

ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Staff Report

ADDRESS: 717 West Liberty Street Application Number HDC26-0006

DISTRICT: Old West Side Historic District

STATUS: Contributing

REPORT DATE: February 12, 2026

REPORT PREPARED BY: Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE: Monday, February 9, 2026

OWNER

Name: Michael Bielby

Address: 605 North Fifth Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Phone: (734) 276-5376

APPLICANT

David Lewis
Lewis Greenspoon Architects
440 South Main Street Suite 2
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(734) 786-3757

BACKGROUND: The city assessor's records say this house was constructed in 1864. It features end gables, wide board trim under the eaves, and very old six-over-six windows. It appears on the 1880 Birdseye Map of Ann Arbor minus the rear additions, with two windows and a center door facing south.

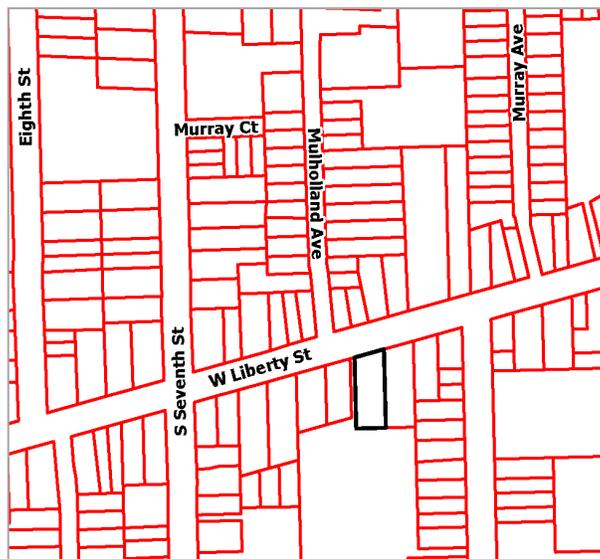
In 2014 the HDC denied a request to build a two-tiered rear addition to the house with a large walkout basement and patio on top, and a garage.

LOCATION: The site is located on the south side of West Liberty Street, east of South Seventh Street and west of South Fifth Street.

APPLICATION: The applicant seeks HDC approval to 1) build a 420-square foot addition on the back of the existing historic house, remove a non-historic chimney and dormer, and 2) construct a new single-family house on the rear portion of the same lot, facing West Liberty Street.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS:

From the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:



- (1) A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
- (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 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.
- (10) New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

From the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings:

Building Site

Recommended: Designing new exterior additions to historic buildings or adjacent new construction which is compatible with the historic character of the site and which preserve the historic relationship between a building or buildings, landscape features, and open space.

Retaining the historic relationship between buildings, landscape features, and open space.

Not Recommended: Introducing new construction onto the building site which is visually incompatible in terms of size, scale, design, materials, color and texture or which destroys historic relationships on the site.

Introducing a new building or site feature that is out of scale or otherwise inappropriate.

Removing or radically changing buildings and their features or site features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the property so that, as a result, the character is diminished.

District/Neighborhood

Not Recommended: Introducing new construction into historic districts that is visually incompatible or that destroys historic relationships within the district or neighborhood.

New Additions

Recommended: Constructing a new addition so that there is the least possible loss of historic materials and so that character-defining features are not obscured, damaged, or destroyed.

Designing new additions in a manner that makes clear what is historic and what is new.

Locating the attached exterior addition at the rear or on an in-conspicuous side of a historic building; and limiting its size and scale in relationship to the historic building.

Considering the attached exterior addition both in terms of the new use and the appearance of other buildings in the historic district or neighborhood. Design for the new work may be contemporary or may reference design motifs from the historic building. In either case, it should always be clearly differentiated from the historic building and be compatible in terms of mass, materials, relationship of solids to voids, and color.

Not Recommended: Attaching a new addition so that the character-defining features of the historic building are obscured, damaged, or destroyed.

Designing a new addition so that its size and scale in relation to the historic building are out of proportion, thus diminishing the historic character.

From the Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines:

All New Construction

Appropriate: Retaining the historic relationship between buildings, landscape features and open space.

Designing new features so they are compatible with the historic character of the site, district, and neighborhood.

Basing the site location of new buildings on existing district setbacks, orientation, spacing and distance between adjacent buildings.

Designing new buildings to be compatible with, but discernible from, surrounding buildings that contribute to the overall character of the historic district in terms of height, form, size, scale, massing, proportions, and roof shape.

Designing new sidewalks, entrances, steps, porches and canopies to be consistent with the historic rhythm established in the district.

Not Appropriate: Introducing any new building that is out of scale or otherwise inappropriate to the setting's historic character.

Introducing a new feature that is visually incompatible with or that destroys the patterns of the site or the district.

Introducing new construction onto a site or in a district, which is visually incompatible in terms of size, scale, design, materials, and texture or which destroys relationships on the site or the district.

Guidelines for All Additions

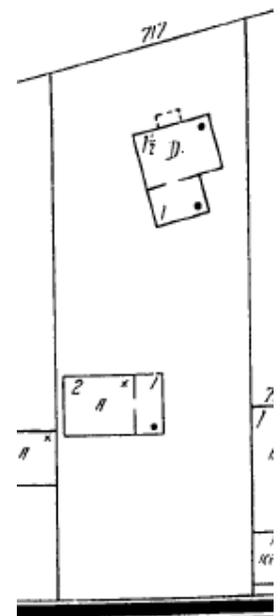
Appropriate: Limiting the size and scale of the addition in relationship to the historic building so that it does not diminish or visually overpower the building or the district. The addition should exceed neither half of the original building's footprint nor half of the original building's total floor area.

STAFF FINDINGS:

1. The owner proposes to build an addition on the back of the historic house, and to add a new house roughly where a two-story barn/garage was previously located. Because the new house drawings need to be modified to account for the floodplain on the site, the applicant requested that at the March meeting the addition to the historic house be considered, rather than postponing the entire application. Staff agreed, and a suggested motion to postpone is found at the end of the staff report.
2. The lot is larger-than-average (11,000+ square feet) and slopes down steeply behind the house to the Bach Elementary School big playground. A portion of the site, and all of the big playground, are in the floodplain.

Rear Addition

3. Two single-story rear additions are proposed to be retained. One is pre-1925 and appears on that year's Sanborn Map (figure 1). The other is post WWII and built off the west side of the addition. The early addition has been obscured by replacement siding, windows and doors, and cement infill has been placed between the brick foundation piers but would be retained, including the foundation along the outer walls. The newer addition would be replaced with new construction in the same footprint.
4. The pre-1945 house had a 710 square foot (sf) footprint and 1,180 sf of floor area. When added to the existing non-historic addition, the project would increase the footprint of the house by a total of 525 square feet or 74%. The floor area calculation takes the original 1,180 sf, removes the 470 sf second floor (not being retained because it cannot be used as habitable space due to very low ceiling heights) and adds the two modern additions (525 sf). The result is 1,235 sf total, an increase of 55 square feet or 5%.
5. The existing shed roofline of the older rear addition is visually maintained. The roofline of the newer addition is modified to match the 6/12 pitch of the historic house. The proposed new addition also has side gables and a 6/12 pitch. The proposed addition consists of a rectangle that matches the footprint size of, and is aligned with, the current rear additions,



1. 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 707 W Liberty

plus a lower-pitched saddle with a north/south ridge connecting the two. Cladding on the new and rebuilt additions is painted James Hardie lap siding and windows are Andersen aluminum clad wood one-over-one sashes. Three egress windows and a bathroom window are in appropriate locations on the new addition's foundation plus one egress window on the rear elevation of the historic house. The basement windows are not shown on the details but are assumed to be Andersen aluminum clad casements. Window well materials are not specified.

6. The front door is rotted at the base and the bottom 10" or so is missing. The applicant proposes to replace the front door with another exterior door that leads to the modern addition. The current door is probably not original, but probably is pre-1945. Staff doesn't think swapping the doors is inappropriate, though the new front door would look better if it had two interior/exterior applied muntins or if the glazing was replaced and real muntins added. The alternative is to have a new wood replica door custom made to fit the historic opening.
7. It is appropriate for a non-historic dormer and chimney (a permit was issued to for the new chimney in 1955) to be removed from the rear of the house.
8. The design of the addition is very compatible. It is low, stacked behind the house, and repeats the existing simple form without introducing new complicated or elaborate features. Staff believes this is an appropriate design, location, and scale for an addition to a very humble and charming historic house and is not concerned about the footprint in excess of 50% of the original. This is a good example of what happens when a very small house cannot accommodate a two story addition in order to shrink the footprint while adding a useful amount of habitable space.

New House

A motion to postpone the new house portion of the application to the March 12, 2026 HDC meeting is suggested below.

POSSIBLE MOTIONS: (Note that the motions are only suggested. The Review Committee, consisting of staff and at least two Commissioners, will meet with the applicant on site and then make a recommendation at the meeting.)

For the New House:

I move that the Commission POSTPONE the portion of the application at 717 West Liberty Street, a contributing structure in the Old West Side Historic District, to construct a two-story house with an attached garage, to the March 12, 2026 Historic District Commission meeting.

For the Addition:

I move that the Commission issue a certificate of appropriateness for the application at 717 West Liberty Street, a contributing structure in the Old West Side Historic District, to construct a single-story rear addition to the historic house, rebuild an existing addition, and remove a non-historic chimney and dormer. The work as proposed is compatible in

exterior design, arrangement, texture, material and relationship to the surrounding area and meets the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines* for All Additions, and *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, in particular standards 1, 2, 5, 9 and 10 and the guidelines for Building Site, District/Neighborhood, and New Additions.

MOTION WORKSHEET:

I move that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work at 717 W Liberty Street in the Old West Side Historic District

___ Provided the following condition(S) is (ARE) met: 1) STATE CONDITION(s)

The work is generally compatible with the size, scale, massing, and materials and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, standard(S) number(S) (*circle all that apply*): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

ATTACHMENTS: drawings, photos

717 West Liberty Street, front and east elevations (April 2024, courtesy Google Street View)



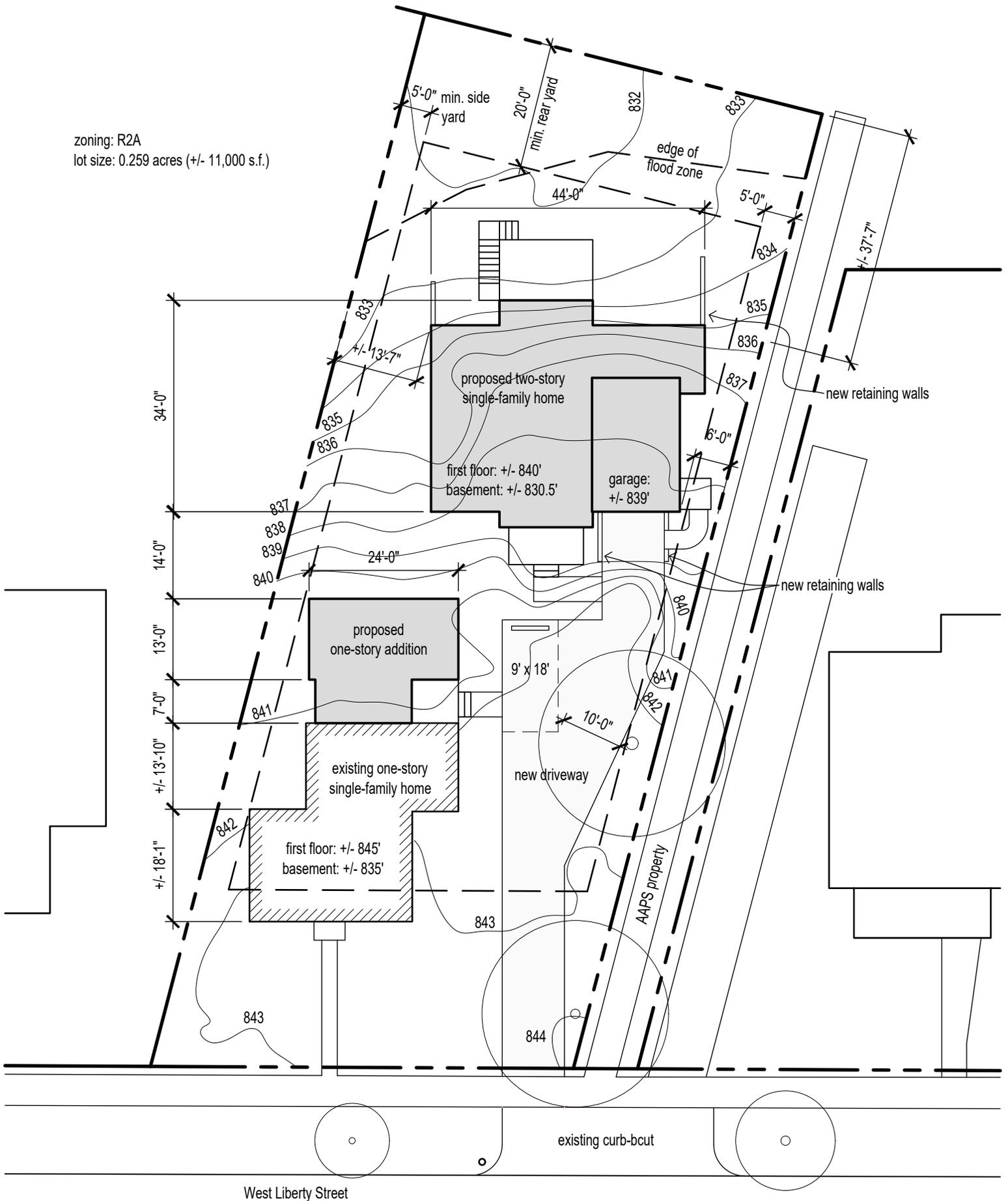
717 West Liberty Street, front elevation (April 2024, courtesy Google Street View)



717 West Liberty Street, front and west elevation (April 2024, courtesy Google Street View)



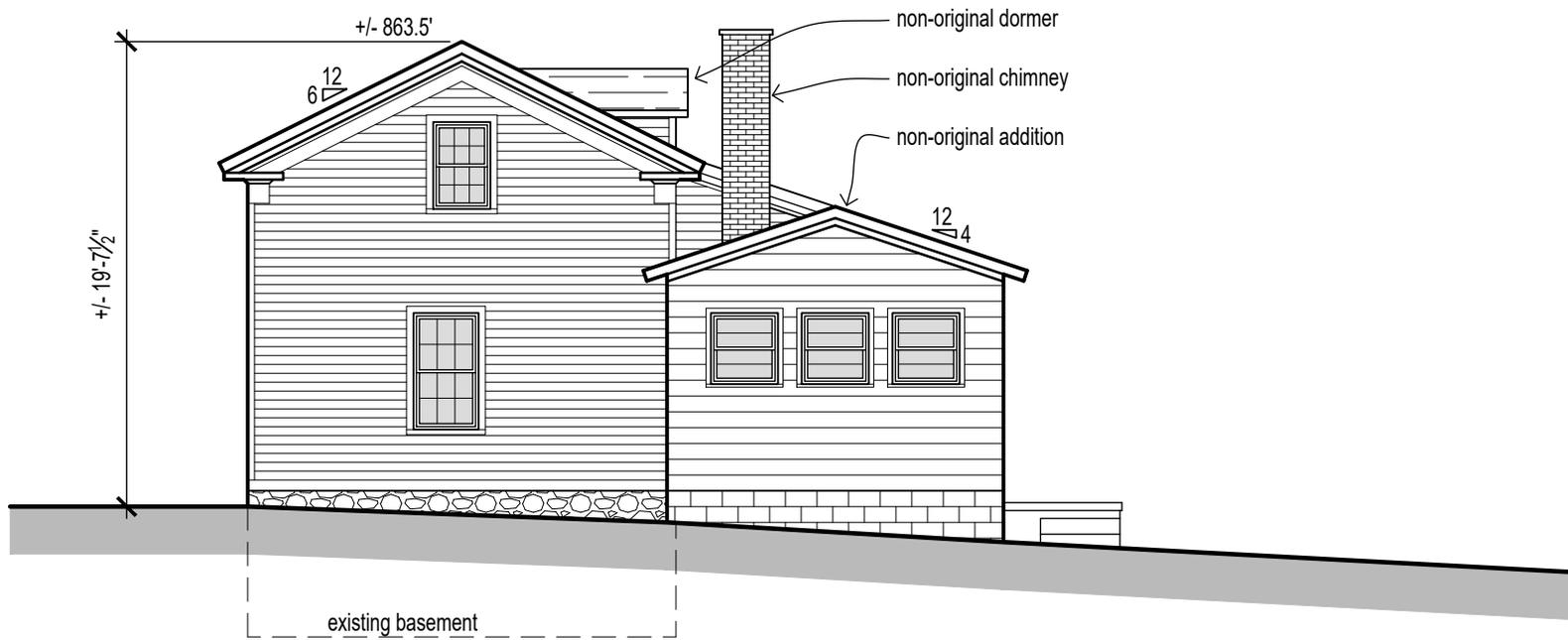
zoning: R2A
 lot size: 0.259 acres (+/- 11,000 s.f.)

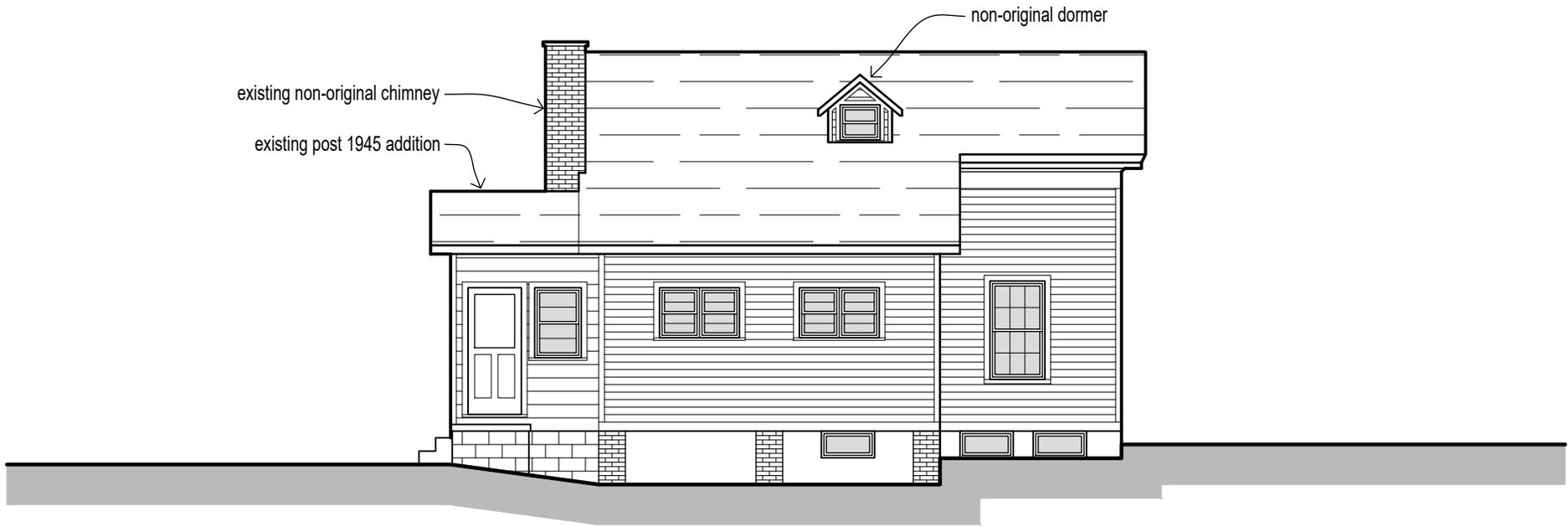


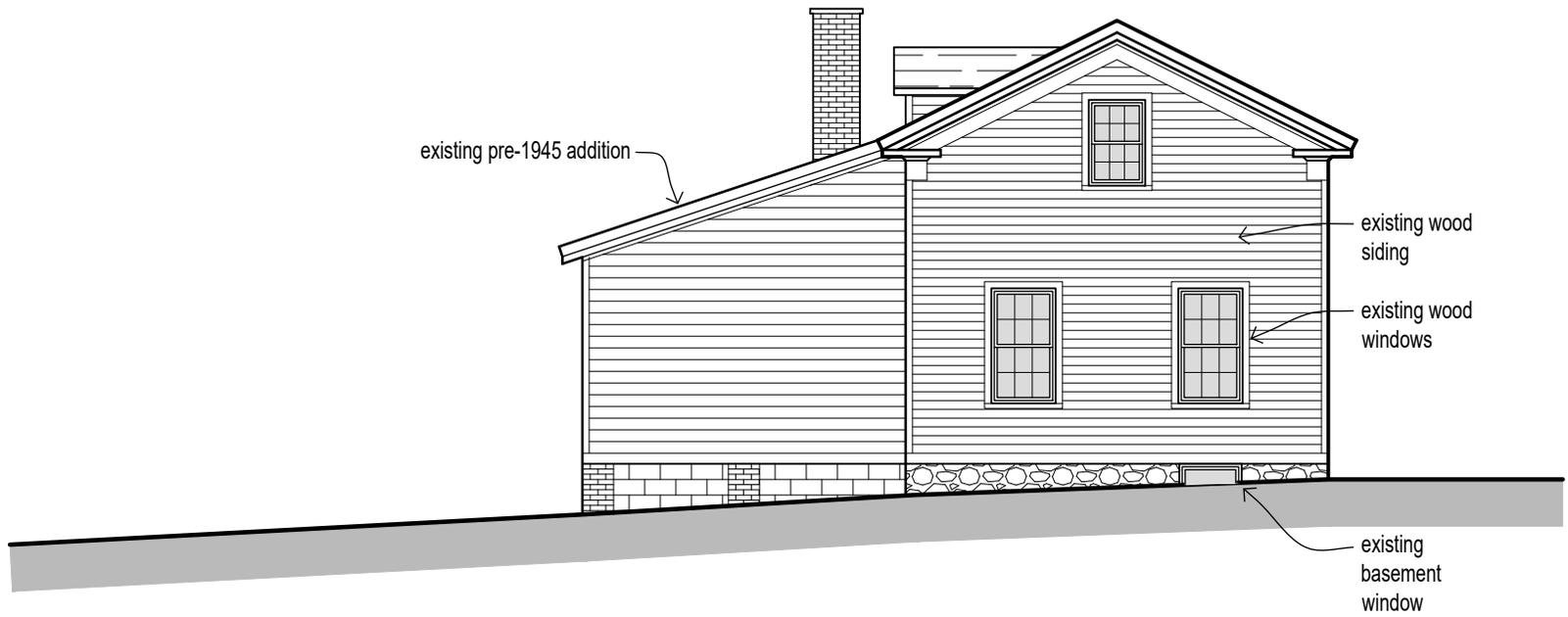


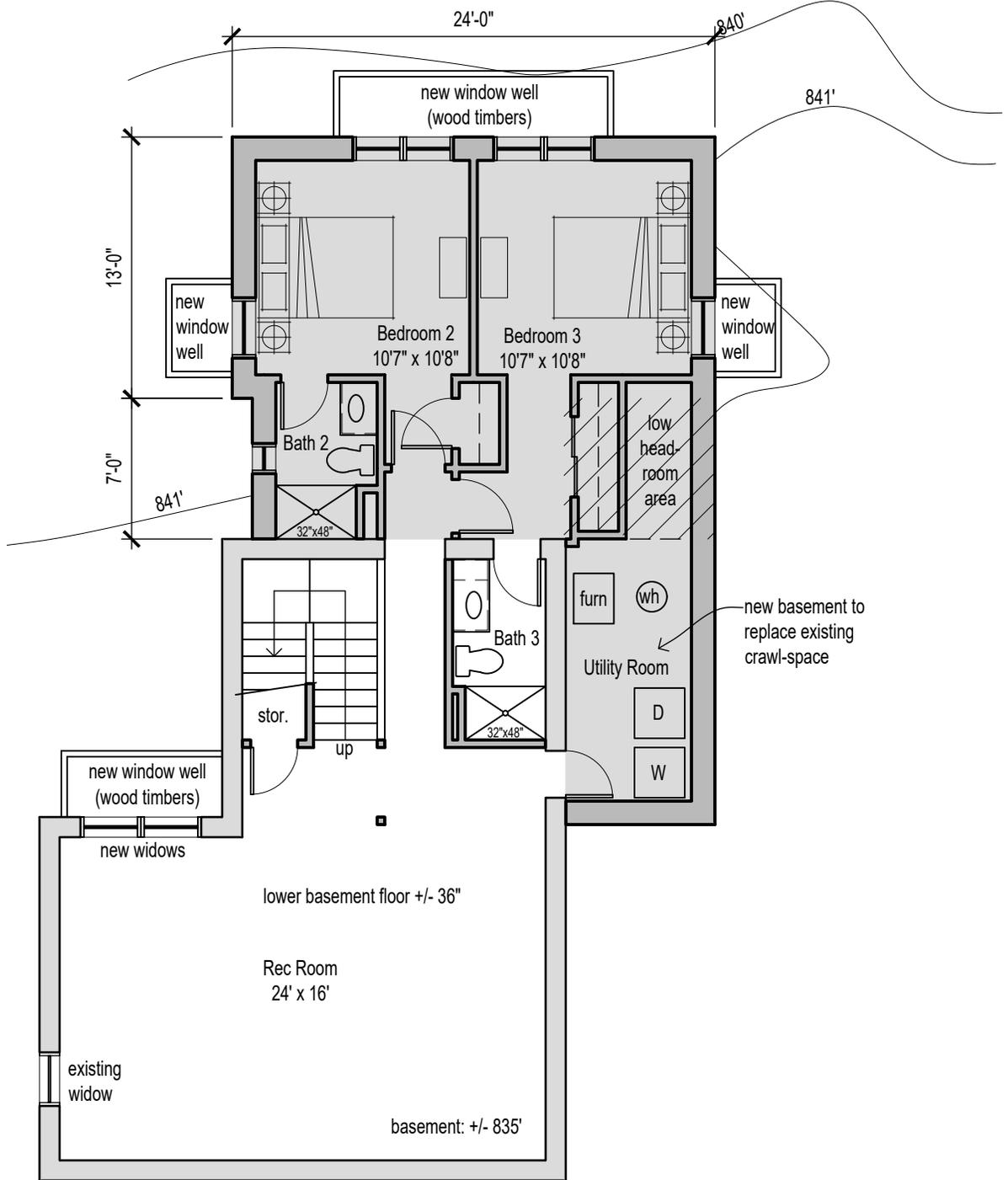
existing wood siding
existing wood windows

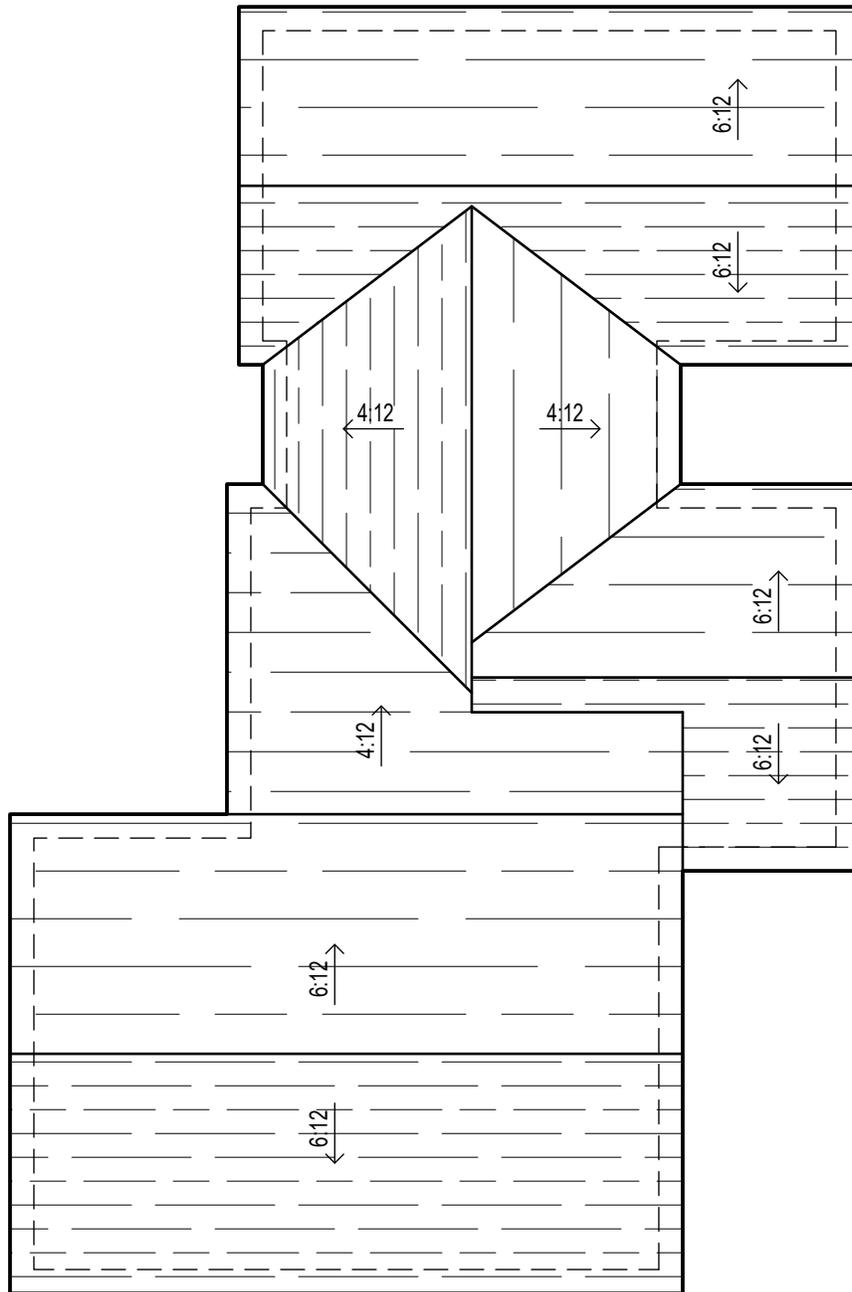
existing non-original chimney
existing post 1945 addition

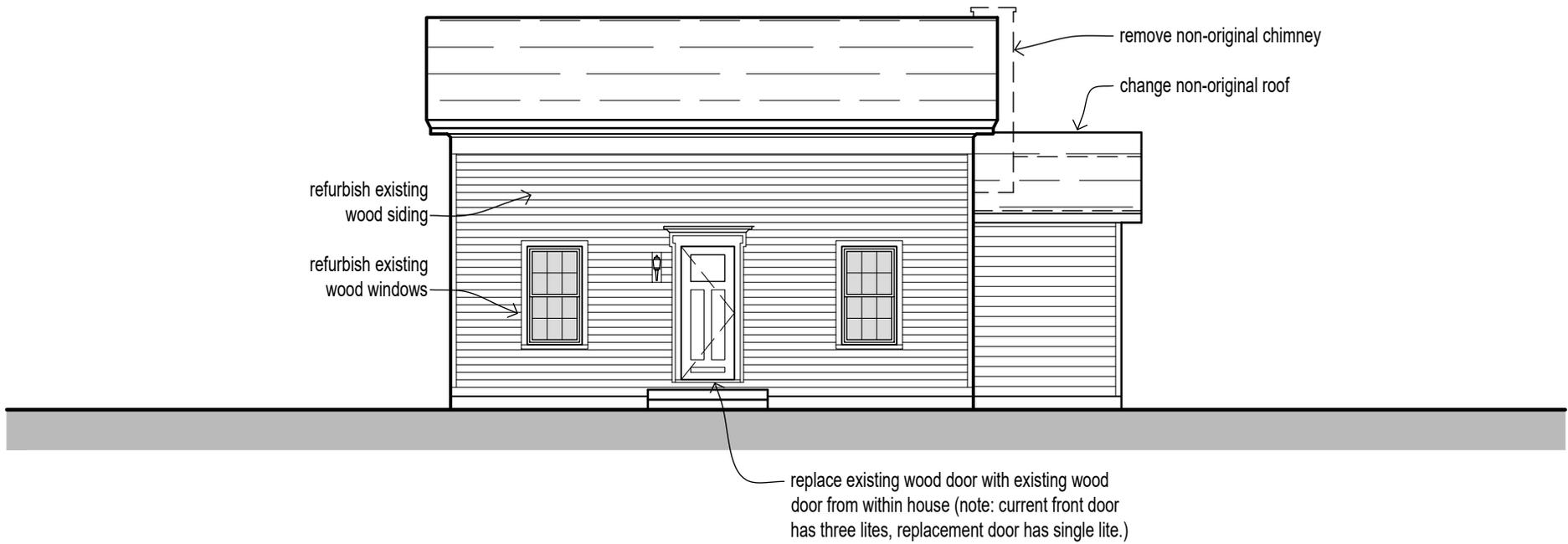


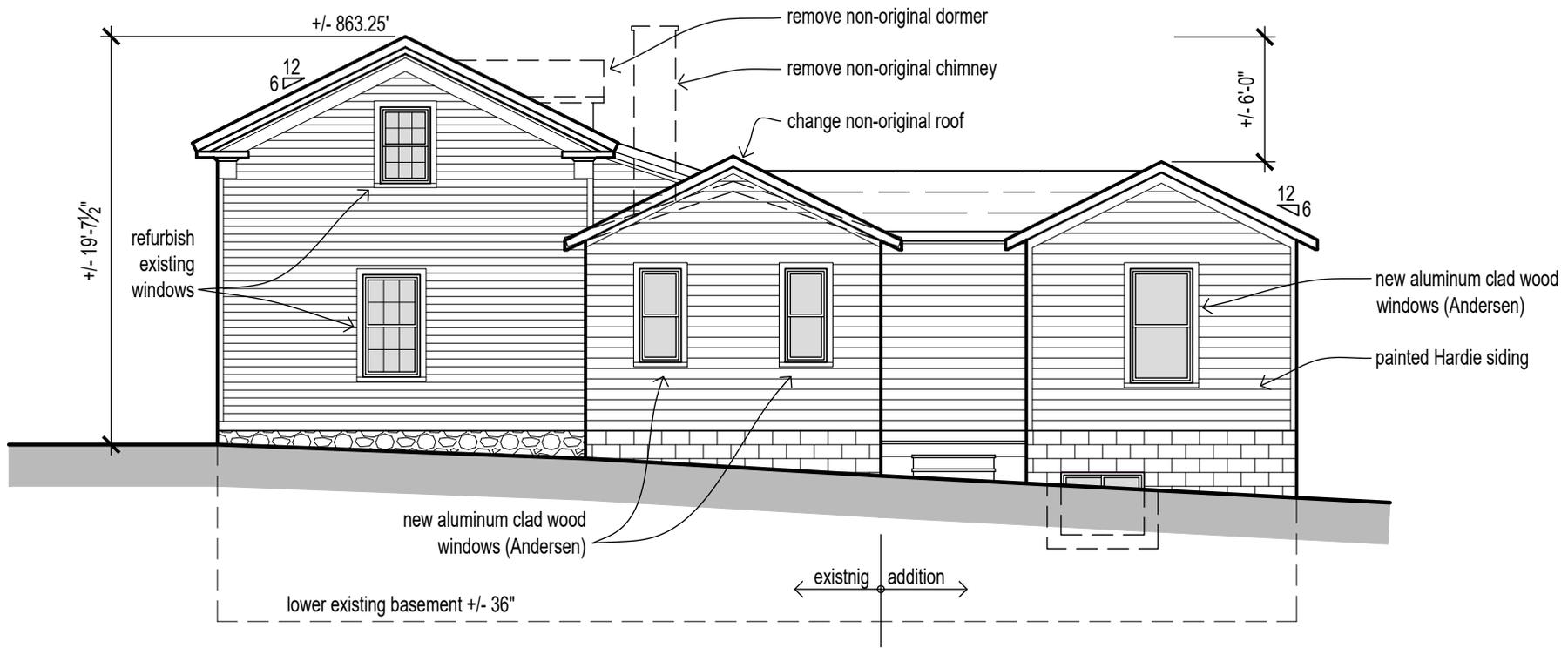


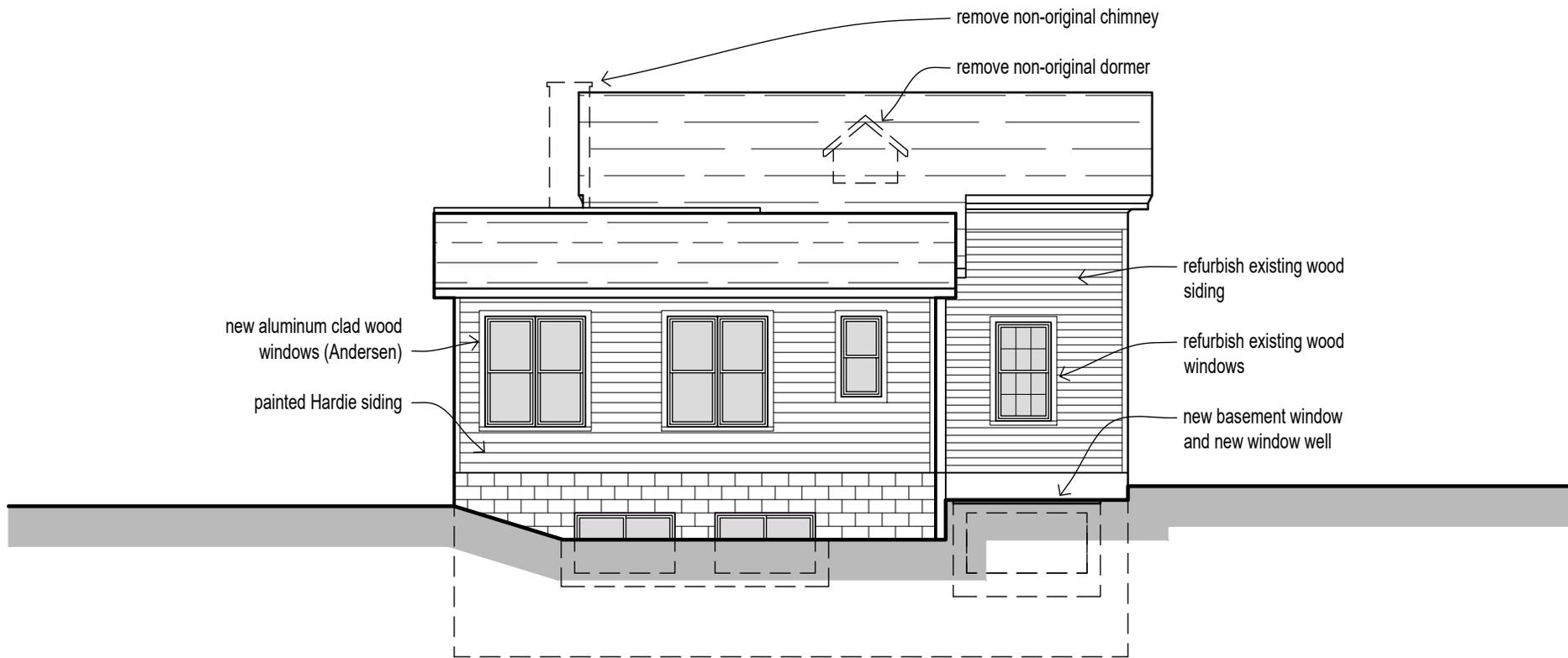


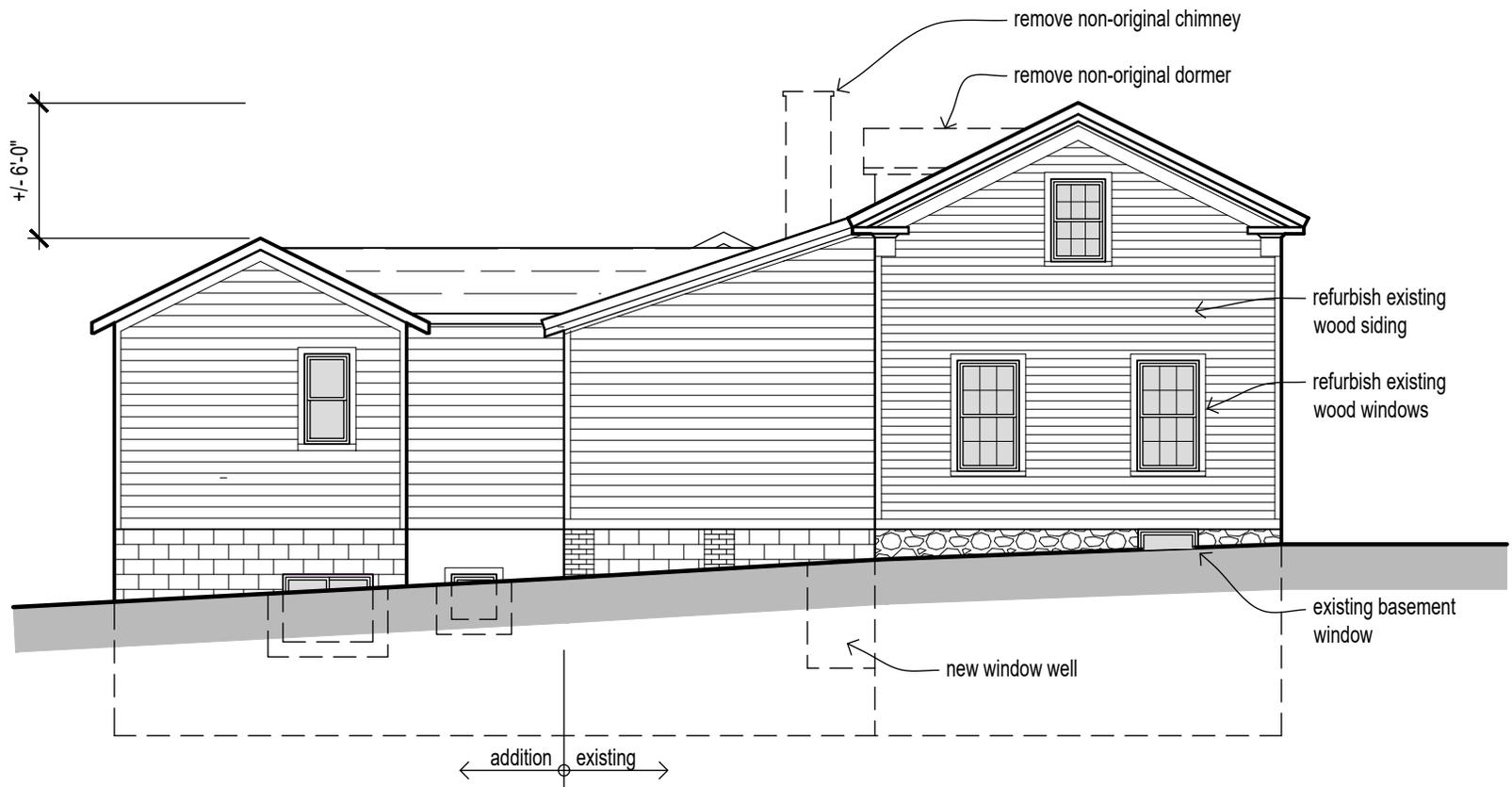


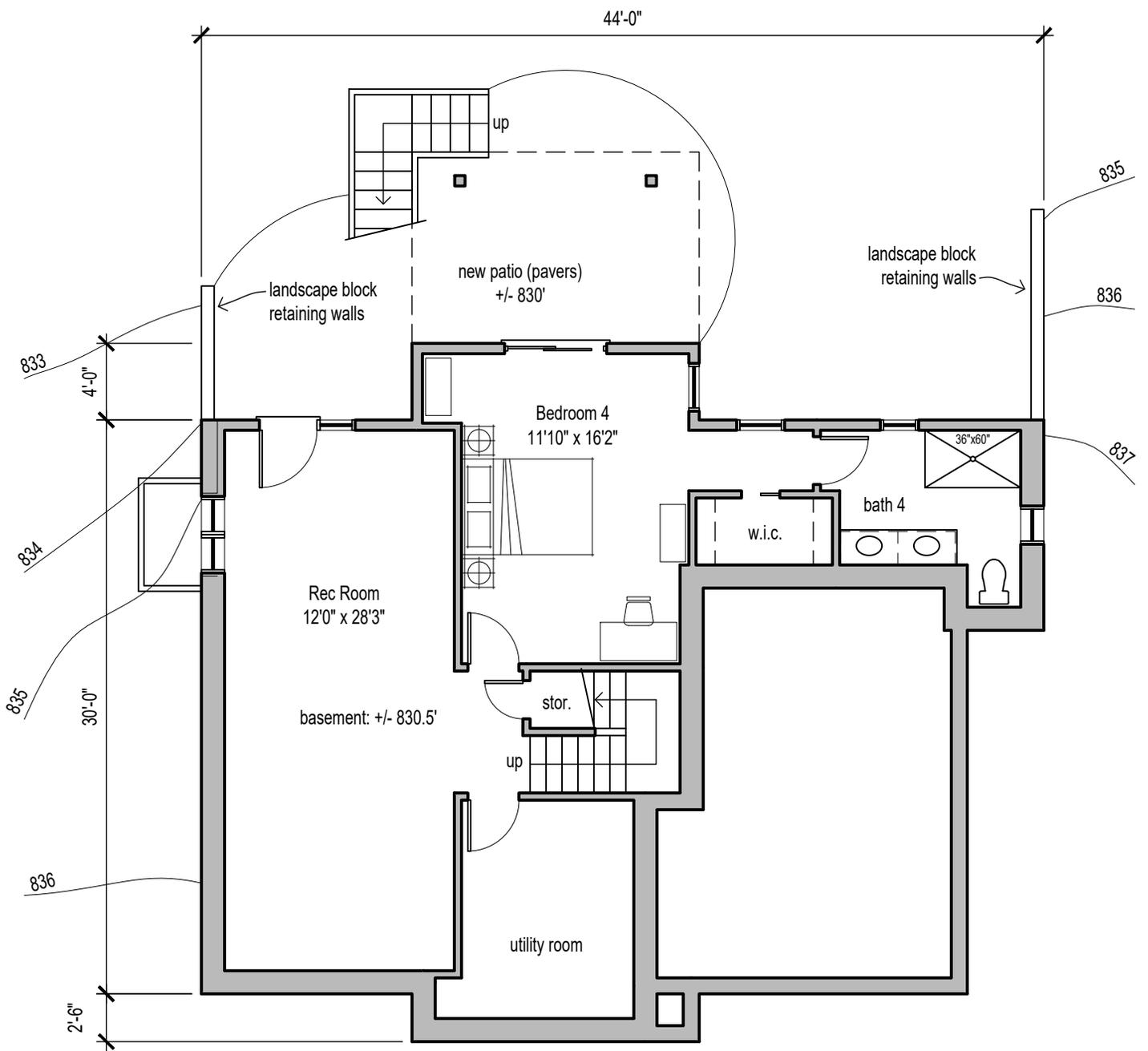


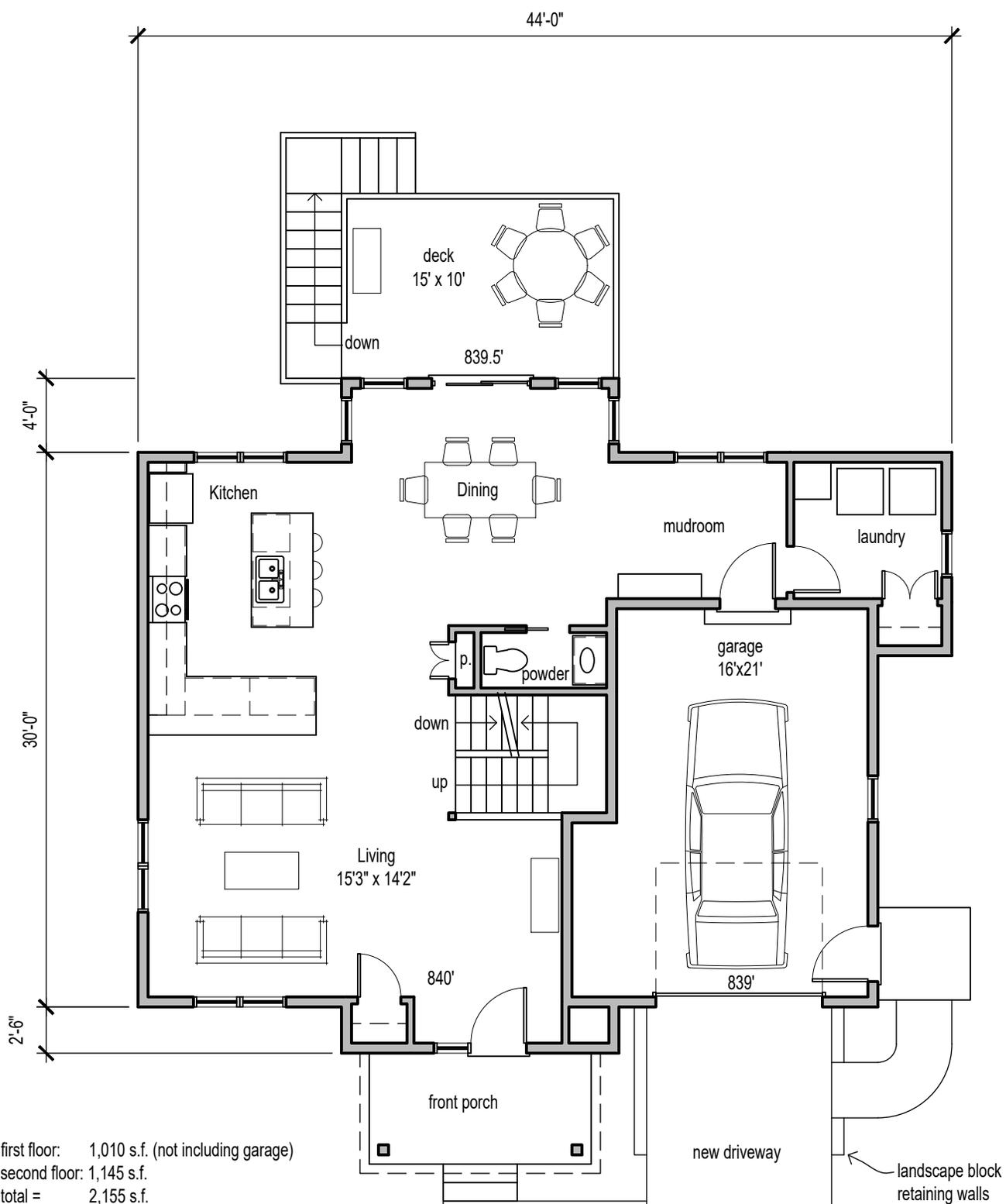




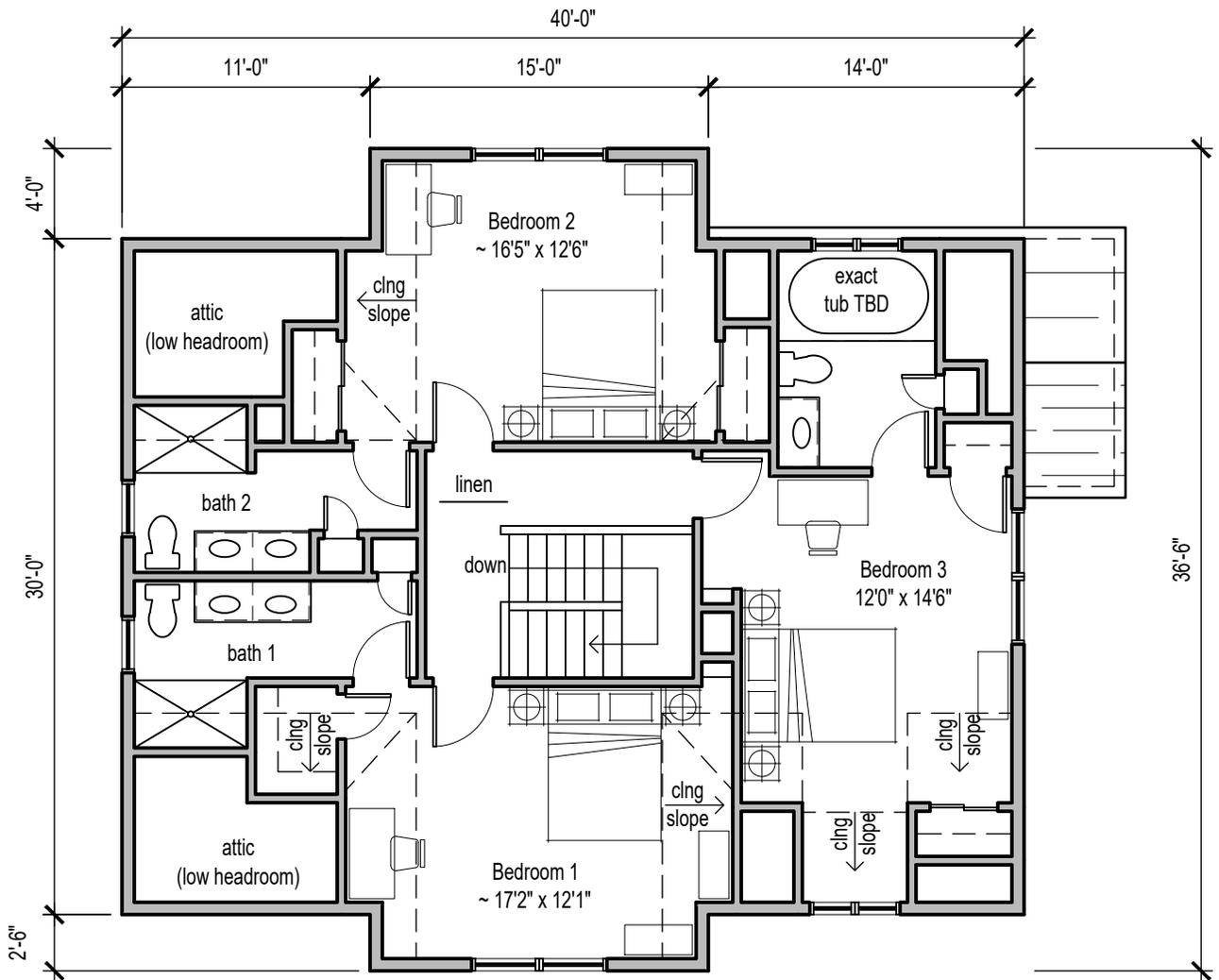


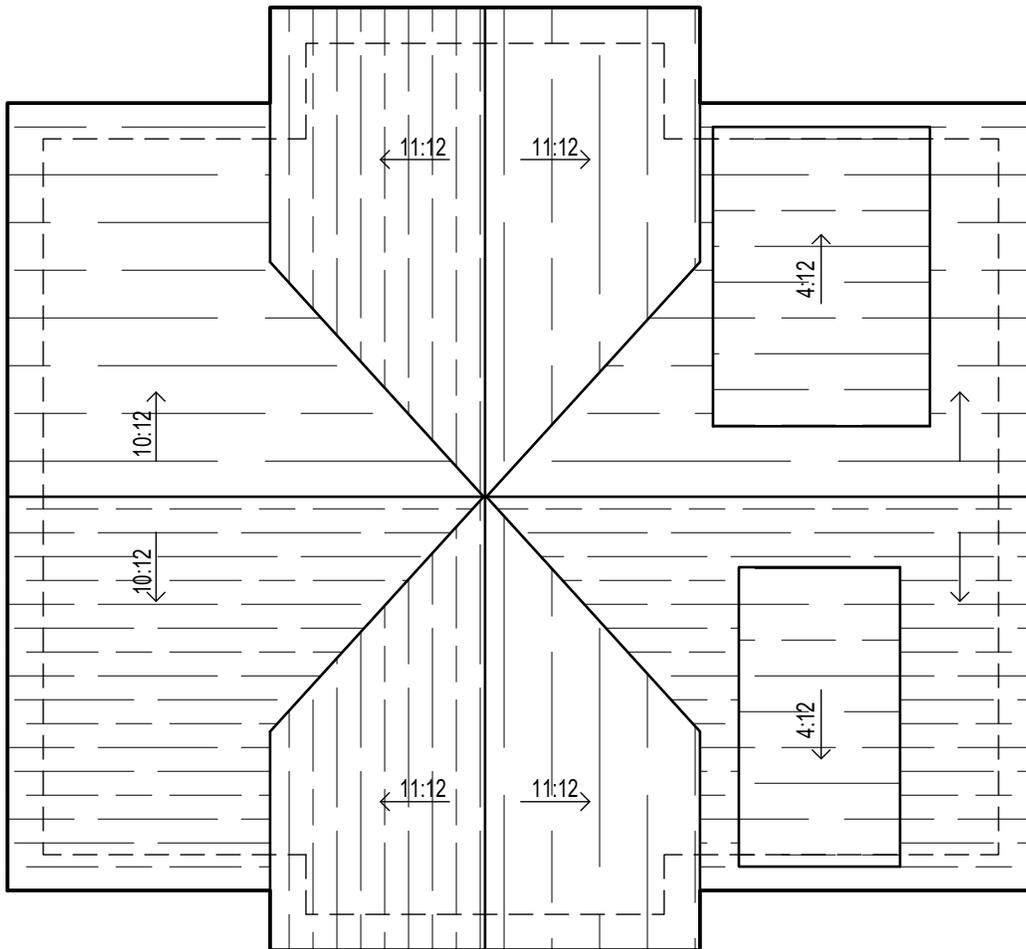




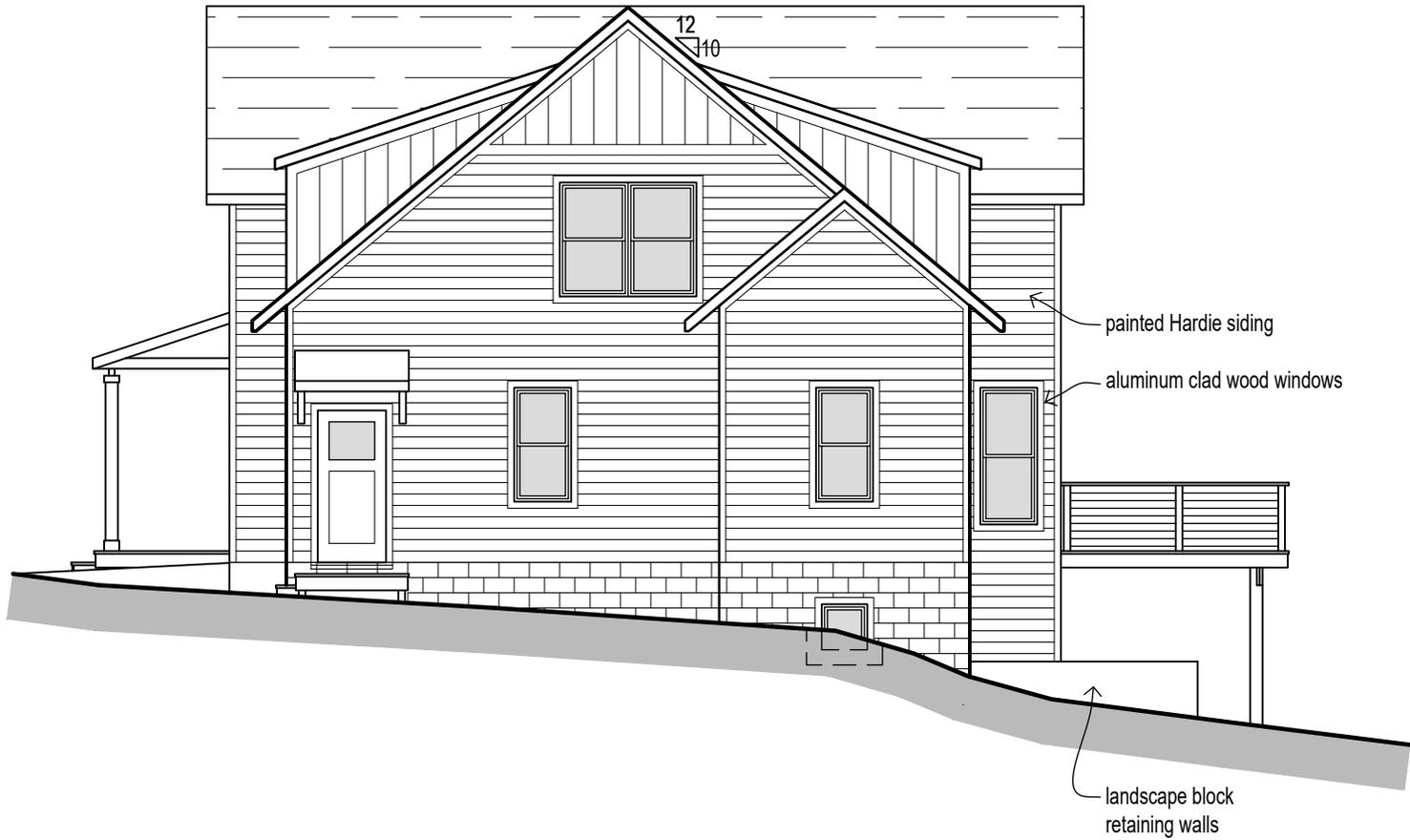


first floor: 1,010 s.f. (not including garage)
 second floor: 1,145 s.f.
 total = 2,155 s.f.





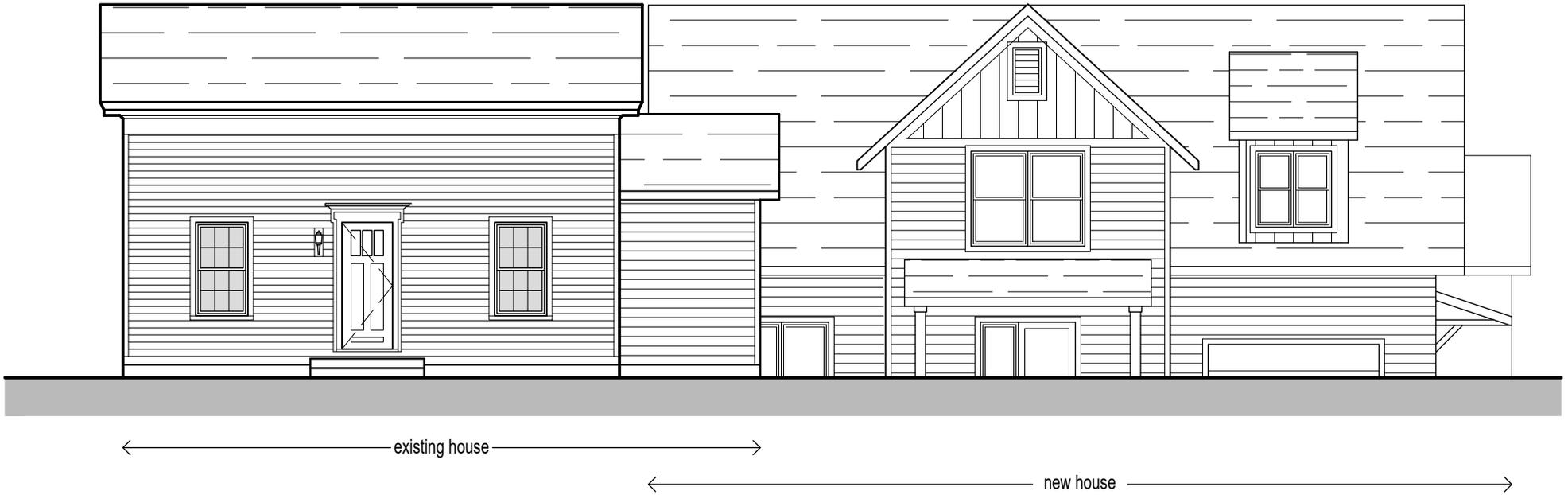








elevations of existing roof and new roof match



elevations of existing roof and new roof match



717 West Liberty

23 January 2026 - HDC application

Existing front door (rotted):

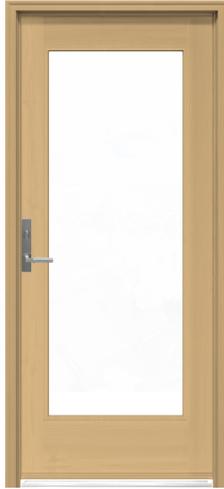


Existing alternate door to replace front door:





PANEL STYLE 102 STRAIGHTLINE GLASS PANEL



Interior



Exterior

Summary

Configuration	Single Door
Interior Color	Maple
Glass	Low-E4® Glass
Hardware	FSB 1102, Satin Stainless Steel
Grille Pattern	None
Exterior	Dark Bronze

;

DOUBLE-HUNG WINDOW

FEATURES

DOUBLE-HUNG WINDOWS

FRAME & SASH

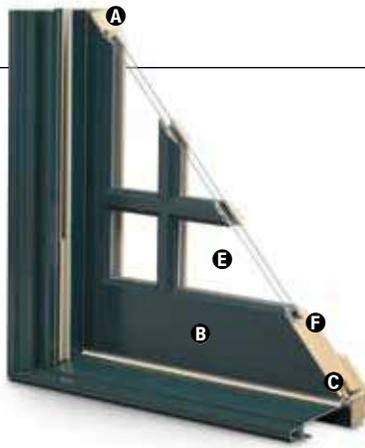
A Select wood components are kiln dried and treated with water/insect repellent and preservative. Interior wood surfaces are available in pine, mixed grain Douglas fir, cherry, hickory, mahogany*, maple, oak, walnut, alder or vertical grain Douglas fir. Interior surfaces are available unfinished or factory primed. Optional factory-applied finishes are available in a variety of stains and paints.

B Wood components are fitted with aluminum extrusions on the exterior. 50 exterior colors that meet AAMA 2604 and 2605 specifications are available, as well as custom colors. Also available is a selection of seven exterior anodized options.

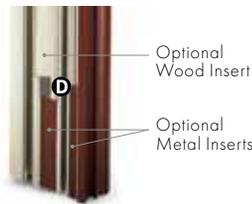
Optional vinyl installation flanges are pre-applied into a kerf on the frame exterior to facilitate installation. Optional aluminum flanges or metal installation clips are available.

C Compression bulb weatherstrip is applied on the bottom sash, head jamb, at the meeting rail and on side jambs for a maximum weather seal.

Jamb liners encase balancer assemblies that allow each sash to be tilted 90° inward from a bottom pivot and stay securely in place for washing.



D Double-hung jamb liners incorporate synthetic interior and exterior inserts or optional painted aluminum exterior and wood-veneered interior inserts.



GLASS

E High-Performance Low-E4® glass with a low-conductivity spacer. Triple-pane glass, tinted, clear dual-pane, high-altitude glass and other special glazing options are available.

F Glass is fixed in place from the interior with wood stops that can be removed for easy reglazing if necessary. Glass stops available in ovolo (colonial) and contemporary profiles.

GLASS SPACERS available in black, white and stainless steel.

HARDWARE

Sash lock/tilt mechanisms and keepers give a slim, more traditional design and allow opening and tilting of the window in one operation. Tilting the sash from the inside for cleaning is effortless.

Optional surface mount sash lifts allow for easy operation. Units less than 3' wide use one lift. Units 3' wide and greater use two lifts.

HARDWARE OPTIONS



Lock



Sash Lift

Antique Brass | Black | **Polished Chrome** | Bronze | Gold
Oil Rubbed Bronze | Pewter | **Bright Brass** | **Brushed Chrome** | White

Windows with VeriLock® sensors use a different sash lock. See the next page for details.
Bold name denotes finish shown.

HARDWARE FINISHES



Oil rubbed bronze is a "living" finish that will change with time and use.

EXTERIOR & INTERIOR OPTIONS

EXTERIOR COLORS 50 exterior colors, 7 anodized finishes and custom colors. See exterior colors on page 11.

INTERIOR WOOD SPECIES



Interior custom stains, paints and color matching available.

Naturally occurring variations in grain, color and texture of wood make each window one of a kind.

All factory-finished options are shown on pine.

Painted options available on pine. Dark bronze and black painted options available on pine or maple. Anodized silver painted option available on maple only.

FACTORY-FINISHED INTERIORS



INTERIOR PAINTED OPTIONS



*Actual wood species is either Sapele or Sipo, both non-endangered species grown in Africa, with color and characteristics similar to Central American mahoganies. Printing limitations prevent exact replication of colors and finishes. Please see your Andersen supplier for actual color and finish samples.

ACCESSORIES Sold Separately

DOUBLE-HUNG WINDOWS

HARDWARE

Window Opening Control Device Kit

An optional Window Opening Control Device Kit is available, which limits opening the sash to less than 4" when the window is first opened. Available in stone and white.

VeriLock & Open/Closed Sensors DISCONTINUED



VeriLock sensors are unique as they detect whether the windows are locked or unlocked* — a feature no other sensors can provide. Available in all hardware finishes.

Open/Closed Sensors

Wireless open/closed sensors are available in four colors.

See page 27 for Smart Home options.

INSECT SCREENS

TruScene® Insect Screens

Andersen® TruScene insect screens let in over 25% more fresh air and provide 50% greater clarity than conventional Andersen insect screens, all while keeping out unwanted small insects. Frames are available in painted aluminum or wood-veneered options.

Conventional Insect Screens



Charcoal fiberglass screen mesh fits into an aluminum frame in all 50 exterior colors and seven anodized finishes. Available in half or full insect screens. Aluminum screen mesh is available as an option.

See page 24 for more information on our insect screens.

GRILLES

Full Divided Light

Permanent interior and exterior grilles with grille spacer bars between two panes of glass. Available in 5/8", 7/8", 1 1/8", 1 1/2", or 2 1/4" widths and ovolo or contemporary profile. Ovolo profile shown below, not all widths are pictured.



5/8"

7/8"



1 1/8"

1 1/2"

Simulated Divided Light

Permanent exterior and interior grilles without grille spacer bars. Available in 5/8", 7/8", 1 1/8", 1 1/2", or 2 1/4" widths and ovolo or contemporary profile. Ovolo profile shown below, not all widths are pictured.



7/8"

Finelight™ Grilles-Between-the-Glass

Available in 5/8" flat or 1" contoured aluminum profiles. Two-tone colors of pebble tan/colony white, sierra bronze/colony white or forest green/colony white are available on the 1" profile.



5/8" Flat

1" Contoured

3/4" & 1"

Removable Interior Wood Grilles

Removable interior wood grilles are available in a 7/8" width and ovolo or contemporary profiles. Optional surround for removable grille and permanent exterior grilles also available. Ovolo profile shown below.



7/8"

See page 22 for more information on grilles.

*When properly configured and maintained with a professionally installed security system and/or self monitoring system compatible with Honeywell® 5800 controls. See your Andersen supplier for more information.

BAY STONE

PAVERS: BAY STONE – CEDARVILLE
BORDER PAVERS: HOLLAND 4x8 – JET BLACK



KEYSTONE COMPAC STRAIGHT SPLIT

› WALL STONES: COMPAC 3 STRAIGHT SPLIT – MANISTEE BLEND
WALL CAPS: 3x24 SPLIT FACE CAP – SLATE



KEYSTONE COMPAC STRAIGHT SPLIT

› WALL STONES: COMPAC STRAIGHT SPLIT – WALNUT BLEND
WALL CAPS: UNIVERSAL CAP – WALNUT BLEND



STANDARD COLORS

COMPAC UNITS



GRAY



MANISTEE BLEND



WALNUT BLEND



LIMESTONE BLEND



SAHARA BLEND

ELITE COLORS



GRAPHITE BLEND