

STAFF REPORT: 10/08/2025 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: L. SAINT JAMES

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00561

ADDRESS: 14635 E. JEFFERSON

HISTORIC DISTRICT: JEFFERSON-CHALMERS HISTORIC BUSINESS

APPLICANT: JOHN MARUSICH / MARUSICH ARCHITECTURE

PROPERTY OWNER: TONY SAUNDERS / VOLTE 14635 E JEFFERSON INVE ET AL

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 09/15/2025

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 09/24/2025

SCOPE: ALTER AND REHABILITATE BUILDING, CONSTRUCT NEW PARKING LOT

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Designed by architect Lancelot Sukert and completed in 1922, this Tudor Revival-style structure was originally built for the St. Columba parish, with the church itself situated just behind the annex at 1021 Manistique. The three-story building features a row of storefronts framed by five stone segmental arches along the ground floor. Distinctive elements like a slate roof and cast stone window trim sets it apart from the other commercial buildings that share the block.



Staff photo, 09/24/2025. South elevation faces E. Jefferson.



Staff photo, 09/24/2025. Taken from the corner of E. Jefferson and Manistique.



Staff photo, 09/24/2025. Taken from Manistique.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to make certain exterior revisions to support a change of use of the property to a multi-family residential building. The proposed exterior scope of work includes, but is not limited to:

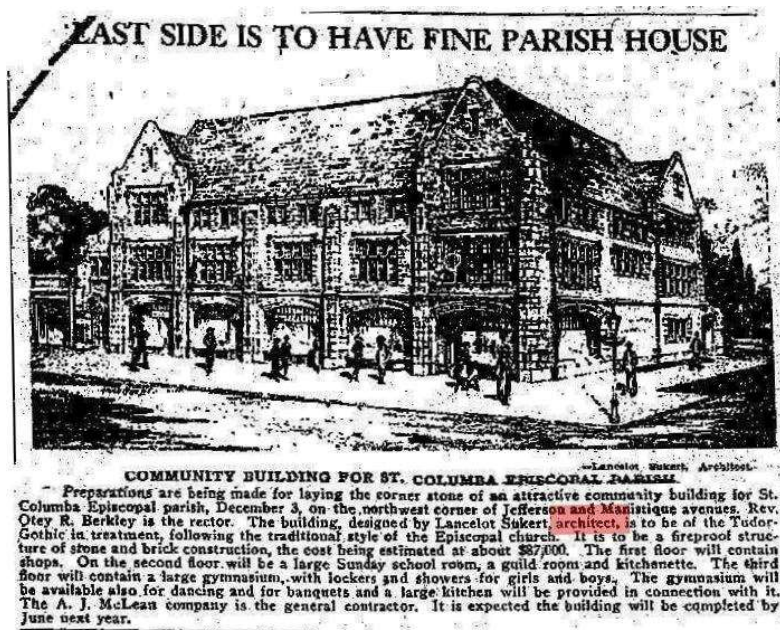
- Doors: replace/remove/install, including integrating new brick infill
- Windows: restore/remove, including integrating new brick infill
- Light fixtures: restore/remove/install
- Install sky lights
- Repoint brick
- Construct new parking lot
 - Erect trash enclosure

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

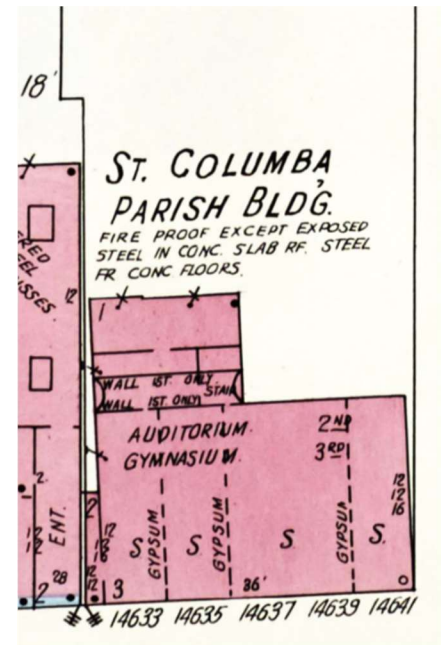
- The Jefferson-Chalmers Historic Business Historic District was enacted in 2008.
- The St. Columba Episcopal Parish grew as the neighborhood around it flourished. This building, the parish house or St. Columba Activity Hall, further cemented the role of the church in the surrounding community by offering storefronts on the first floor, gymnasium, meeting hall, and kitchen facilities.



Thumb Tack Club of Detroit, 1925



Detroit Free Press, 1922



Sanborn map, 1929



Detroit Parcel Viewer

- The property received a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) on 06/09/2016 for the following work via application 16-4654:

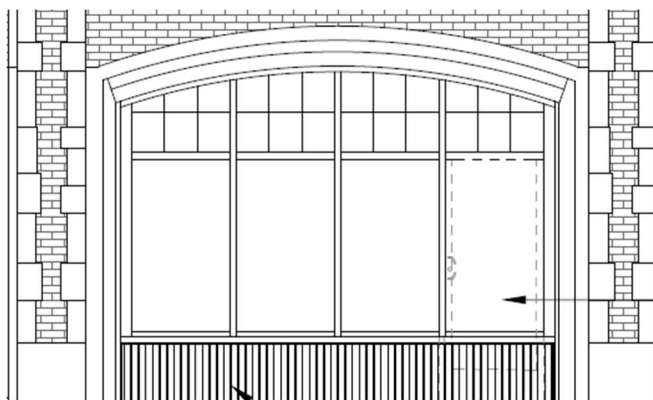
- Installation of new storefront systems with the following conditions...

- The board-and-batten design be used and the drawings revised so the battens align with the window mullions
- The scope of work be revised to specify simulated divided light transoms will be installed
- The finish colors of the wainscot be submitted for staff review
- Staff shall be afforded the ability to review and approve the final project specs before the permit is pulled for the project and the work commences.

Staff would like to note that the board-and-batten was never installed at the panels below the storefront systems.



Staff photo, 09/24/2025



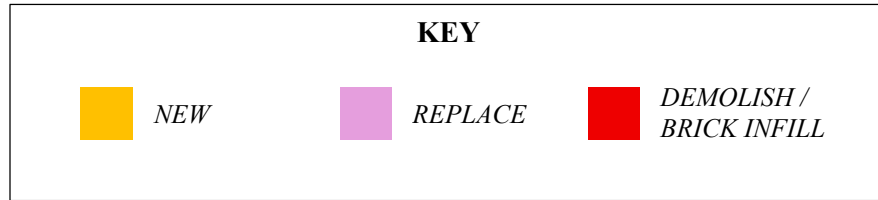
PROPOSED

DEMOLISH EXISTING STOREFRONT DOORS, AS SHOWN REPLACE WITH STOREFRONT WINDOWS TO MATCH EXISTING

HISTORIC ERA DECORATIVE SCREEN
FABRICATED TO HAVE LOOK SIMILAR TO
ORIGINAL AND SECURED OVER EXISTING PANELS (TYP.)

Drawing from current application

- The existing storefront panels, with their flat surface and lack of details, appear to reflect a more modern design, contrasting with the ornamental details, like panels, typical of historic storefronts of that era.



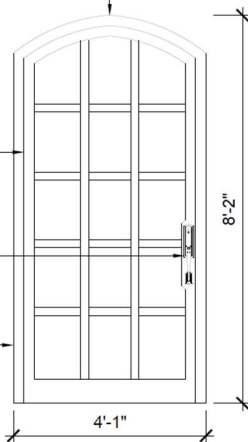
DEMOLISH EXISTING DOOR.
INSTALL NEW SOLID CORE OAK WOOD DOOR IN
WOOD FRAME TO MATCH HISTORIC FEATURES.
PAINT WITH COLOR B:6 (MODERATE BROWN
MS) PER HDC COLOR CHART. INSTALL BALDWIN
LOCKSET (SEE SHEET A-17 FOR SPECS.)

PROPOSED

SOLID CORE OAK
WOOD DOOR
WITH SURFACE
APPLIED OAK
WOOD STILES
AND RAILS

KEYED BALDWIN
LOCKSET

WOOD FRAME



Drawings from application

EXISTING



Staff photo, 09/24/2025

- The existing, historic wood door is a distinctive, character-defining feature and has not been proven to be beyond repair.

- The applicant proposes to replace the door with a replica wood door and paint it B6: Moderate Brown.

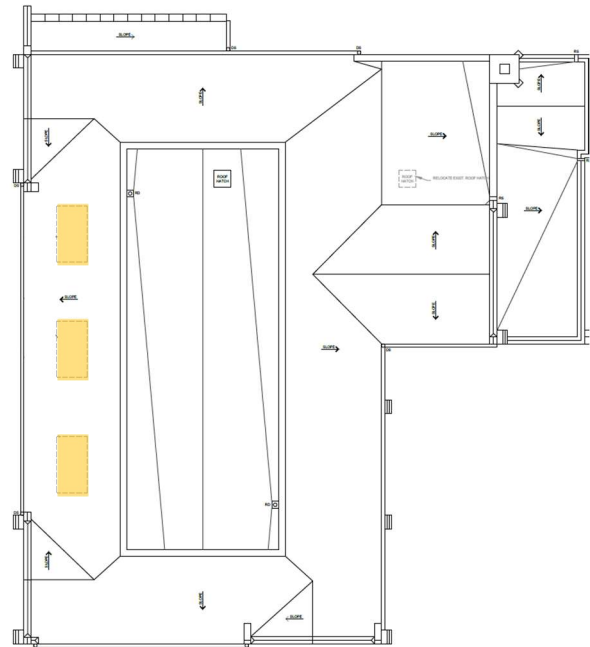




Staff photo, 09/24/2025

- The slate roof is certainly historic and unambiguously a distinctive character-defining feature that is important to the historical character. Slate used as a roof material is described in the Elements of Design #3 (Sec. 21-2-2). It is also described in the Historic District Advisory Board (HDAB) designation report for the historic district (emphasis by staff):

14635 East Jefferson - St. Columba Parish Building - Three-story, five bay, brick and stone building, 1923, Lancelot Suckert, architect. One of the most outstanding structures in the Jefferson-Chalmers Historic Business District is the St. Columba Activity Hall. The three story Elizabethan building houses storefronts under five stone segmental arches at street level. Groupings of multi-paned windows are in the second story bays. On the third story, the windows are grouped in multi-paned window sets on the two gable end bays, and three smaller double sets of windows run between the gables. **The slate roof, cast stone window surrounds, and striking design make the structure stand out among the other multiples storefront blocks.** The two end bays each contain a small attic-story window in the peak of the gabled roofline



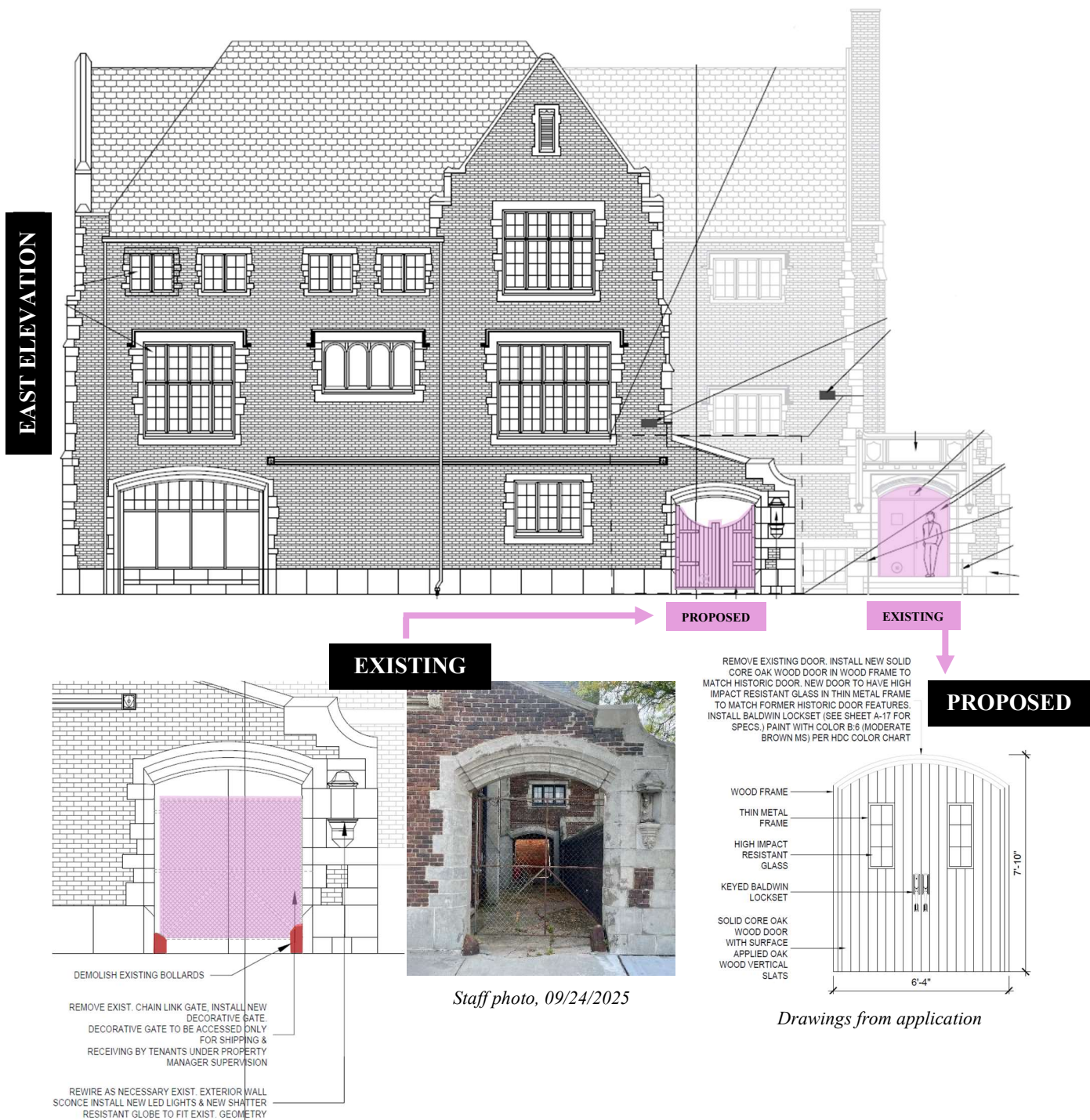
Roof drawing from application

- The application proposes to install skylights at the south roof surface, facing E. Jefferson. The submitted materials for the product indicate that the skylights will be steel, fixed, and flush mounted. Although we do not have the measurements of the proposed skylights, the applicant is seeking to install three groupings of skylights, which will extend nearly the full length of the south roof surface. When viewed from the public right-of-way, especially from E. Jefferson, the proposed skylights will present as a highly visible modern intrusion that is not compatible with the building's historic character. Considering this building is on the corner, staff does not recommend the installation of skylights on any of the sloped roof surfaces, as they will be visible from the public right-of-way.
- The installation of the proposed skylights does not follow NPS guidelines. Specifically:
 - *Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*
 - **Recommended**
 - *Adding skylights or dormers on secondary roof elevations where they are not visible or are only minimally visible so that they do not negatively impact the building's historic character.*
 - **Not Recommended**
 - *Adding skylights or dormers on primary or highly-visible roof elevations where they will negatively impact the building's historic character.*
 - *Rehab Learning Program: No. 10*
 - **YES**
 - *Property owners rehabilitating historic buildings often want to add skylights to permit light and ventilation into historic interior spaces. This is especially true when previously unfinished spaces, such as attics, are converted into usable space. Some buildings can accept new skylights without seriously affecting their historic character and can thus meet the Standards.*
 - *The appropriateness of skylights depends upon location, visibility, size, number and design. In general, skylights should be located on secondary (side or rear) elevations, away from public view. They should not interfere with decorative roof patterns, create strong new rhythms, or destroy significant architectural elements. They should be as small as possible. New skylights should be few in number and preferably located in a single row. Finally, skylights should blend in with the historic roof by having as low a profile as possible, and by using framing to match the roof color.*
 - **NO**
 - *Property owners rehabilitating historic buildings often want to add skylights to permit light into historic interior spaces. This is especially true when previously unfinished spaces, such as attics, are converted into usable space. However, adding skylights may substantially change the appearance of a roof and, thus, fail to meet Standards 2 and 9. Buildings that have prominent roofs or highly visible roof elevations are usually not good candidates for skylights.*



Materials from applicant

- The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-2) for the district provide the following observations (emphasis by staff):
 - **(7) Relationship of materials.** *The major materials in the district are brick and cast stone. Other major materials include limestone, ashlar, ceramic tile, and structural glass. Face brick on fronts of buildings often extends into the side elevations but changes to common brick for the majority of the sides and rear. Window frames, sash and mullions are of wood or metal. **Slate is used as a roofing material** on some churches, which also display stained glass. Some downspouts in the district are copper.*
 - **(8) Relationship of textures.** *A variety of textural relationships exist in the district, the most common being textured or pressed brick with mortar joints juxtaposed to cast stone trim. The Art Deco styling of several of the buildings is manifested by zigzag, diamond, chevron, and other patterns of brick. Some surface panels and parapet roofs are clad in tile, creating textural effects. Structural glass surfaces, where they exist, result in smooth surfaces. Religious structures in Medieval styles exhibit stone façades, ornament, lintels, sills, door and window surrounds, and decorative details, resulting in rich textural qualities. Subdivided windows and repetitious window arrangements also contribute to textural effects. In general, **the district is rich in textural interest.***
 - **(9) Relationship of colors.** *Natural brick colors, red, beige, yellow, orange, brown and buff, and beige limestone, are major façade colors in the district. Light cast stone trim provides contrast to the darker materials. The use of contrasting brick also results in colorful patterns. Color applied to window frames, sash, and mullions range from green, brown, gray, putty and black. Ceramic tile, usually green, **gray slate roofs on religious buildings**, and red Spanish tile on the slopes of parapet walls, where they exist, add significantly to the color relationships in the district.*



- Staff would like to note that the application doesn't specify the material or finish of the proposed gate.
- Considering the existing conditions for both entrances are not historic, it is staff's opinion that the proposed replacements are appropriate due to their material and style.



NORTH ELEVATION

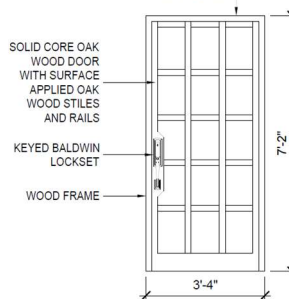
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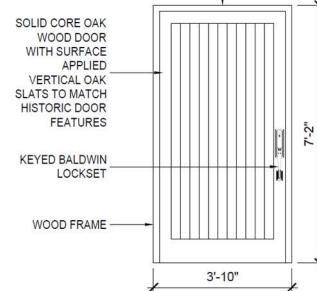
PROPOSED



REMOVE EXISTING DOORS. INSTALL NEW SOLID CORE OAK WOOD ENTRY DOOR IN WOOD FRAME WITH SURFACE APPLIED HORIZONTAL OAK STILES AND RAILS TO REPLICATE HISTORIC DOOR FEATURES. PAINT WITH COLOR B-6 (MODERATE BROWN MS) PER HDC COLOR CHART. INSTALL BALDWIN LOCKSET (SEE SHEET A-17 FOR SPECS.) ADJUST FRAME TO FIT EXISTING MASONRY OPENING WHERE NECESSARY



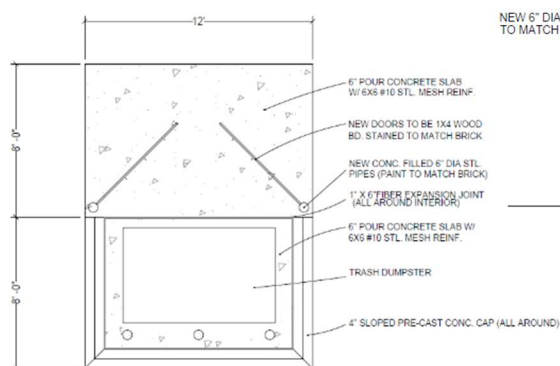
REMOVE EXISTING DOOR. INSTALL NEW WOOD DOOR IN WOOD FRAME TO MATCH FORMER HISTORIC DOOR FEATURES. PAINT WITH COLOR B-6 (MODERATE BROWN MS) PER HDC COLOR CHART. INSTALL BALDWIN LOCKSET (SEE SHEET A-17 FOR SPECS.)



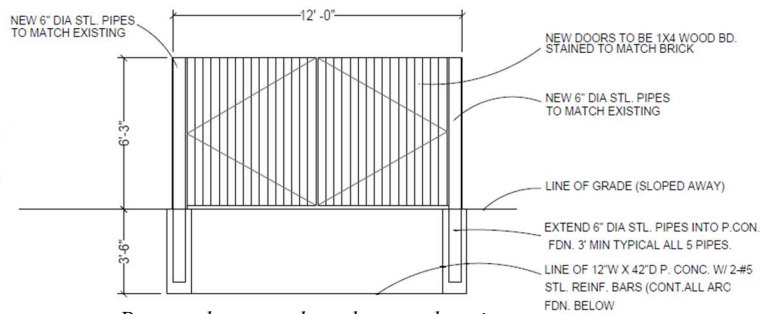
Drawings from application

- This corridor is partially visible from the public right-of-way with the existing chain-link gate. With the applicant's proposed gate (see previous page), this corridor would not be visible from the public right-of-way. Considering its rear location and proposed privacy gate, it is staff's opinion that the alterations to the existing openings are appropriate because the current doors and windows do not reflect the overall design features which distinguish this building regarding detailing and instead present a more utilitarian appearance than the character-defining doors and windows which are present at the building's façade and other sides.

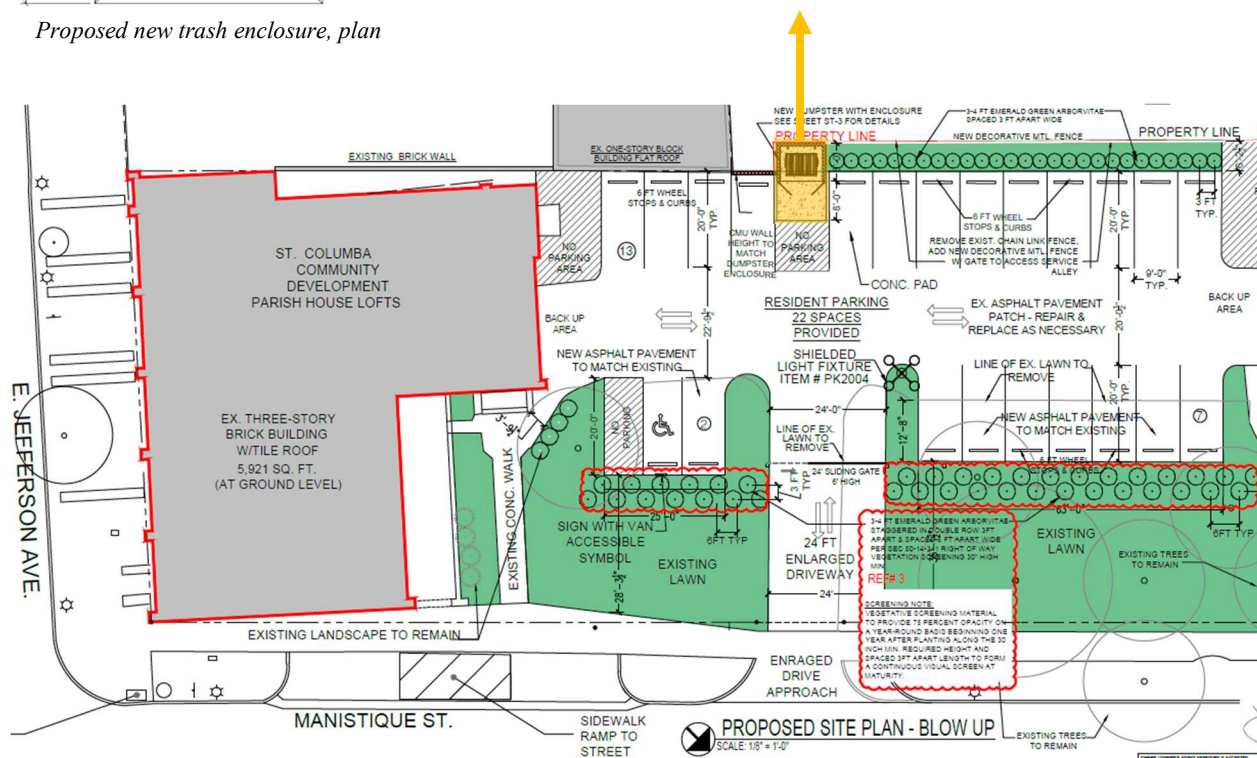
Parking Lot & Trash Enclosure



Proposed new trash enclosure, plan



Proposed new trash enclosure, elevation



Drawings from application

- Staff does not have the authority to approve the construction of new trash enclosures requesting foundations. Therefore, this portion of the project has been submitted to the Commission for review and approval via the current application.

It is staff's opinion that the proposed parking lot and trash enclosure does meet the NPS Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation with respect to new additions, specifically Standard #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.*

ISSUES

- The installation of the skylights is inappropriate, especially given the distinctive materiality and high public right-of-way visibility of the slate roof. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (quoted in full below) require that historic materials and distinctive features be retained. Additionally, the NPS' guidelines state that "Adding skylights or dormers on primary or highly-visible roof elevations where they will negatively impact the building's historic character." and "Buildings that have prominent roofs or highly visible roof elevations are usually not good candidates for skylights."
- The historic wood door at E. Jefferson is a distinctive, character-defining feature of the property that has not been proven to be beyond repair.
- The proposal is missing the design, material, and specifications for the storefront system panels, the material for the gate, the type and color of mortar to be used for any repointing, and the infill brick specifications.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

Recommendation 1 of 2 – Denial – Install skylights

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

Standards #:

- 1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment*
- 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.*
- 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.*

Elements of Design #: 7, 8, 9

For the following reasons:

- The new skylights will be highly visible from the public right-of-way as they will extend nearly the full length of the south roof's surface and will diminish the historic building's character.

- The NPS' guidelines state that "Adding skylights or dormers on primary or highly-visible roof elevations where they will negatively impact the building's historic character." and "Buildings that have prominent roofs or highly visible roof elevations are usually not good candidates for skylights."

Recommendation 2 of 2 – Certificate of Appropriateness – Remaining work items

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Jefferson-Chalmers Historic Business Historic District's Elements of Design, with the condition(s) that:

- The proposed storefront system panel design, materials, and specifications shall be provided to staff for review and approval.
- The proposed material for the gate shall be provided to staff for review and approval.
- The existing historic door at the E. Jefferson Avenue entrance shall be restored, and not painted, instead of replaced.
- A historic mortar mix shall be used for the proposed repointing, as the mortar must be softer than the historic brick and match the composition of the existing historic mortar.
- A photo of the sample of the infill brick next to the existing historic brick shall be provided to staff for review and approval to ensure that it is suitable for exterior use and is compatible in texture, color, and dimension with the adjacent historic brick.