

ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Staff Report

ADDRESS: 706 West Liberty Street, Application Number HDC23-0060

DISTRICT: Old West Side Historic District

REPORT DATE: May 11, 2023

REPORT PREPARED BY: Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE: Monday May 8, 2023

	OWNER	APPLICANT
Name:	Alex Whatley	Same
Address:	706 W Liberty Street Ann Arbor, MI 48103	
Phone:	(734) 417-1981	

BACKGROUND: The 1867 John Christian Burkhart house features a very symmetrical front façade, with a center entry and vertically aligned four-over-four windows. The porch is a reproduction from the late 1980s, when the missing porch was designed in part based on ghosting found under artificial siding. It also features a hip roof and dentils and decorative wall trim beneath the eaves. Per *Historic Buildings, Ann Arbor, Michigan*, Burkhart was a skilled carpenter who moved to Ann Arbor in 1848 to help build Bethlehem Church. He also built an earlier house across the street at 707 W Liberty.

LOCATION: The site is located on the north side of West Liberty Street, west of Fifth Street and east of Mulholland.

APPLICATION: The applicant seeks HDC approval to pave a gravel drive with concrete to address drainage, ice hazard and accessibility issues.

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.
- (10) New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property will be unimpaired.

From the Secretary of the Interior’s Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (other SOI Guidelines may also apply):

Building Site

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

Identifying, retaining, and preserving buildings and their features as well as features of the site that are important in defining its overall historic character.

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.

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.

From the Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines (other Ann Arbor guidelines may also apply):

Landscape Features

Not Appropriate: Introducing any new building, streetscape, or landscape feature that is out of scale or otherwise inappropriate to the district’s historic character.

Paved Areas

Appropriate: On residential properties, retaining and maintaining existing historic driveways and curb cuts, including “two track” driveways and green space between the driveway and house.

STAFF FINDINGS

1. The current garage either replaced or added on to a smaller structure in the same location sometime after 1947 (per aerial photos). The driveway, which in 1947 did not pass the rear of the house, was extended to the garage at that time.
2. A narrative included with the application details problems with the unpaved driveway that paving would resolve.
3. There is a triangular planting bed along the west side of the main house block, between the house and the driveway. (See the aerial photo at the end of this report and the application photos.) Though not shown on the drawings provided, the applicant told staff that he intends to keep this planting bed, which is appropriate per the *Design Guidelines*. The area behind the northwest corner of the main house and inset by the two-story addition would be paved. The motion is conditioned on keeping the planting bed.

4. The gravel area behind the house is proposed to be expanded to the east by 6-7' when paved, to facilitate the movement of vehicles, extra parking (none is allowed on West Liberty), and kid fun like bike riding and chalk drawing. Because of the large lot width, arrangement of this particular yard, and pavement location behind the house, staff feels this proposal meets the standards used by the HDC. On a different or smaller lot this might be too much concrete that is out of scale with the landscape.
5. Staff recommends approval of the application. The proposed work, as conditioned, is generally compatible in exterior design, arrangement, texture, material and relationship to the rest of the building and the surrounding neighborhood and meets the *Ann Arbor Historic District Guidelines* for paved areas and landscape features, and *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, in particular standards 1, 2 and 10, and the guidelines for building site.

POSSIBLE MOTIONS: (Note that the motion supports staff findings and is only a suggestion. 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.)

I move that the Commission issue a certificate of appropriateness for the application at 706 West Liberty Street, a contributing property in the Old West Side Historic District, to pave the driveway with concrete on the condition that the existing planting bed along the west elevation of the house, in front of the rear addition, is maintained. As conditioned, the work is compatible in exterior design, arrangement, texture, material and relationship to the surrounding resources and meets the *Ann Arbor Historic District Guidelines* for paved areas and landscape features, and *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, in particular standards 1, 2, and 10, and the guidelines for building site.

MOTION WORKSHEET:

I move that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work at 706 West 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: site drawings, photos, narrative

706 W Liberty Street (November 2019, courtesy Google Street View)



706 W Liberty (2010 City Aerial)

