

ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Staff Report

ADDRESS: 1223 Traver Street, Application Number HDC22-1074

DISTRICT: Broadway Historic District

REPORT DATE: May 12, 2022

REPORT PREPARED BY: Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE: Monday May 9, 2022

	OWNER	APPLICANT
Name:	Mitch Gerczak and Tami Stevenson	Same
Address:	1223 Traver Street Ann Arbor, MI 48105	
Phone:	(734) 730-1842	

BACKGROUND: The c.1840s Jacob Armstrong House is a 1.5 story Greek Revival in the rare hen and chicks form. It may have been moved from another site on Traver. It was first owned by Jacob Armstrong who moved to Ann Arbor from New York. Armstrong, his sons and grandsons all worked as carpenters in Ann Arbor.

In 2021 the HDC determined that the garage is a contributing historic structure (HDC21-031). In 2022 the HDC approved an application and issued a certificate of appropriateness to raise the house 16", add three basement egress windows, and construct a rear 150 square foot addition (HDC22-006).

LOCATION: The site is on the west side of Traver Street, north of Bowen and south of Pear Street.

APPLICATION: The applicant seeks a HDC approval to 1) move the house four feet to the north in order to protect two silver maple trees and a black walnut tree, at least one of which is from the period of significance; and 2) redesign a previously approved addition to remove a corner inset at the rear corner of the house.



1947 Aerial Photo of 1223 Traver 1

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 will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
- (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 (other SOI Guidelines may also apply):**Additions**

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

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

Building Site – Identify, Retain, Preserve

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

Preserving important landscape features, including ongoing maintenance of historic plant material

Not Recommended: Locating any new construction on the building site where important landscape features will be damaged or destroyed.

Not Recommended: Removing or radically changing buildings and their features or site features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the building site so that, as a result, the character is diminished.

Removing or relocating buildings or landscape features thus destroying the historic relationship between buildings and the landscape.

District or Neighborhood Setting – Identify, Retain, Protect

Recommended: Identifying, retaining, and preserving building and landscape features which are important in defining the historic character of the setting.

Retaining the historic relationship between buildings and landscape features of the setting.

Not Recommended: Removing or radically changing those features of the setting which are important in defining the historic character.

Removing or relocating historic buildings or landscape features, thus destroying their historic relationship within the setting.

From the City of Ann Arbor Design Guidelines:**Guidelines for All Additions**

Appropriate: Locating and designing a new addition so that significant site features, including mature trees and landmark status trees, are not lost or damaged.

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

Residential Landscape Features

Appropriate: Retaining and maintaining mature trees, hedges, and other historic plantings.

Retaining historic relationships between buildings, landscape features, and open spaces.

Not Appropriate: Removing mature trees, hedges, and other historic landscaping.

STAFF FINDINGS:*House Moving*

1. After speaking to contractors and arborists, the homeowners concluded that three trees along the south property line, close to their house, would be in danger of being weakened or killed by the process of digging out the basement under the existing house (as approved by the HDC in an earlier 2022 application). They are seeking approval to move the house 4' to the north in order to protect the trees.
2. Two of the trees along the center of the house are silver maples and the one farther back near the corner of the house is a black walnut. The black walnut shows up clearly on the 1947 aerial photo. The silver maples appear to be in the photo but are not as clear.
3. If the HDC had to decide between moving the house or losing the trees, it would be a difficult decision. Looking at the SOI Guidelines, it is clear that neither moving the house nor losing the trees is recommended. The *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines* state that it is appropriate to locate and design a new addition so that significant site features, including mature trees and landmark status trees, are not lost or damaged.

They also say that it is appropriate to retain the historic relationships between buildings, landscape features, and open spaces. The homeowners state in their application, however, that leaving a partial crawlspace along the south basement wall is an alternative (albeit not the one they are pursuing). This would leave the tree roots undisturbed and would shrink the size of the basement. It would also be in keeping with the Standards and both sets of Guidelines.

Revision to Addition

4. The homeowners seek to remove the inset for the addition to the back of the house that was approved earlier this year. We know that a poorly-constructed, shed-roof wing across the back of the house (running north/south) that was added during the period of significance was removed in the 1990s, and that it was rebuilt with a shallow gabled roof, plus a taller addition was added behind that. The reconstructed wing appears to be in roughly the same footprint as the shed-roof one, and it was intentionally inset 5" from the rear corner of the house (which is visible in the aerial photo from 1947, above). Further, the taller rear addition is very different in proportion and height and runs east/west. Staff theorizes that the new construction intentionally kept the north/south wing's height and footprint intact. If this is correct, the previously approved addition that retains the rear corner of the existing house via an inset is appropriate.

MOTION

(Note that the motion is only a suggestion. The Review Committee, consisting of staff and at least two Commissioners, will meet with the applicant on site and share their observations at the meeting.)

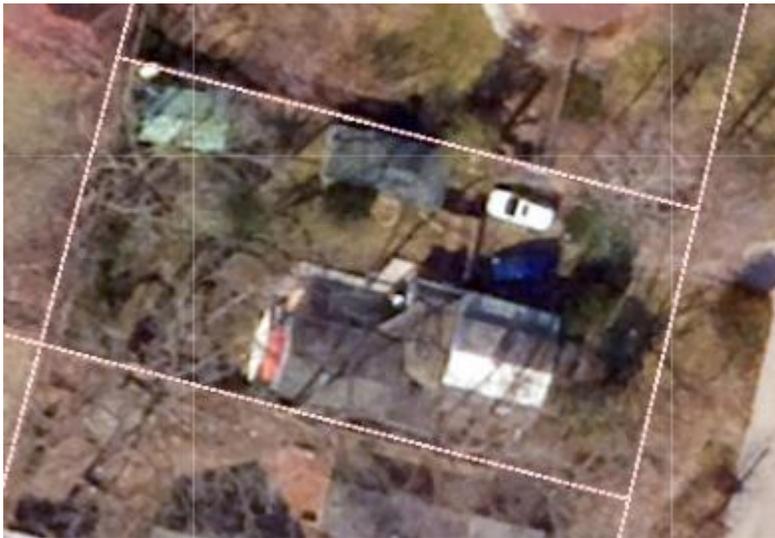
I move that the Commission issue a certificate of appropriateness for the application at 1223 Traver Street, a contributing property in the Broadway Historic District, to 1) move the house four feet to the north in order to protect two silver maple trees and a black walnut tree, and 2) redesign a previously approved addition to remove a corner inset at the rear corner of the house. As proposed, the work is compatible in exterior design, arrangement, texture, material and relationship to the surrounding resources and meets the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines* for All Additions and Residential Landscape Features, and *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, in particular standards 1, 2, 9 and 10 and the Guidelines for District/Neighborhood Setting, Building Site, and Additions.

ATTACHMENTS: application, photographs with narrative, drawings

1223 Traver Street (2007 courtesy Google Streetview)



1223 Traver (2020 aerial photo)



Historic District Application

1223 Traver Rd.

Ann Arbor, Mi 48105

Tami Stevenson and Mitch Gerczak

Date: April 21, 2022

To: City of Ann Arbor Historic District Commission

From: Tamara K Stevenson and Mitch J Gerczak

Project: 1223 Traver Rd. Historical Tree Preservation and Corner Inset Determination

Description of Proposed Changes

We are seeking approval from the Historic District Commission (HDC) for two purposes: 1) to preserve historical trees while installing basement by moving our house at 1223 Traver Road 4 feet away from historical trees, and 2) to remove a corner inset demarcating our HDC-approved addition.

Historical Tree Protection

We received permission from the HDC at the January 13, 2022, meeting to raise our home and install a basement. While impossible to predict, 2-3 historical trees (silver maple and black walnut: 6 feet circumference) on the southern side of house could potentially be harmed by digging the basement. In consultation with the brick layer, house lifter, and arborist, there are 2 possible solutions to substantially mitigate potential risk to the trees: 1) install a crawl space (vs a full basement) near the trees, or 2) move the house 4 feet away from the trees.

While option 1 is possible without HDC approval, it is more expensive and less elegant than option 2; in addition, it would reduce utility by taking away a significant amount of basement space.

We are seeking HDC approval for Option 2 – to move our house 4 feet away from the historical trees. This is a more elegant solution to substantially reduce harm to the trees; it moves the excavation a significant distance away from the trees and it allows for a full basement to be installed. Importantly, it will not alter the appearance of our home or change the character of the neighborhood.

Corner Inset Determination

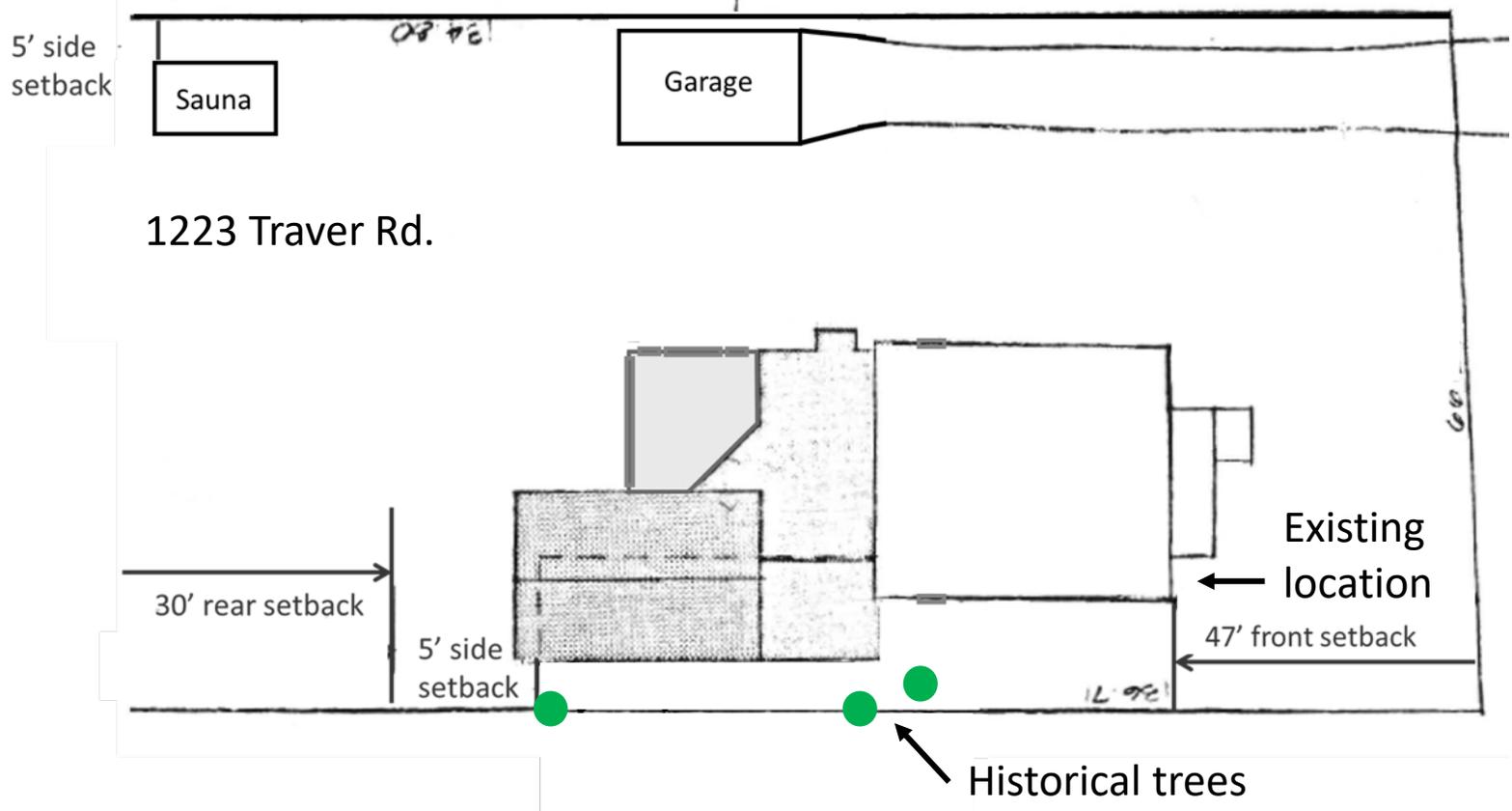
In addition to receiving permission at the January 13, 2022, meeting to raise our home, we received permission to add a small 150 sq ft rear addition to allow for stairs to access the basement. For the addition, we proposed an 8" corner inset to offset the addition from the current house.

However, since that meeting, we have acquired photos from the previous owner showing that the rear portion of our house was completely removed during the early 1990s renovation. The previous owner has confirmed that the current addition is not in the same footprint as the shed-roof addition that was demolished during the 1990s renovation. Moreover, there is actually already a corner inset demarcating the original portion of the house and the addition. Therefore, we would like approval to remove the corner inset from our HDC-approved/proposed addition to essentially continue the addition that was added in the early 1990s.

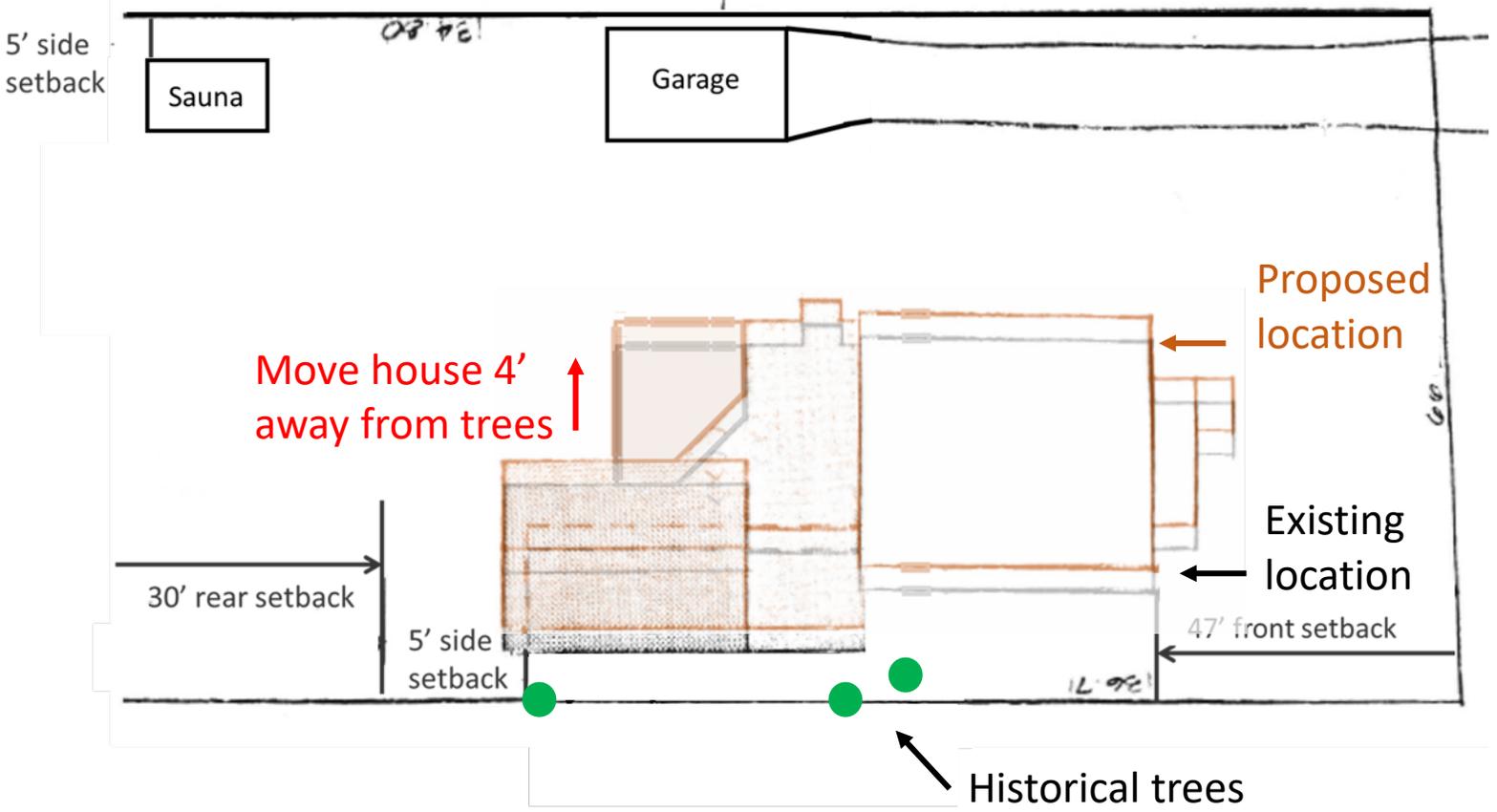
Historical Trees



Existing Site Plan

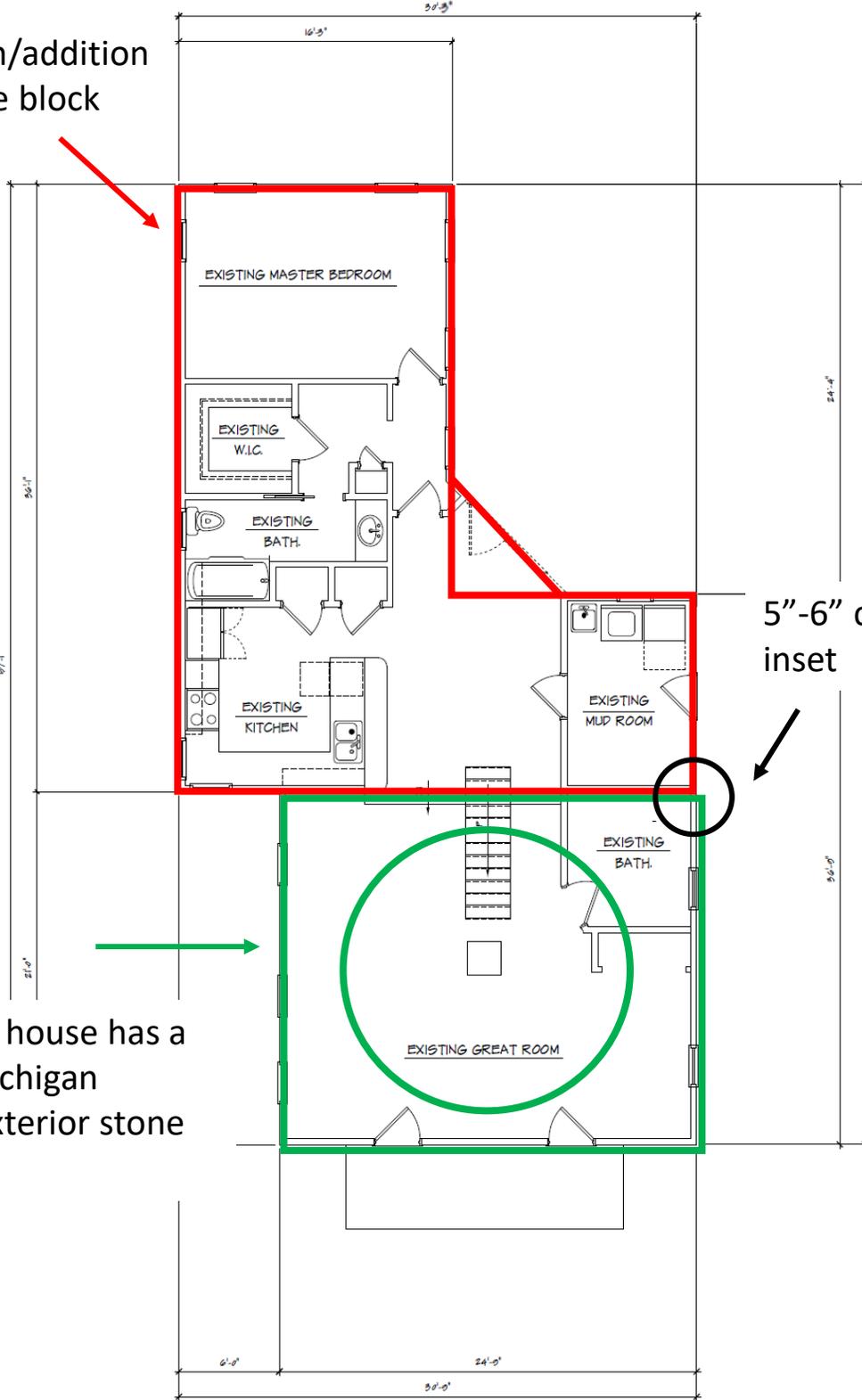


Proposed Site Plan



Updated Existing Foundation

1990s renovation/addition sits on a concrete block crawl space

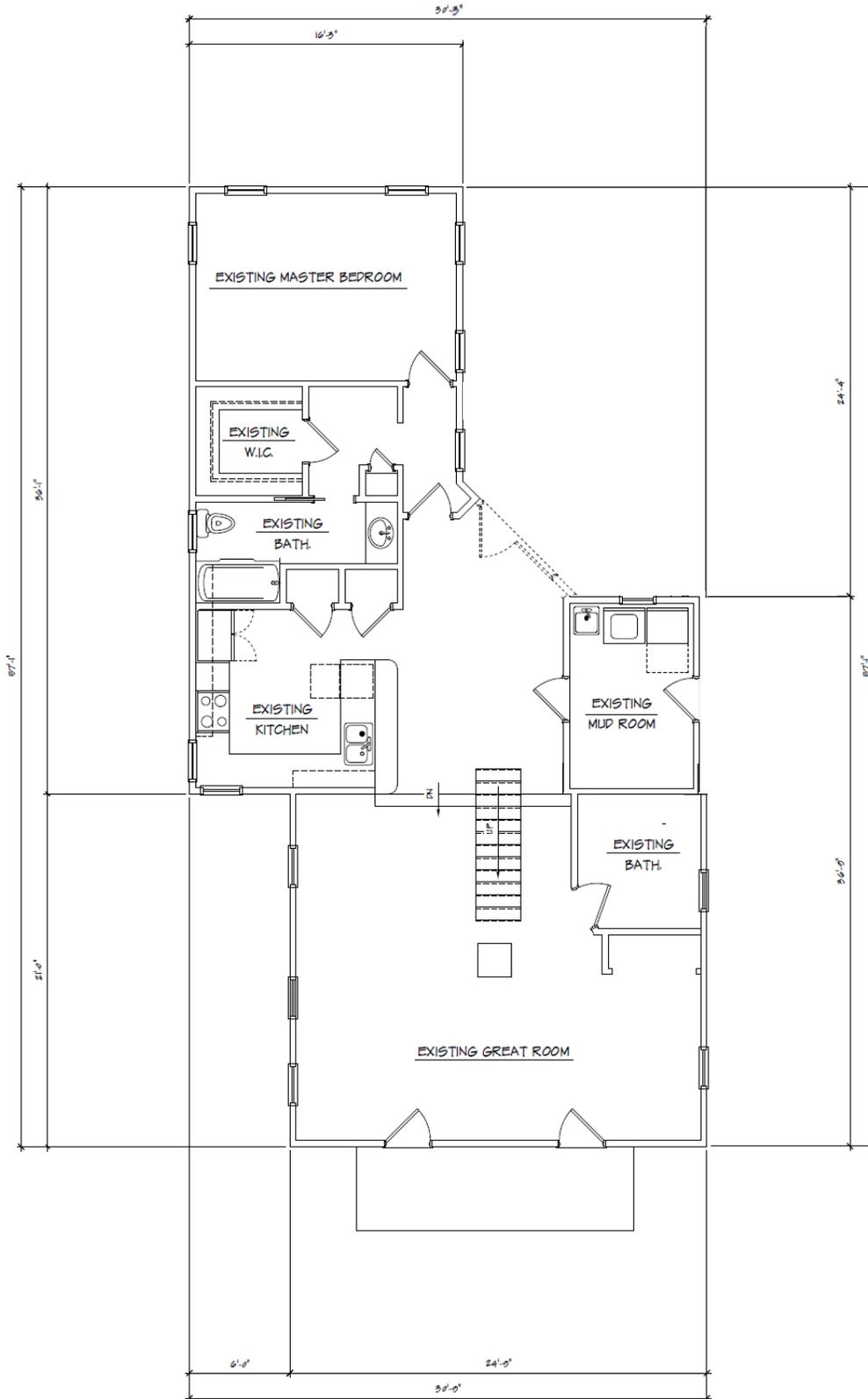


1850s portion of house has a circular stone Michigan basement and exterior stone foundation

NEW MAIN FLOOR PLAN
1/4" = 1'-0" 

<p>MEH DESIGN 1045 Jewell Road • Minn. Mahigan 48609 • 734 • 564 • 7409 •</p>
<p>CONTRACTOR MUST CHECK AND VERIFY ALL DIMENSIONS ON THE JOB. REPORT ANY DISCREPANCIES TO OWNER IMMEDIATELY.</p>
<p>Original Issue Date: 20 December 2021 Revisions: Issue Description: Preliminary set.</p>
<p>Issued For: Preliminary: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Owner Review: <input type="checkbox"/> Estimating: <input type="checkbox"/> Construction: <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Project Name: Genesak Addition 223 Traver Rd., Ann Arbor, Michigan Sheet Title: New Foundation Plan & New Main Floor Plan</p>
<p>Drawn: Matt Haggood Scale: As Shown Date: 20 December 2021</p>
<p>Project Number: 202106 Sheet Number: A1.0</p>

Updated Existing Floorplan



NEW MAIN FLOOR PLAN

1/4" = 1'-0"



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Drawn: Matt Haggood
 Scale: As Shown
 Date: 20 December 2021

Project Number: 202106
 Sheet Number:

A1.0

1990s Renovation



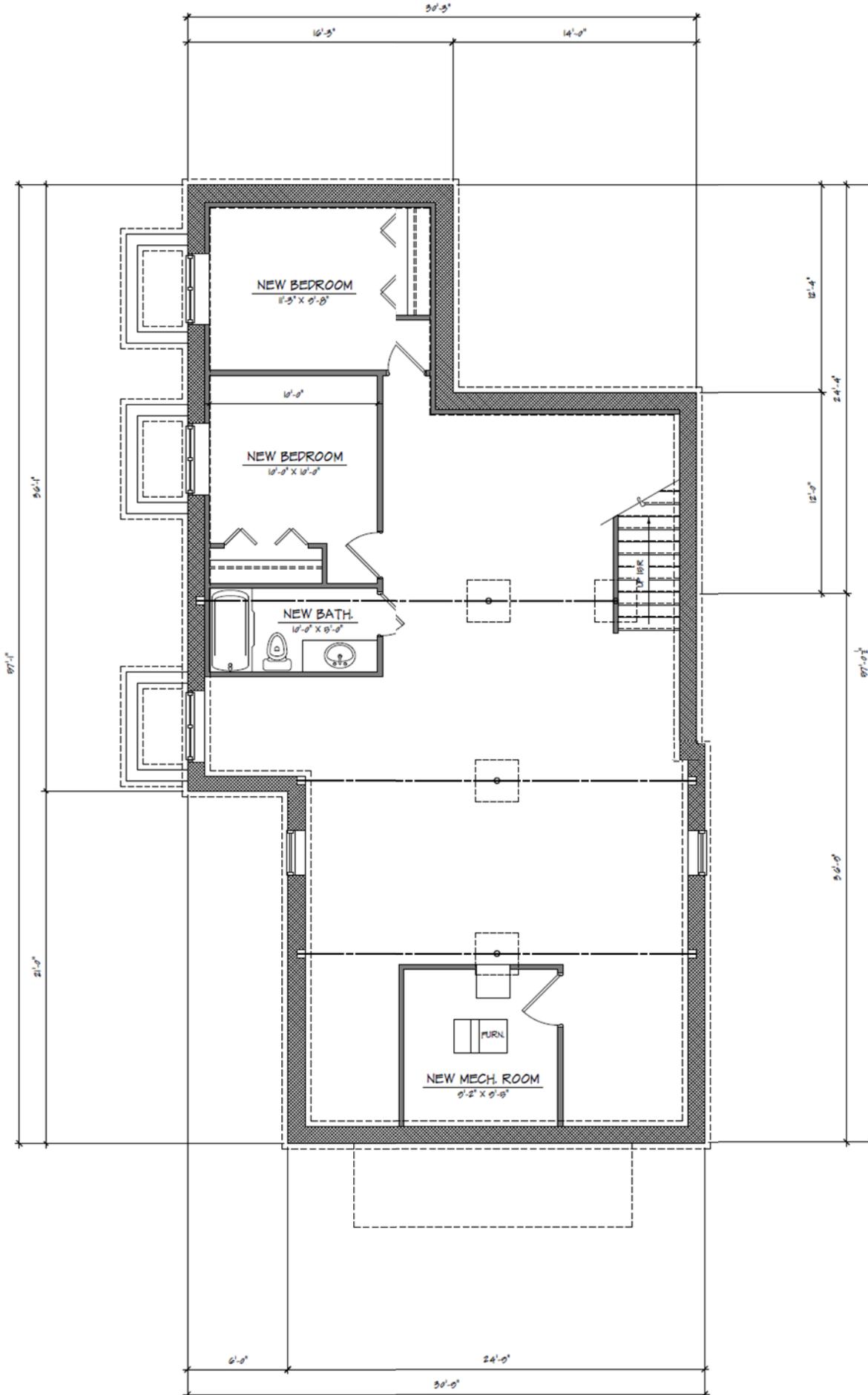
1947 Footprint

1990s renovation removed original structure apparent in 1947 footprint



Current corner inset is 5" – 6" in.

Updated Proposed Foundation



NEW MAIN FLOOR PLAN



MEH DESIGN
 • 10415 Laurel Road • Mississauga • L4R 9P7 •
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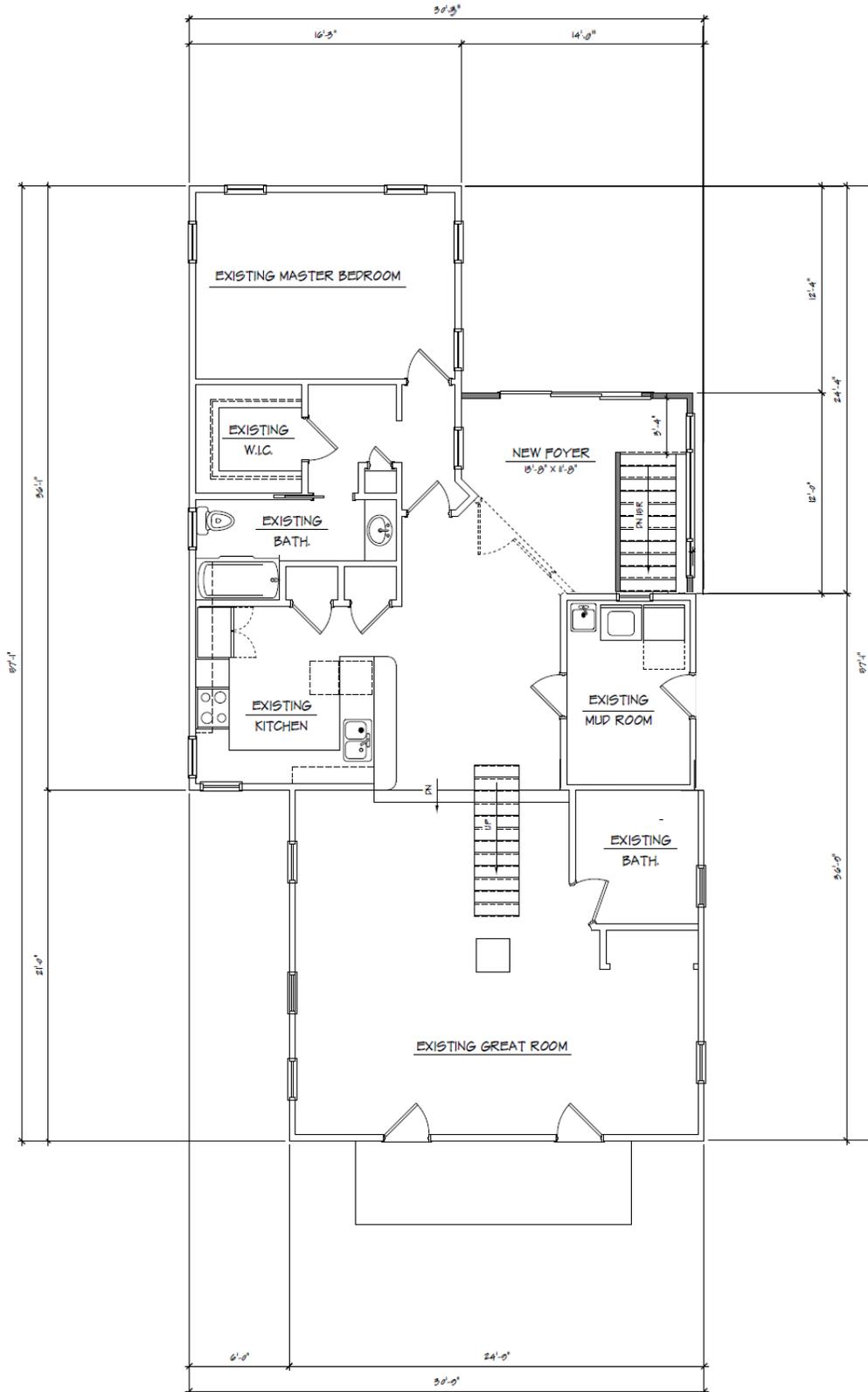
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 Gereszak Addition
 225 Traver Rd.
 Ann Arbor, Michigan
 Sheet Title:
 New Foundation Plan & New Main Floor Plan

Drawn:
 Matt Hagan
 Scale:
 As Shown
 Date:
 20 December 2021

Project Number:
 202106
 Sheet Number:

A1.0

Updated Proposed Floorplan



NEW MAIN FLOOR PLAN

1/4" = 1'-0"



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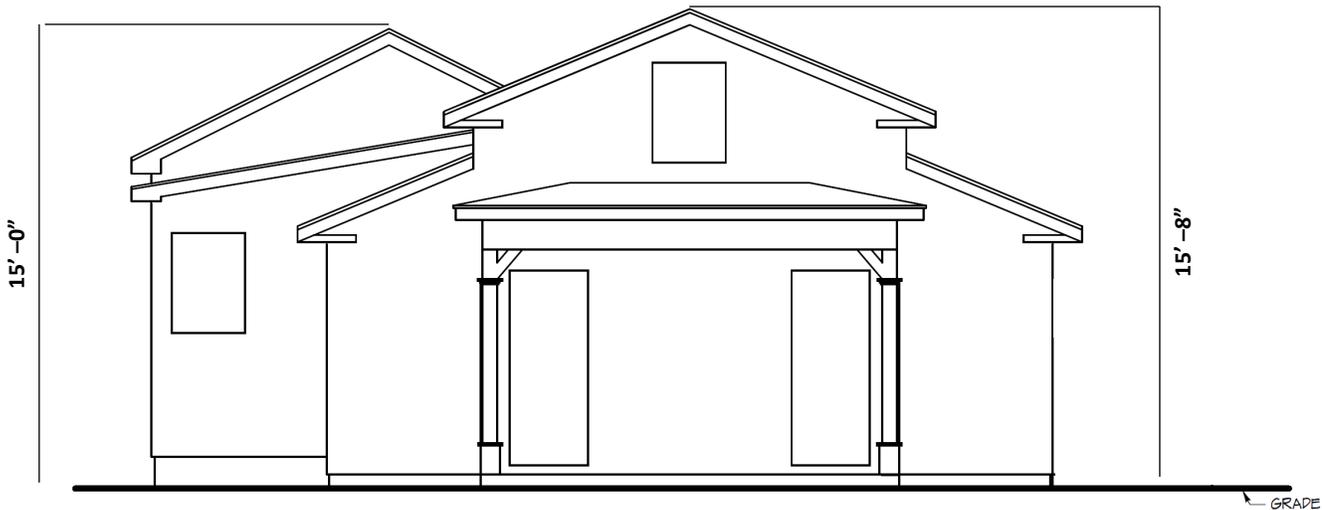
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Matt Haggood
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202106
 Sheet Number:

A1.0

EXISTING



EAST ELEVATION

1/4" = 1'-0"

MEH DESIGN
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734 • 864 • 7409

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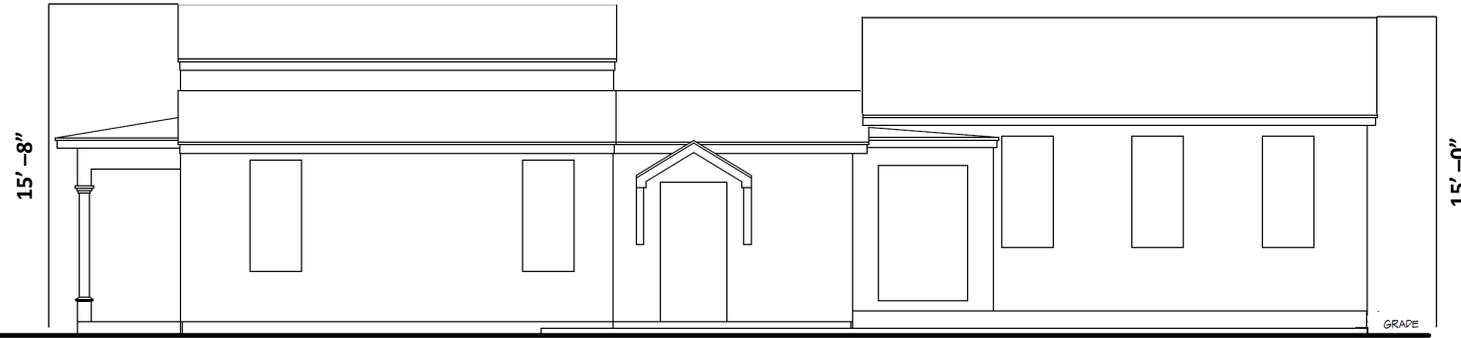
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Matt Hgood
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As Shown
Date:
20 December 2021

Project Number:
20206
Sheet Number:

A1.0

EXISTING



NORTH ELEVATION

1/4" = 1'-0"

MEH DESIGN
• 1049 Jerald Road • Milan, Michigan 48160 •
• 734 • 664 • 7429 •

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20 December 2021

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Issued For:

Preliminary:

Owner Review:

Estimating:

Construction:

Project Name:

Gerscak Addition

225 Traver Rd.

Sheet Title:

New Foundation Plan & New Main Floor Plan

Drawn:

Walt Hgood

Scale:

As Shown

Date:

20 December 2021

Project Number:

20206

Sheet Number:

A1.0

EXISTING



WEST ELEVATION

1/4" = 1'-0"

MEH DESIGN
• 1045 Jewell Road • Milan, Michigan 48060 •
• 734 • 564 • 7400 •

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 - Construction:

Project Name:
Gereszak Addition
223 Traver Rd. Ann Arbor, Michigan
Sheet Title:
New Foundation Plan & New Main Floor Plan

Drawn:
Matt Haggood
Scale:
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Date:
20 December 2021

Project Number:
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Sheet Number:

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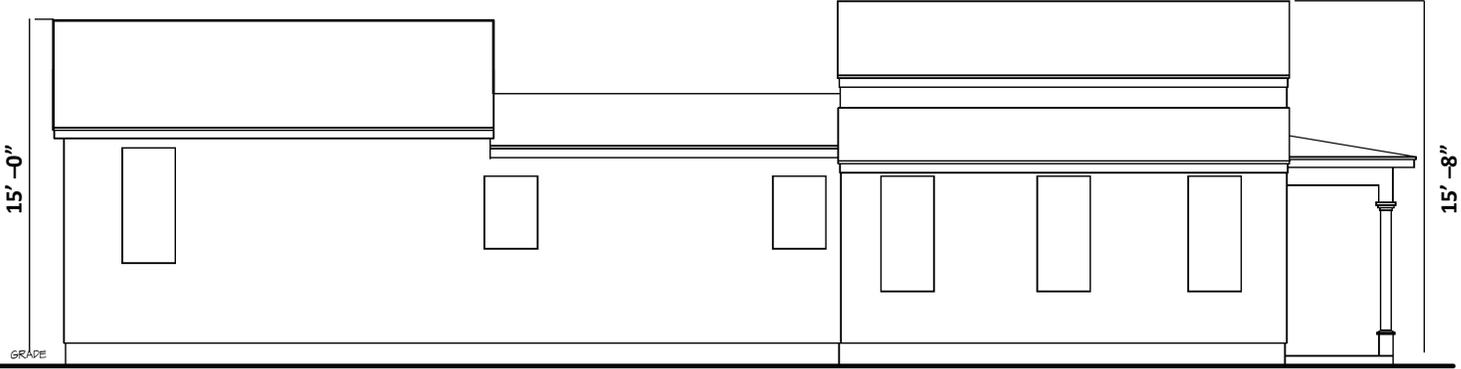
15'-0"

15'-8"

GRADE

GRADE

EXISTING



SOUTH ELEVATION

1/4" = 1'-0"

MEH DESIGN
• 1045 Laurel Road • Midland, Michigan • 48607 •
• 734 • 664 • 7400 •

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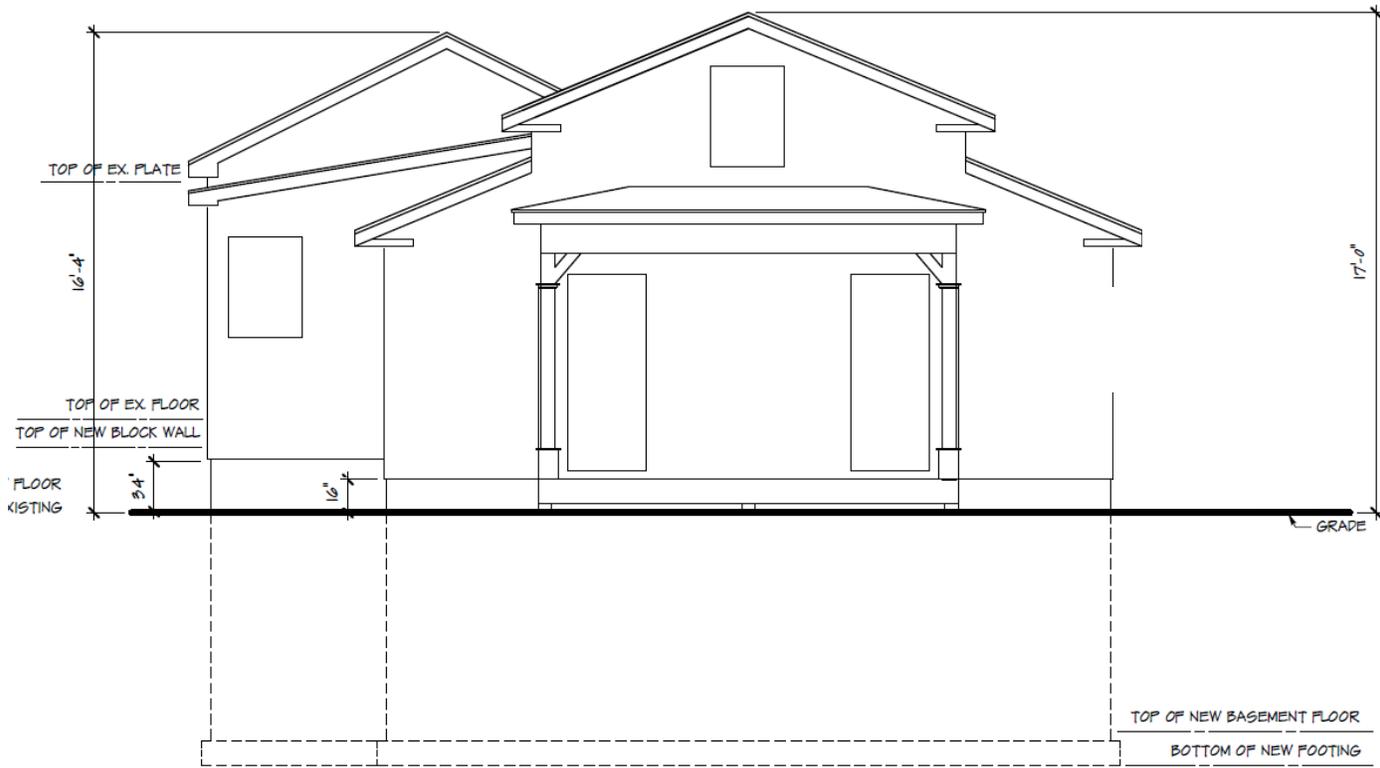
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Gerczak Addition
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Ann Arbor, Michigan
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New Foundation Plan & New Main Floor Plan

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Matt Hgood
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As Shown
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202106
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A1.0

PROPOSED



EAST ELEVATION

1/4" = 1'-0"

MEH DESIGN
 1045 Juvett Road • Salem, Michigan 48160 •
 • 734 • 884 • 7409 •

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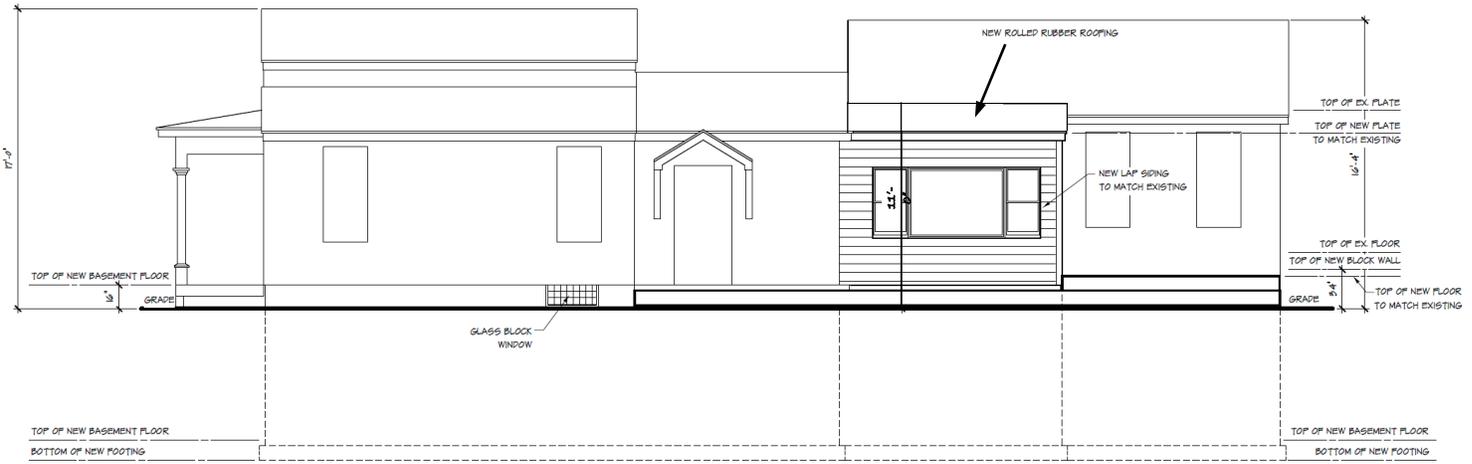
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 Matt Hgood
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 Sheet Number:

A1.0

PROPOSED



NORTH ELEVATION

1/4" = 1'-0"

MEH DESIGN
 • 1045 Jewell Road • Minn. Mallen • 4366 •
 • 734 • 564 • 74 00 •

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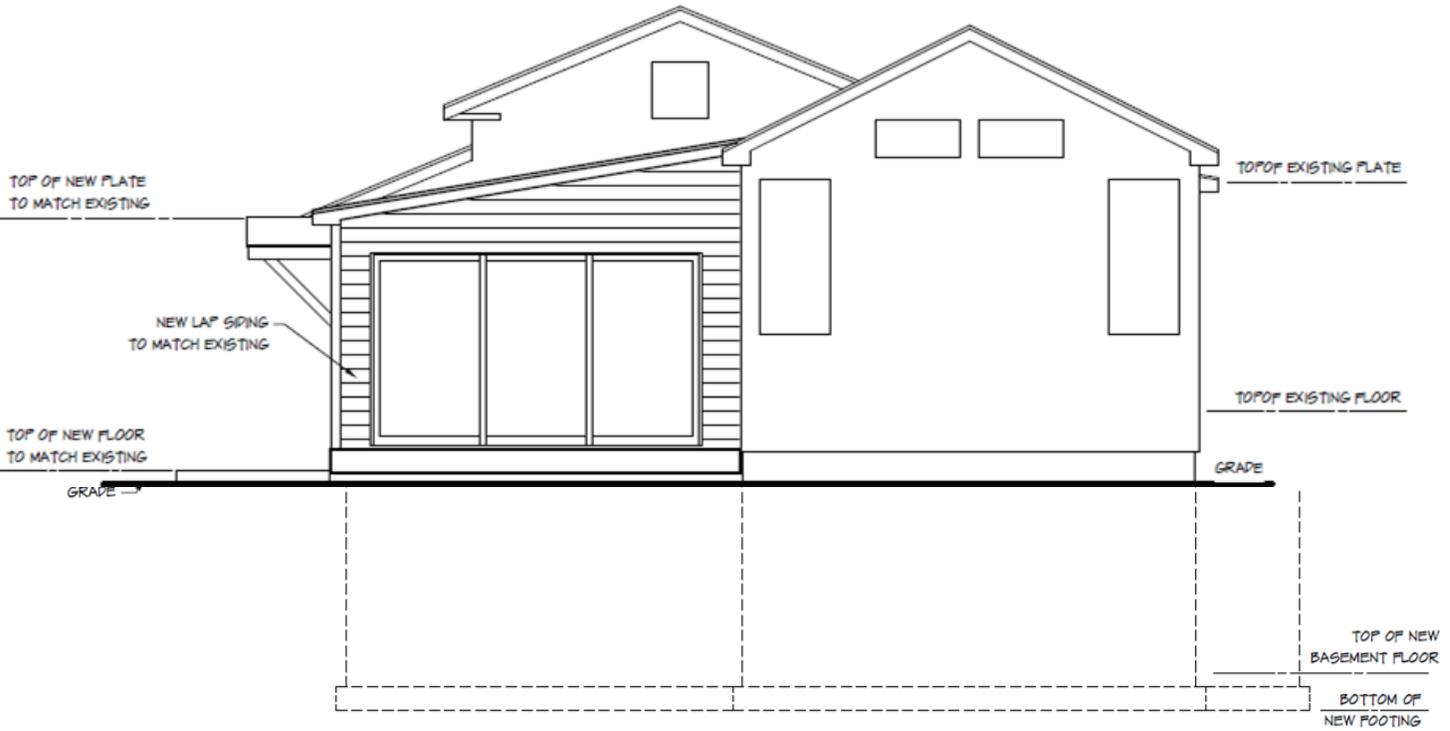
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New Foundation Plan & New Main Floor Plan

Drawn:
 Matt Hagedorn
 Scale:
 As Shown
 Date:
 20 December 2021

Project Number:
 202136
 Sheet Number:

A1.0

PROPOSED



WEST ELEVATION

1/4" = 1'-0"

MEH DESIGN
 1043 Jewell Road • Milan, Michigan 48160 •
 • 734 • 664 • 7400 •

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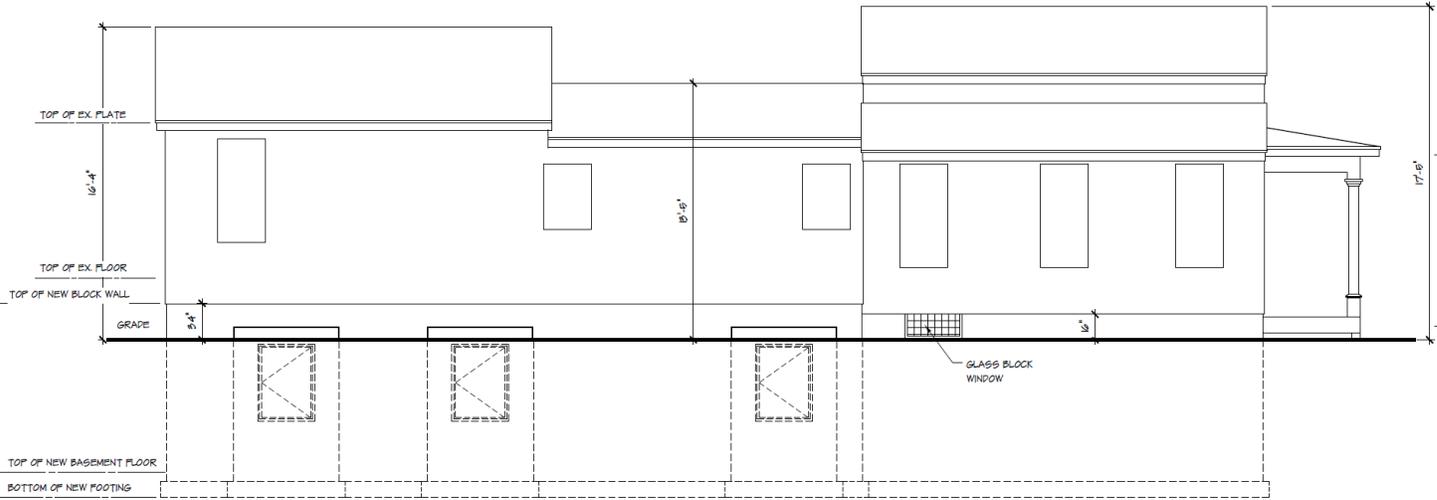
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Project Name:
Gerszak Addition
223 Traver Rd.
 Sheet Title:
Elevations
 Ann Arbor, Michigan

Drawn:
 Mark Tognoli
 Scale:
 As Shown
 Date:
 20 December 2021

Project Number:
202106
 Sheet Number:
A2.0

PROPOSED



SOUTH ELEVATION

1/4" = 1'-0"

MEH DESIGN
 1049 Wood Road • New Michigan 48660
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 Matt Hgood
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A1.0