glass and lead coming at windows that remained in May 2025 does not meet the Standards. Also, the clear glass which replaced these decorative, distinctive elements is not an adequate match.



Conditions in May 2025, fixed windows that flank the front door. Note that the window to the right appears to be in poor condition while the window on the left appears to be in good condition. Photo by HDC staff



Conditions in May 2025, front façade bay. Note that the decorative transom windows appear to be in good condition.
Photo by HDC staff



Current condition, 9/1/2025. Photo by HDC staff. Yellow arrow indicates clear glass installed at transom sometime after May 2025



Current condition, 9/1/2025. Photo by HDC staff. Yellow arrow indicates clear glass installed at transom sometime after May 2025



Current condition, 9/1/2025. Photo by HDC staff. Yellow arrow indicates clear glass installed to replace window that appeared to be in good condition in May 2025. Red arrow indicates clear glass installed to replace the stained glass and lead coming above which remained in May 2025

ISSUES

- The railing that was installed at the front and rear porches is incompatible with the building's historic character and therefore does not meet the Standards.
- The replacement of the distinctive, character-defining, stained glass and lead coming at the front façade windows at the front façade does not meet the Standards

RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

Recommendation 1 of 2, Denial – Install railing at front and rear porches; replace stained glass and lead coming at the front façade bay transom; and replace stained glass and lead coming at windows that flank the front door

Staff recommends that work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Russell Woods-Sullivan 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.

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 historic character-defining railing at the front porch was a low, 24"-inch high metal guardrail with simple square balusters that were integrated in between/into the top and bottom rail. The current railing at the front and rear porches does not adequately match the historic as it is inappropriately high and displays an incompatible design to include integrated light fixtures, prominent newel posts, and face-mounted balusters. Also, metal is a better match to the original railing at the front porch that was removed without approval and is more compatible with the material that is commonly used for railings within the historic district.
- The current application did not adequately demonstrate that the distinctive, character-defining, stained glass and lead coming that was located at the front façade bay's transom and at one window to the side of the front door was deteriorated beyond repair. Additionally, the clear glass which replaced these distinctive decorative elements is not an adequate match.

Recommendation 2 of 2, Certificate of Appropriateness: Repair brick and repair the masonry at the rear porch

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District's Elements of Design.