

**STAFF REPORT:** 02/11/2026 REGULAR MEETING

**PREPARED BY:** L. SAINT JAMES

**APPLICATION NUMBER:** HDC2026-00018

**ADDRESS:** 4324 (4314-4316) W. VERNOR

**HISTORIC DISTRICT:** HUBBARD FARMS

**APPLICANT:** TIMOTHY FLINTOFF JR. / 4545 ARCHITECTURE

**PROPERTY OWNER:** MOISES GUTIERREZ

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION:** 01/19/2026

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT:** 01/29/2026

**SCOPE:** REMOVE BRICK VENEER AT FAÇADE, INSTALL NEW BRICK CLADDING AND STOREFRONT SYSTEM

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

This two-story early 1900s commercial building has brick veneer and features a simple rectangular form typical of small urban storefronts from that era. The brick veneer is laid in running bond and painted a dark gray color. The upper story includes two double-hung, non-historic windows with flush lintels and modest projecting brick sills. At or under the parapet, a horizontal decorative band has been affixed over the historic masonry. The ground level storefront has been heavily altered with a later brick infill, with the original display windows and entry configuration replaced and partially enclosed. The entry door is slightly recessed, and a secondary door at the left (addressed 4316) likely provides access to the upper floor.



*Staff photo, 01/29/2026. Front of the building, taken from W. Vernor.*

## PROPOSAL

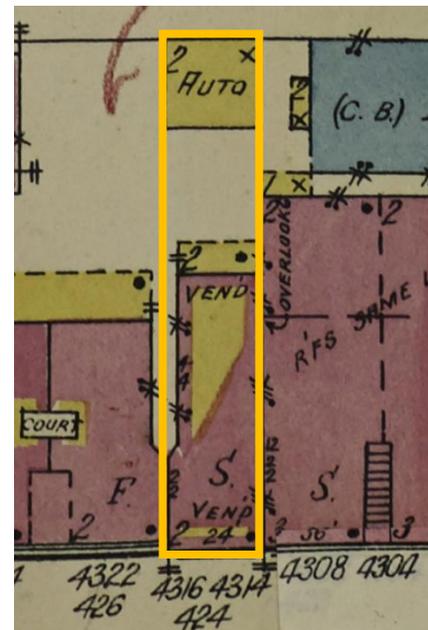
- **Remove brick veneer at façade / remove existing brick and glass storefront infill**
- **Install new brick cladding**
  - Brampton Brick in Old Chicago, 257mm L x 79mm H x 90mm D
  - Increase cornice height to align with building to the West
- **Replace windows**
  - Anderson Windows, E-Series, Double-Hung, in Black
- **Install new storefront**
  - Andersen Architectural Series wood storefront windows, in green finish
  - Masonite Doors, Wood, 6 Lite, in Green
- **Install new signage**

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Hubbard Farms Historic District was enacted in 1993 with a National Register period significance of 1910 through 1953.



Google Maps, edited by staff



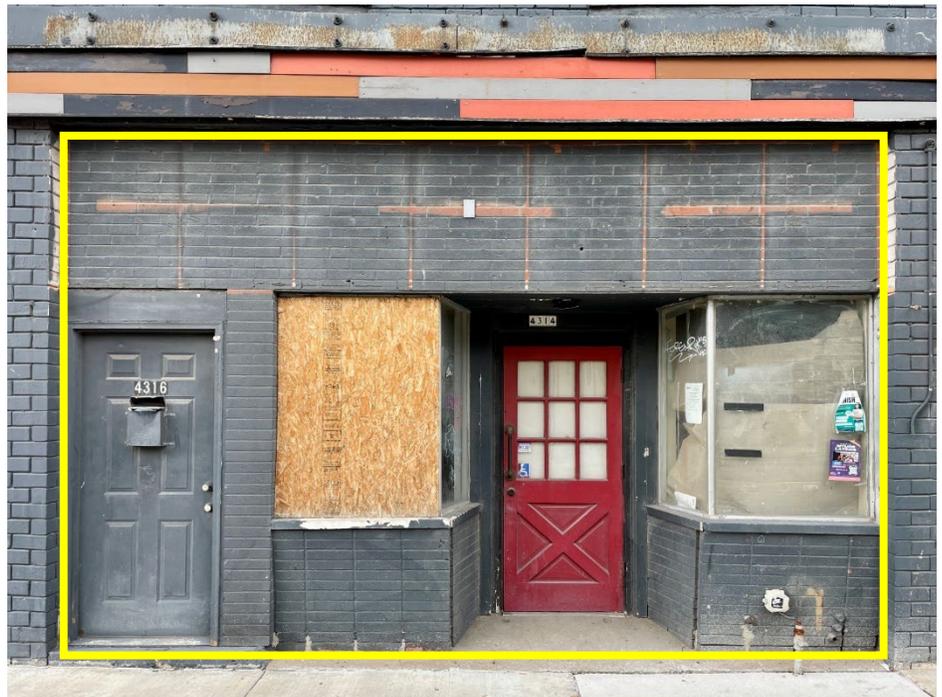
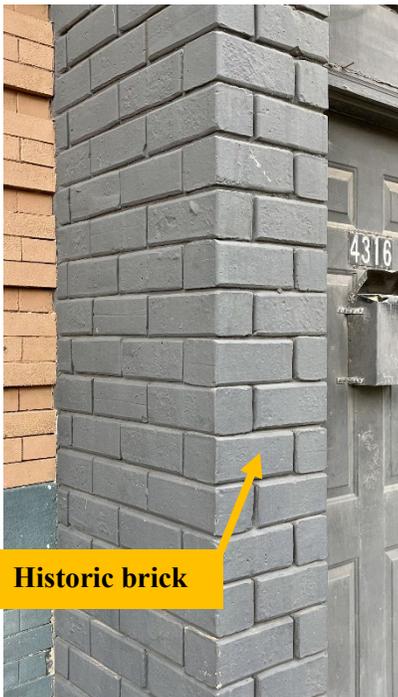
Sanborn map, 1921

- The HDAB designation report does not specifically discuss this property. The *Bagley West Vernor Historic District* National Registry of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination draft, now under consideration, proposes this property to be a contributing building for the historic district and offers the following description and history of the building:

*This two-story building has a rectangular plan and a flat, membrane-clad roof with parapet walls. A small, one-story, rectangular-plan addition extends from the building's north-facing rear elevation and also has a flat roof. The building's south-facing façade is clad in grey-painted brick. It includes a three-sided, recessed entrance bay on its first story which is flanked on both sides by one-part storefront windows with aluminum frames, set on brick bulkheads. A secondary entrance is located at the first story's west end. There are two, one-over-one, vinyl double-hung windows with stone sills and headers on the façade's second story. Colorfully painted wood boards and a steel angle beam separate the first and second stories.*

*This combination commercial and professional building was built in 1908. It originally housed a confectionary on the first story with apartments above. For much of the mid-twentieth century, it was owned by Canadian optometrist Frederick LeHeup and his son, Kenneth, who ran their practice on the first story and lived above. The Latinx community's continued growth after the district's period of significance is evidenced by the establishment of a notable Mexican restaurant here in the early 2000s. Taqueria La Tapatia was known as a clean, affordable restaurant that also hosted "CyberTaqueria" events that helped Latinx residents translate and send e-mail messages to their home countries during the early internet age.*

- The existing storefront, characterized by its mostly brick infill and minimal detailing, appears to reflect a more modern, mid-century design. This is evident in the use of thinner, elongated bricks, which contrast with the more ornamental features, such as decorative wood panels, typically found in earlier historic storefronts.



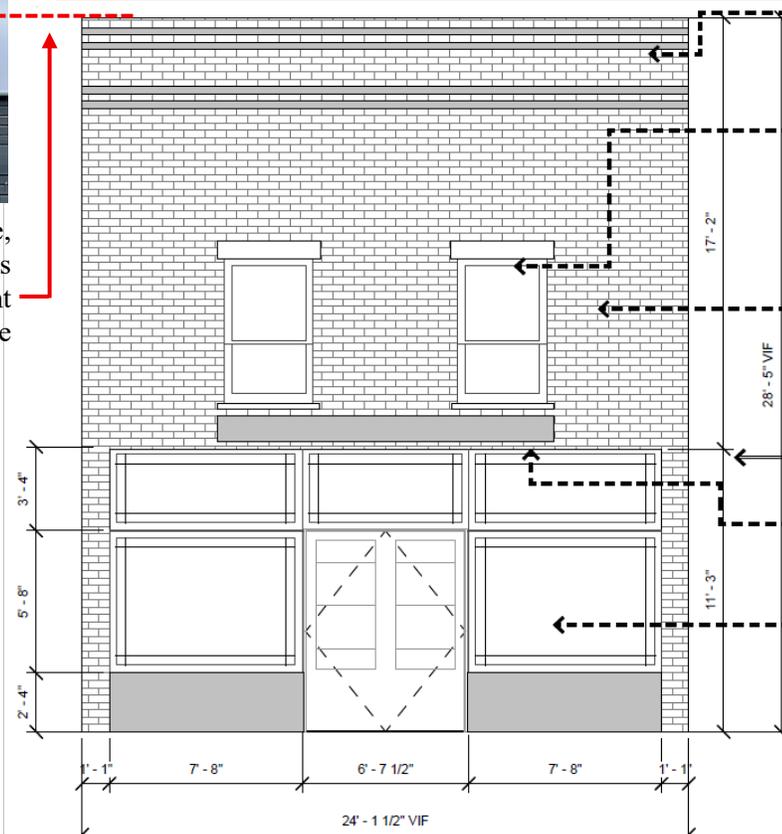
Staff photos, 10/24/2025. No elements within the yellow box are historic.

- The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-2) for the district provide the following observations (excerpts by staff):
  - **(7) Relationship of materials.** *Brick and wood are the primary building materials originally used. Brick buildings may have pressed brick front façades with common brick sides and rears.*
  - **(19) Degree of complexity within the façade.** *The degree of complexity has been determined by what is typical and appropriate for a given style. The classically inspired buildings usually have simple, rectangular façades with varying amounts of ornamentation.*
- It is staff's opinion that the following features of this property are contributing and character-defining:
  - Brick veneer
  - Tiled edge at parapet
  - Stone lintels
  - Projecting brick sills

Proposal Analysis



With the new façade, the applicant proposes to increase the height to align with the building to the West.



*Brampton Brick  
Old Chicago*



*Anderson Windows  
E-Series, Double-Hung, in Black*



*Masonite Doors  
Wood, in Green*

*NOTE: application states 6-lite,  
but product photo included in application  
shows single lite*

- Staff would like to note that the proposed new brick size does not match the existing historic brick in size. If replacement brick veneer was warranted (that is, if the historic brick veneer was demonstrated to be beyond repair), the new brick veneer 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).



- A very similar scope of work came before the Commission, via HDC2025-00596, at the 11/12/2025 meeting and received a Notice of Denial for the following reasons:
  - *The historic brick veneer at the façade is a distinctive, character-defining feature and not proven to be beyond repair.*
  - *Introducing features that are not based on documented historical evidence, including architectural elements copied from other buildings and styles, creates a false sense of history.*
- The applicant has included a structural evaluation report of the existing façade condition from Metropolitan Structural Engineers & Associates Inc. Please refer to application pages 24 through 32 for the full report with pages 29 through 32 specifying the existing façade conditions.
- The engineer observes bulging in the second story masonry and discusses the likelihood of structural restoration. They state that “restoration of the existing façade... will be very labor intensive, time consuming, and risky for the contractor.” No costs of specific details are given in order for the Commission (or Staff) to assess economic/technical feasibility as required under the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards.
- The engineer also states “Further, the restored façade/envelope conditions will not provide the same level of serviceability to the building as modern code compliant materials and build-ups.” While undoubtedly true, the Commission, under historic preservation standards, must prioritize preservation of historic character over the potential benefits of modern systems and materials, particularly in instances that will result in the removal/replacement of all historic materials in favor of what will appear to be an entirely new building. The proposed modern alteration would remove the building’s historic integrity and render it a non-contributing resource to the district.
- It is staff’s opinion that the applicant’s proposal to remove the existing historic brick veneer at the façade is inappropriate, as the existing brick veneer is a distinctive, character-defining feature and has not been demonstrated to be beyond repair. Furthermore, the proposed new brick cladding, with its smaller individual brick size and increased cornice height and detailing, conveys a misleading representation of historic brick architectural details and creates a false sense of historical development. These elements are incompatible with the building’s authentic and simplistic historic character.

- Even if found by the Commission to be beyond reasonable repair, Standard #6 dictates that distinctive features must be replaced to match historic conditions. Altering the parapet height and brick sizes does not satisfy this requirement. The correct preservation treatment, should retention of the second story façade prove unreasonable under the Standards, is a faithful reproduction of the existing masonry and parapet in size and design.
- The historic windows were likely double-hung wood windows. If the existing, non-historic windows were there at the time of designation (although, this is unknown as the designation photos from 1993 cannot be located), 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.”
- Staff notes that, to better understand the proposed storefront system, a detailed, dimensioned site and elevation drawings were requested; however, no response was received from the applicant.

## ISSUES

- The historic brick veneer at the façade is a distinctive, character-defining feature of the property that has not been proven to be beyond repair.
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- Even if found to be beyond reasonable repair, the proposed design alterations do not repair/replace these features to match. Instead, different brick sizes are proposed, and the parapet is proposed to be raised to match the neighbor and not include the tiled edge, contrary to its long established historic condition.
- Architectural features/elements copied from incompatible ornamental styles are not appropriate here, and create a false sense of historic development, in direct contradiction to the NPS's Standards for Rehabilitation, Standard #3.
- The proposal is missing a detailed, dimensioned drawings and clarification of the proposed storefront system, signage, and doors.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

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

### **Recommendation 1 of 2 – Denial – Remove brick veneer at façade, install new brick cladding**

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Hubbard Farms 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.*

*3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*

*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.*

*Elements of Design #: 7, 19*

For the following reasons:

- The historic brick veneer at the façade is a distinctive, character-defining feature and not proven to be beyond repair.
- Introducing features that are not based on documented historical evidence, including architectural elements copied from other buildings and styles, creates a false sense of history.

### **Recommendation 2 of 2 – Certificate of Appropriateness – Replace storefront at existing opening, remove wood boards above storefront, install signage**

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

- The proposed storefront system, including the doors, and signage dimensioned drawings and specifications shall be provided to staff for review and approval.

