

**STAFF REPORT:** 10/08/2025 REGULAR MEETING

**PREPARED BY:** L. SAINT JAMES

**APPLICATION NUMBER:** HDC2025-00551

**ADDRESS:** 255 E. FERRY

**HISTORIC DISTRICT:** EAST FERRY AVENUE

**APPLICANT:** BRIAN HURTTIENNE / CHRISTIAN HURTTIENNE ARCHITECTS

**PROPERTY OWNER:** ADAM SELZER / LENA SELZER

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION:** 09/11/2025

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT:** 09/22/2025

**SCOPE:** ALTER AND REHABILITATE DWELLING, ERECT SIDE PORCH

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

Designed in 1893 by the architectural firm Donaldson & Meier for Frank C. Hecker, this 2½-story brick residence showcases a symmetrical Queen Anne style. Its distinctive hipped roof features flared eaves and is flanked by paired dormers clad in vinyl faux-shingle siding. A full-width front porch with a half-circle projection is supported by fluted columns. The façade is further enriched by bay windows with multi-light transoms, dentil molding, and corbelled brickwork along the cornice line.



*Staff photo, 09/22/2025*

## PROPOSAL

- Front porch
  - Rebuild porch floor, remove terrazzo flooring, finish with crushed limestone
  - Restore wood elements, including columns
- Erect new side porch
- Doors: replace/remove/install, including integrating new brick infill
- Windows
  - Restore first and second floor historic wood windows
  - Install new storm windows
  - Replace basement and attic windows
- Masonry:
  - Repointing, including integrating new brick infill
  - Replacement of damaged/missing red sandstone windowsills and porch wall cap
- Roof: Patch roof shingles, replace gutters and downspouts
- Dormers:
  - Remove existing vinyl siding
  - Restore and replace damaged/missing existing historic wood shingles below
- Paint

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The East Ferry Avenue Historic District was enacted in 1981.

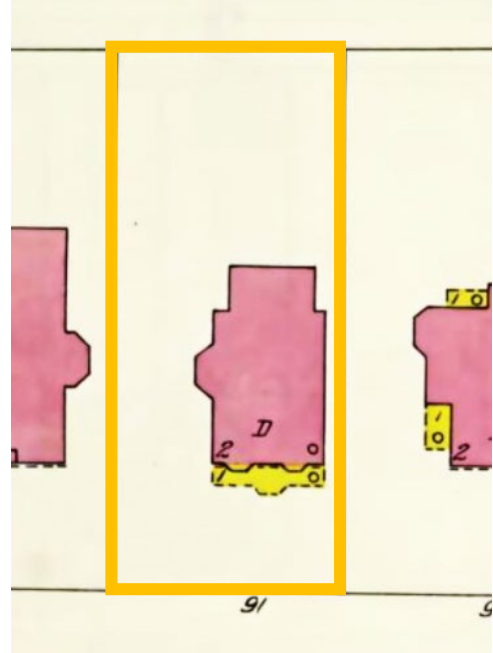


*HDAB designation photo, 1981*





*Detroit Parcel Viewer*



*Sanborn map, 1897*

### *Front Porch Analysis*

- Any damaged areas of the fascia and columns are to be restored. The porch trim is proposed to be painted B:8 Grayish Brown and the fascia and columns B:11 Grayish Olive Green.



*Photo from application of existing condition*



*B:8 Grayish Brown*



*B:11 Grayish  
Olive Green*

- The applicant states that most of the existing porch floor, which is a structural slab, is cracked and caved in. Staff agrees, as this is evident from the condition shown in the photos provided with the application.
- With the porch floor, the applicant is proposing to “remove the entire floor and install a concrete porch in-place. The existing floor has a terrazzo finish. We proposed to provide a new crushed limestone finish to emulate the terrazzo finish.”



*Photo from application of existing condition*

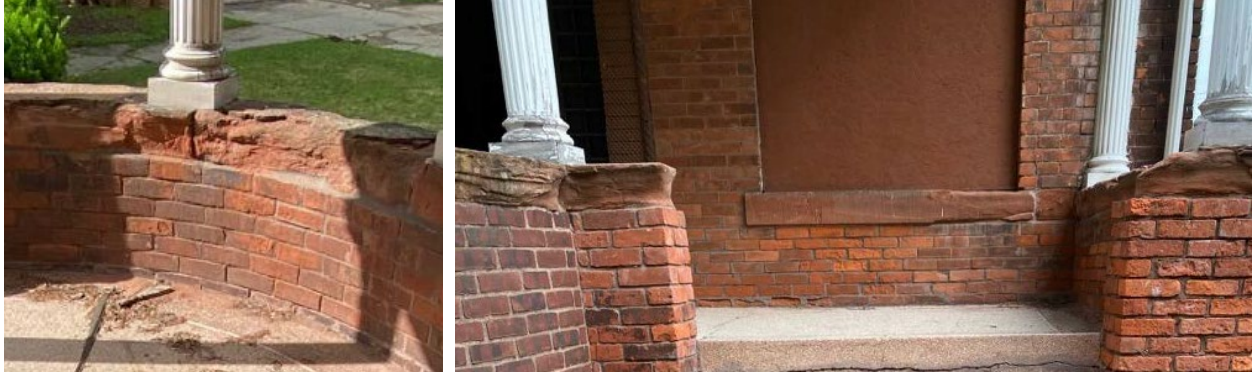
#### PROPOSED



*Crushed limestone*

- The existing historic terrazzo design, featuring tesserae that separate the two tones of terrazzo, reflects the style commonly used in the United States from the late 19th to early 20th century.
- Italian immigrants introduced terrazzo to the United States, with the first documented installation taking place in 1890 at the Vanderbilt residence in New York City. This event helped establish the technique as an artisanal skill, thanks to the expertise of Italian craftsmen. The installation in the home of one of America's wealthiest families cemented terrazzo's reputation as a high-end and exceptional material. Since this house was built in 1893, it's likely that the terrazzo was installed by such a skilled artisan. By the early 1900s, a wave of Italian immigration brought even more trained terrazzo workers to the U.S., further spreading and popularizing the technique.
- It is staff's opinion that the existing, two-toned terrazzo, separated by a tesserae border, is a distinctive and historic character-defining feature.





*Photos from application of existing conditions*

- Due to the extent of deterioration to the existing red sandstone porch cap, the applicant proposes to replace it with cementitious stucco dyed red to match the color of the existing red sandstone, in the sizes and dimensions of the existing to be replaced original configurations.
- Staff finds the existing red sandstone at the porch to be deteriorated beyond repair, as the [National Park Service \(NPS\) Preservation Brief 6: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings](#) states "...some types of sandstone ...will weather at an accelerated rate once their protective "quarry crust" or patina has been removed." Replacement of deteriorated sandstone or brownstone with dyed cementitious stucco is a common and satisfactory historic preservation treatment. Additionally, per the [NPS Rehab Yes & No Learning Program No. 1](#):

*A frequent problem encountered in rehabilitation projects is how to repair deteriorating stone. One of the types of stone most susceptible to decay, and an element common to many historic buildings, is sandstone. Sandstone is not a durable stone. It is inherently fragile, a characteristic further accentuated by the fact that it was frequently laid incorrectly during construction, exposing bedding planes to accelerated weathering, spalling, or delamination.*

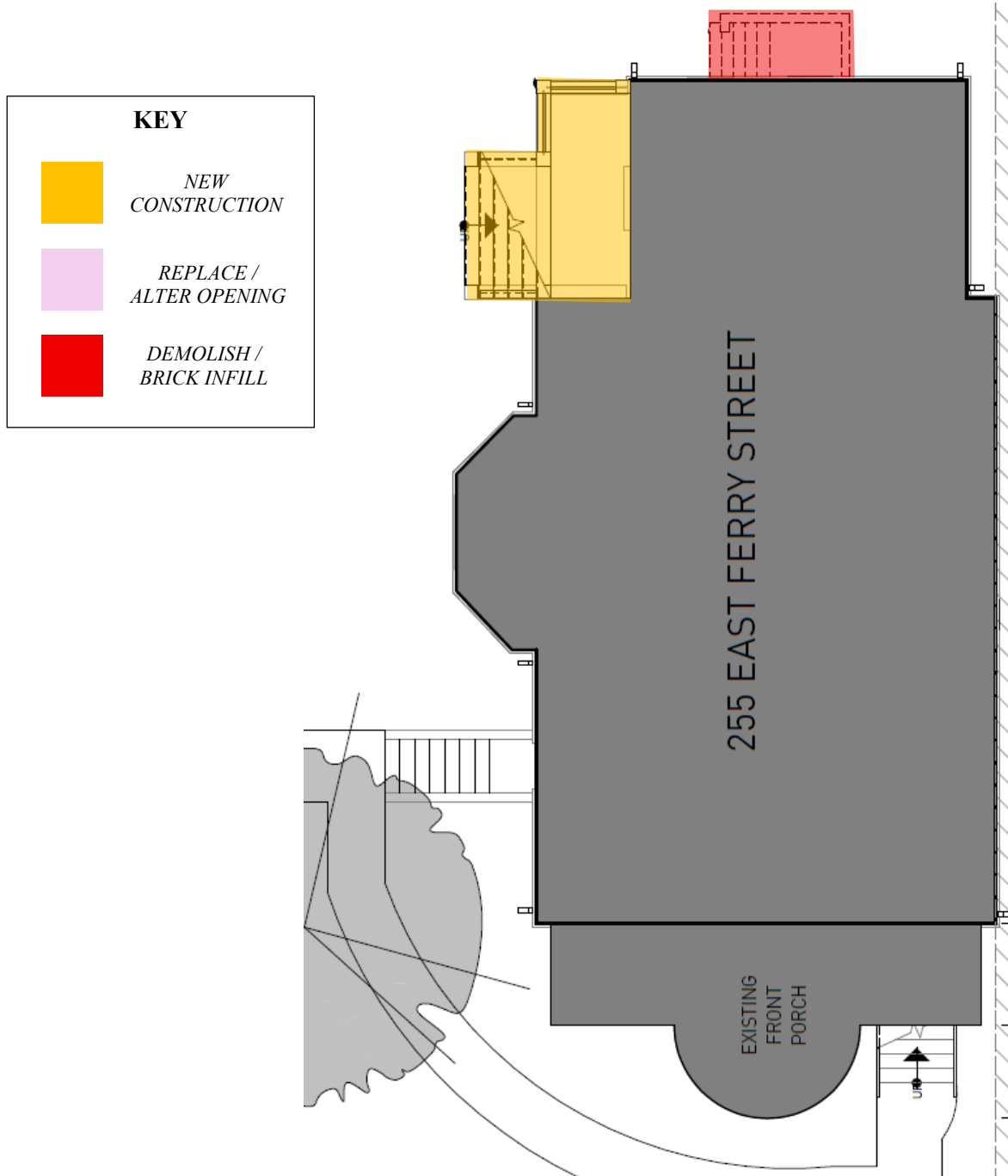
*At this time, there is still no conservation or preservation treatment that has been successful either in [slowing down] decay or in "cosmetizing" deteriorating sandstone.*

*Matching replacement stone is usually not available because most of the original quarries have long since closed, and other sandstones seldom come close to providing a suitable match.*

*Generally, there are two somewhat limited options of traditional repair methods for spalling brownstone: (1) cover it with a cementitious stucco coating; or (2) find appropriate substitute or replacement materials. Both options, if carefully undertaken, are consistent with **Standard 6**. This Standard says that if replacement of historic materials is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.*

### Erect Side Porch Analysis

- The applicant proposes to convert two existing windows into doors by removing the brick masonry below the window sills, while maintaining the existing openings. This alteration is part of a proposed side porch addition located within a recessed section of the house. The new porch will be wood-framed, featuring partial brick columns, a simple wood railing, a wood roof structure, and an additional wood railing along the edge of the porch roof.



*Site plan from application of proposal*

## WEST ELEVATION



*Elevation from application of proposal*



*Photo from application of existing condition*

## NORTH ELEVATION



*Photo from application of existing condition*

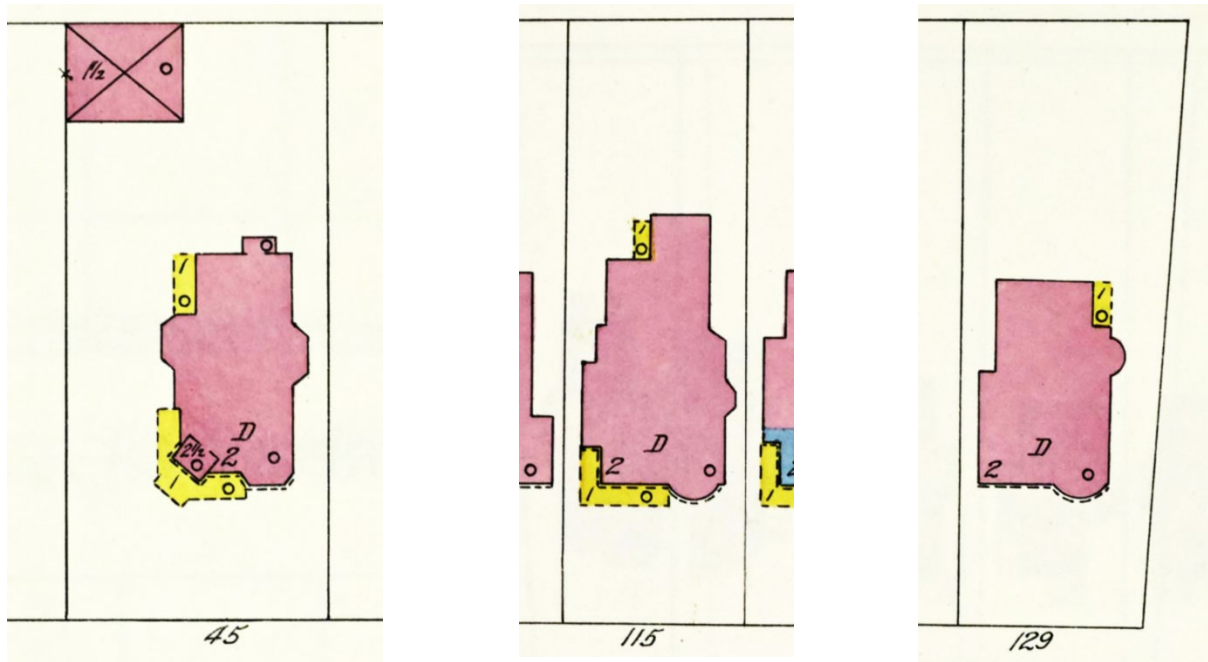


*Elevation from application of proposal*



- Based on the 1897 Sanborn map, which shows other houses on the same street with similar porches located in rear or corner recesses, staff finds that the proposed construction of a new porch at the recessed rear/side corner is generally appropriate to the historic character of the house. However, staff does note the following concerns:

- The current application lacks the height of the proposed wood railing along the edge of the porch roof.



Sanborn map, 1897

- As features significant to the appearance of the East Ferry Avenue Historic District, the codified Elements of Design (Section 21-2-132) offers the following (excerpted) relevant points. Staff highlighting in bold:
  - **(4) Rhythm of solids to voids in front façades.** *The Victorian structures, the predominant type in the district, display a great freedom in placement of openings within the façades. The few buildings of other styles, most notably the Neo-Georgian and Modern, exhibit a greater regularity.*
  - **(6) Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections.** *Steps and porches exist on all of the once residential buildings in the district; the setbacks restriction did not apply to them. The progression of steps and porches lends to the consistency of the streetscape. Positions of porches contribute to the variety of design of the Victorian houses; entrances and porches are frequently placed to one side of the front façade and in some instances wrap around to the side. In those buildings of classical inspirations the entrance and porch are symmetrical arranged on the façade. Rear porches are common.*
  - **(10) Relationship of architectural details.** *Architectural details generally relate to style. A preponderance of Victorian architectural details in the Romanesque, Queen Anne, French Renaissance, and shingle style are prevalent in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings. Porches, window frames, cornices, dormers, and gables are frequently treated.*



# Door, Window, & Siding Analysis





*Photo from application, showing proposed infill brick*

- In areas where infill brick is proposed, Detroit Common Brick will be used and set back with a 1" recess, keeping the existing masonry openings intact. A soft mortar, matching the historic mortar in both strength and color, will be used for the joints.
- Additionally, where the historic red sandstone is damaged or missing at the windowsills, the applicant proposes to use cementitious stucco dyed red to match the color of the existing red sandstone.

- The applicant proposes to restore and paint the existing first and second floor windows, which are in good condition, and to install new exterior storm windows. The basement and third-floor attic windows are proposed to be removed. New casement windows will be installed in the attic, sized to fit the existing rough-framed openings. In the basement, four new awning-type windows are proposed, while the remaining openings will be infilled with brick, recessed 1" to maintain the appearance of the original openings.

#### **DORMER: WINDOWS**



*Staff photo, 09/22/2025*



#### **PROPOSED**

- For the attic dormer windows: new casement windows sized to fit the existing rough-framed openings.
- Jeld-Went W-5500 Clad-Wood Casement Windows.



- Per the [National Park Service's \(NPS\) 'Queen Anne Style 1880s – 1910' article](#), “the windows were often multi-paned” – it is staff’s opinion that the existing single-paned “French window,” which is like standard casement window where they are attached by a hinge to the window frame on one side, but they differ from casements in that they don’t have a central post or mullion, is likely not the original window style and operation for the dormers. They were likely multi-pane sashes, possibly fixed or casement in operation. However, as the existing windows were there at the time of designation, the replacement windows, per the [NPS's 'Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards,'](#) must only be compatible with the historic appearance and character of the building and not necessarily exact matches: “Although replacement windows may be based on physical or pictorial documentation, if available, recreation of the missing historic windows is not required to meet the Standards. Replacement of missing or non-historic windows must, however, always fill the original window openings and must be compatible with the overall historic character of the building.” Should the property owner obtain a photo of the home showing the original windows and are interested in putting new windows in to match the lite-configuration and operation, staff has the authority to approve the installation administratively.

#### DORMER: SIDING



*HDAB designation photo, 1981*



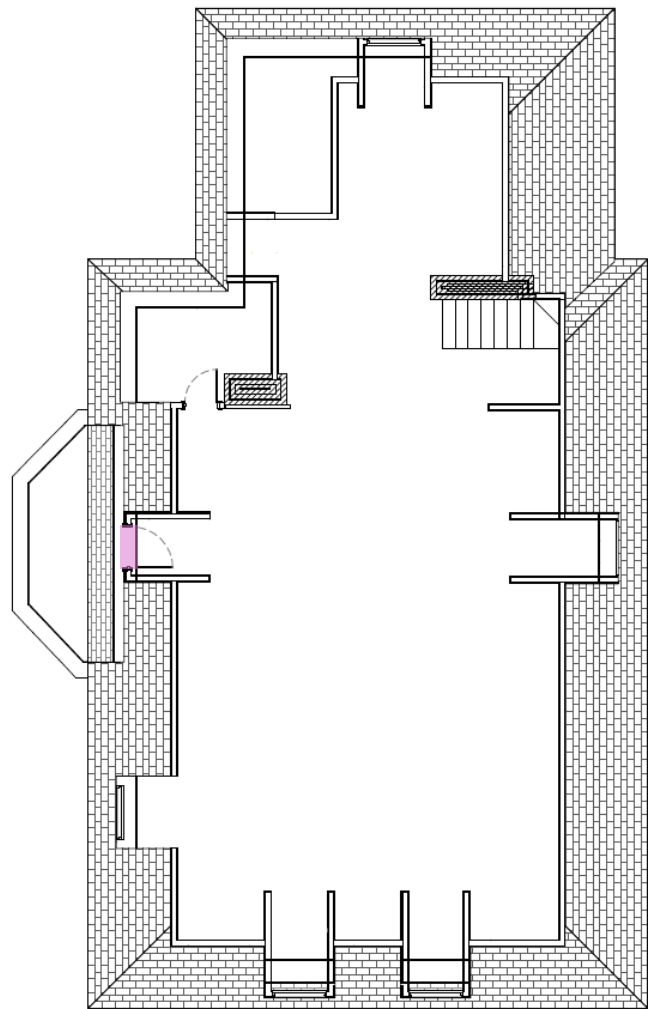
*Staff photo, 09/22/2025*

- The applicant proposes to remove the faux vinyl shingles currently covering the sides of the dormers. The original wood shingles underneath will be repaired where possible, replaced in-kind where deteriorated, and then painted B:11 Grayish Olive Green. However, staff does note the following:
  - The application elevation drawings, in contrary to application narrative, state “Remove vinyl siding and other existing material down to original sheathing from dormer sides. Install new wood cedar shake siding.”
- Staff notes that, based on a 1981 designation photo, there appears to have been a decorative moulding between the two dormers on the façade. It is staff’s opinion that, if any portion of this historic moulding remains when the vinyl siding is removed, it should be restored.

#### DORMER: DOOR



*Photo from application of existing condition*



*Attic floorplan from application*

- The applicant proposes to replace the existing, non-historic door at the attic dormer, but staff notes that they do not specify what the replacement door is.



## CUSTOM DOORS

- For the front door and two new side porch doors, the applicant proposes custom doors with paneling and multi-lites. Staff would like to note that the applicant does not specify a material for the doors.
- Staff agrees that the existing front door is most likely not original and believes the style and materials of the proposed new doors are appropriate.

EXISTING FRONT DOOR



PROPOSED



*Photo and rendering from application*

## ISSUES

- The historic two-toned terrazzo with a tesserae border is a distinctive, character-defining feature of the property.
- Since there is currently vinyl siding at the dormers, the existing condition of the historic siding and moulding detail underneath is unknown.
- The proposal is missing: the height of the wood railing along the edge of the porch roof, finish/color of the aluminum-clad windows, the material of the custom doors, the design and materiality of the attic dormer door, and the storm window specifications and materiality.

## RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

#### **Recommendation 1 of 1 – Certificate of Appropriateness – Multiple exterior alterations**

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

- The two-tone terrazzo and tesserae flooring on the front porch shall be replicated.
- When the vinyl siding is removed, photos of the existing conditions shall be submitted for staff review before moving forward with any work. Any existing historic siding is to be restored, with any damaged or missing siding to be replaced in-kind.
- The following shall be submitted for staff review and approval:
  - The height of the proposed wood railing along the edge of the new porch roof
  - The finish/color of the aluminum-clad windows
  - The material of the proposed custom doors
  - The design and materiality of the attic dormer door
  - The design and materiality of the storm windows