



SR-2 – ADVISORY STAFF REPORT (03-06-2026)

This advisory report, prepared by staff, represents the opinion and advice of professional staff, and does not represent nor direct the separate review and decision of the Historic District Commission. This report serves as an addendum to SR-1, an objective staff summary of the proposal and property.

ADDRESS: 1806 LEVERETTE

MEETING DATE: 03-06-2026

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2026-00001

SCOPE: REPLACE WOOD WINDOWS WITH VINYL WINDOWS

ADVISORY STAFF REPORT PREPARED BY: L. SAINT JAMES

STAFF OBJECTIONS TO APPROVAL:

This first section describes itemized conclusions/concerns, which, in staff's professional opinion, would prevent the issue of an unconditional Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). "None" means staff has no objections and believes a COA is warranted, with no conditions. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.

1. The historic wood windows are distinctive, character-defining historic features of the resource. The deterioration noted constitutes typical maintenance needs of old windows and is repairable. Thus, the windows do not meet the standard of being "deteriorated beyond repair," the standard required for their replacement.
2. 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."
3. The vinyl windows 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.
 - a) Vinyl windows 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.
 - b) Consumer grade vinyl windows weather poorly, deteriorate rapidly, and exhibit poor detailing and detracting color/sheen.
 - c) 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.

- d) 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.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

This second section expands on the reasoning and analysis leading to staff's conclusions given in the first section above. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.

- The applicant states that the current wood windows “are significantly deteriorated, allow substantial air infiltration, and are not energy efficient. In addition, many of the windows no longer operate properly, with several unable to open or remain open, and most lacking functional locking mechanisms” and “restoration would not restore functionality or energy performance to an acceptable level.”
- Photos provided with the application show relatively minor deterioration, such as peeling paint and cracked glazing. Photos also show that some of the windows seem to have been painted-over multiple times and are missing the sash ropes and hardware, conditions that will impair their operation, but are ultimately repairable.



Photos from application to show existing conditions

- The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-142) mention “window sash and functional and decorative trim are in wood. Wood is frequently the only material below the eaves of a building, except for the window glass.” And “Where wooden shingles, carvings, or other decorative wooden details exist, they add significantly to the textural interest of the building.”

- It is staff’s opinion that the upper sash of **window #5** is beyond repair. To preserve the visual and architectural continuity of the property and if the sash is determined to be beyond repair, it is recommended that the upper wood sash be replicated in-kind* and the bottom sash be restored.

**“In-kind” is defined as faithfully reproducing original, historic, or documented character-defining features, elements, and assemblies with respect to design, color, finish, texture, craftsmanship, materials, relationship to other elements or spaces, and other visual qualities.*



Staff photos, 02-24-2026



Photos from application

- Regarding the concerns of energy efficiency and air leakage of the existing historic windows, the National Park Service’s *Preservation Briefs: 9 “The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows”* suggests treatments like reglazing, replacement of worn-out weatherstripping (or addition of if the weatherstripping is not present), and installation of storm windows as routes to “improve the thermal performance of existing windows.” It also goes on to state that “following the relatively simple repairs, the window is weathertight, like new in appearance, and serviceable for many years to come.”
- The existing wood windows are distinctive, character-defining historic features that have not been proven to be beyond feasible repair.
- The installation of the vinyl windows 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.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

This third and final section takes staff's itemized "objections" identified in the first section, and presents them in the form of "conditions" in support of a proposed approval recommendation or "reasons" in support of a proposed denial recommendation, in the form required by Section 21-2-78 of the City Code. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.

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

Recommendation 1 of 1, Denial

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

- **Standard #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.
- **Standard #5:** Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
- **Standard #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 #: 3, 4, 7, 8

For the following reasons;

1. The existing historic wood windows are distinctive, character-defining features that have not proven to be beyond repair.
2. If replacement windows were warranted (that is, if the historic windows were demonstrated to be beyond repair), the new windows would need to match the old in design, material, and other visual qualities.
3. Due to limitations in material quality and fabrication, vinyl windows are not appropriate for use in historic districts.