

ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Staff Report

ADDRESS: 117 N Division Street, Application Number HDC24-0171

DISTRICT: Old Fourth Ward Historic District

REPORT DATE: December 12, 2024

REPORT PREPARED BY: Mariana Melin-Corcoran, Associate Planner

REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE: December 9, 2024

OWNER

Name: Doug Milkey
Address: 1440 Ridge Rd
Chelsea, MI 48118
Phone: (734) 475-9773

APPLICANT

Robert Fowler
R Fowler Construction
5550 Fox Run
Saline, MI 48176
(734) 476-4851

BACKGROUND: 117 N Division is a two-and-a-half story Craftsman style building. It has a side gable, shingle roof with a front dormer, as well as a gable over the front entrance (on the east side of the building). The first story is clad in brick and the second story features a stucco exterior and half timbering. There is a one-story brick bump out on the south side of the building and a one-story bump out on the west side (rear) of the house with a stucco/half timbering exterior. Additionally, there is a brick chimney at the south end of the house.

The house first appears on the 1916 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. At the time it was the home of Dr. Albert G. MacKenzie. The building's overall form has not changed much since the period of significance. By the 1931 Sanborn Map, the bump out on the west side of the building had been slightly expanded. From the 1960s until the mid-1990s, Catholic Social Services operated on the site. In the 1960s, the porch was enclosed and converted into offices (now the bump out on the south side of the building). In 1978, the garage at the rear of the house was demolished. The garage was present on the 1948 Sanborn Map, though not the earlier maps. In the early 1980s the rear yard was paved for a surface parking lot. Other minor repairs were completed by Catholic Social Services during their time at 117 N Division.



The entry ramp at the front of the building was installed in 1996, and at the same time the entrance steps were redone.

LOCATION: The site is located on the west side of North Division Street, south of Ann Street and north of Huron Street.

APPLICATION: The applicant seeks HDC approval to install a wood fire escape on the north (side) elevation of the building.

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.
- (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):

Health and Safety

Recommended: Working with local code officials to investigate systems, methods, or devices of equivalent or superior effectiveness and safety to those prescribed by code so that unnecessary alterations can be avoided.

Not Recommended: Radically changing, damaging, or destroying character-defining spaces, features, or finishes when adding a new code-required stairway or elevator.

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.

Placing new additions such as balconies and greenhouses on non-character-defining elevations and limiting and size and scale in relationship to the historic building.

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

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

Additions

Appropriate: Placing a new addition on a non-character defining or inconspicuous elevation and limiting the size and scale in relationship to the historic property.

Not Appropriate: Attaching an addition so that the character-defining features of the property are obscured, damaged, or destroyed.

Designing a new addition so that the size and scale in relation to the historic property are out of proportion.

Safety Codes

Appropriate: Complying with barrier free and safety codes in a manner that ensures the preservation of character-defining features.

When required, adding new stairways and elevators that do not alter existing facilities and spaces of the building.

STAFF FINDINGS:

1. The applicant is proposing a new fire escape stair on the north (side) elevation of the building. It will be attached to the roof of the west (rear) bump out and then run along the north side of the building towards Division Street. According to the applicant, the fire escape is required by code. The structure, stairs, and guardrail will be treated wood. The design is utilitarian and features closed risers and a side-mounted graspable handrail. The balusters are applied to the outsides of an upper and lower rail. Since this is not part of a historic feature of the house like a front porch, that could be found acceptable.
2. An earlier fire escape stair was located at the rear of the house, also attached to the roof of the bump out but then ran along the west (rear) elevation. It was recently removed (date uncertain) when the parking lot at the rear of the house was leveled. The former fire escape was wood. Per the applicant, the proposed location on the north side of the building allows for more efficient use of the parking lot.
3. No historic materials or features would be impacted, compromised, or destroyed by the fire escape stair. Its impacts would be mainly visual. The work is reversible.
4. While typically fire escape stairs are being removed from structures in historic districts, if this one is required by code, it is generally compatible in exterior design, arrangement, material and relationship to the rest of the site and the surrounding area.

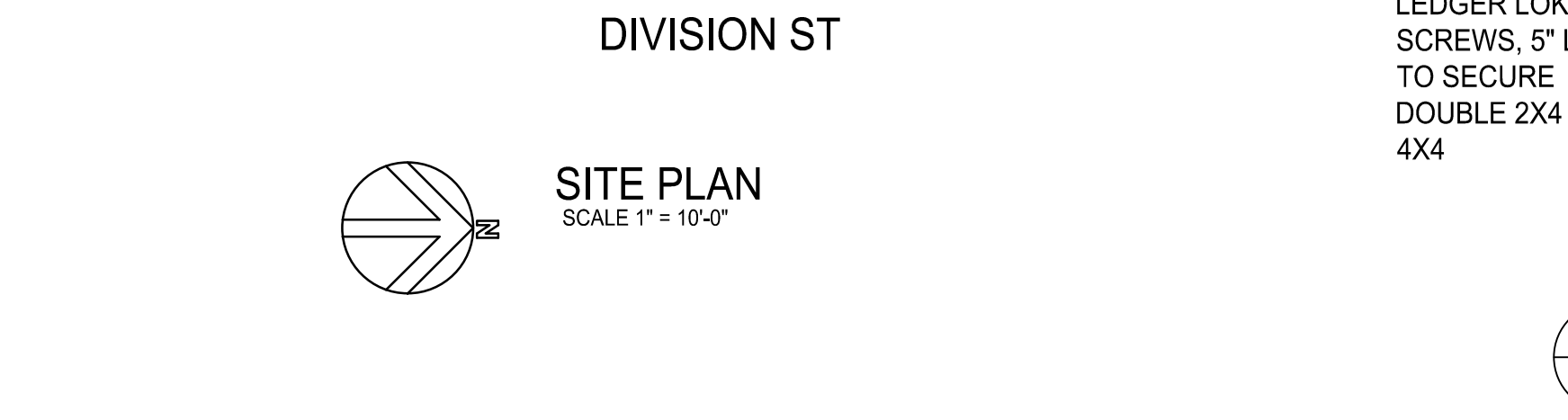
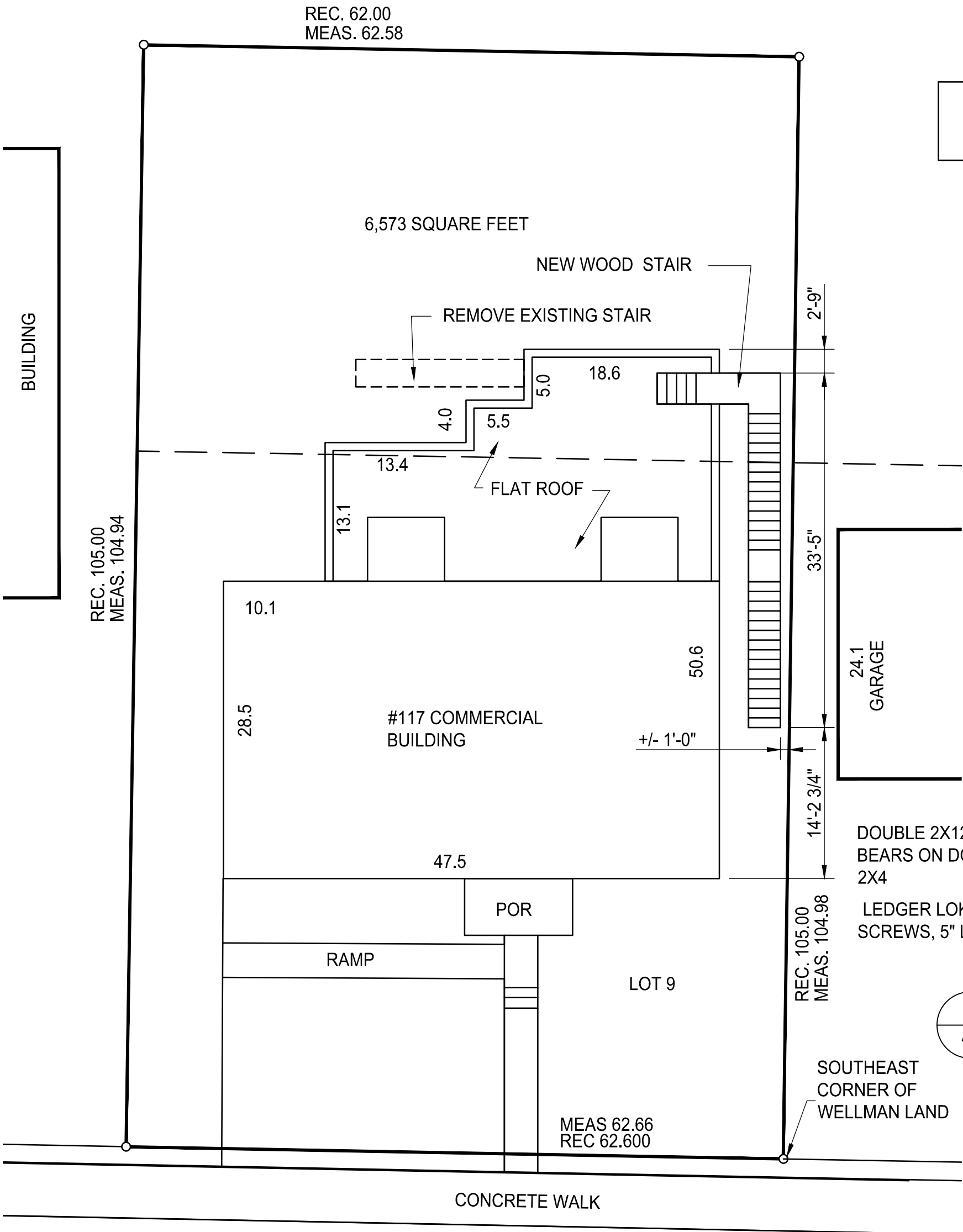
POSSIBLE MOTIONS: (Note that the motion supports staff findings and is only a suggestion. The Review Committee, consisting of staff and at least two Commissioners, will meet with the applicant on site and then make a recommendation at the meeting.)

I move that the Commission issue a certificate of appropriateness for the application at 117 N Division Street, a contributing property in the Old Fourth Ward Historic District, to remove the existing exterior fire escape stair on the rear of the building and construct a new exterior fire escape stair on the north side of the building. As proposed, the work is compatible in exterior design, arrangement, material, and relationship to the building and the surrounding area and meets *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* and *Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, in particular standards 1, 9, and 10 and the guidelines for health and safety and additions, as well as the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines* for additions and safety codes.

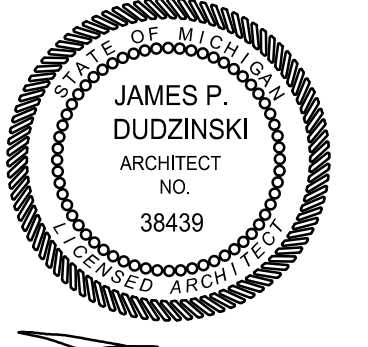
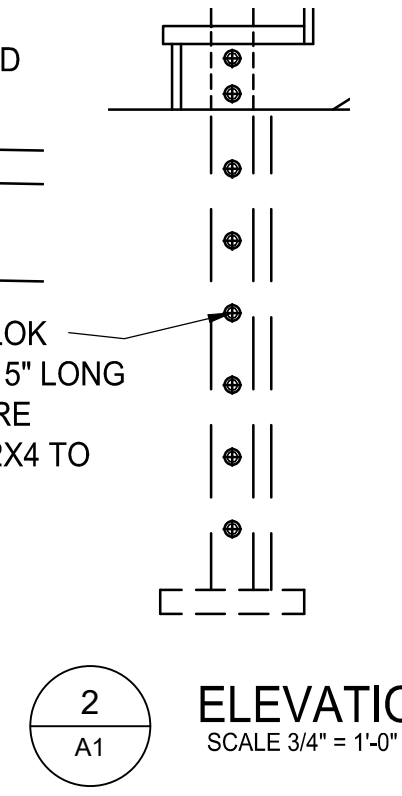
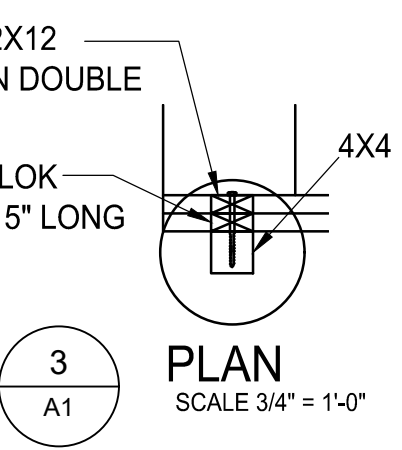
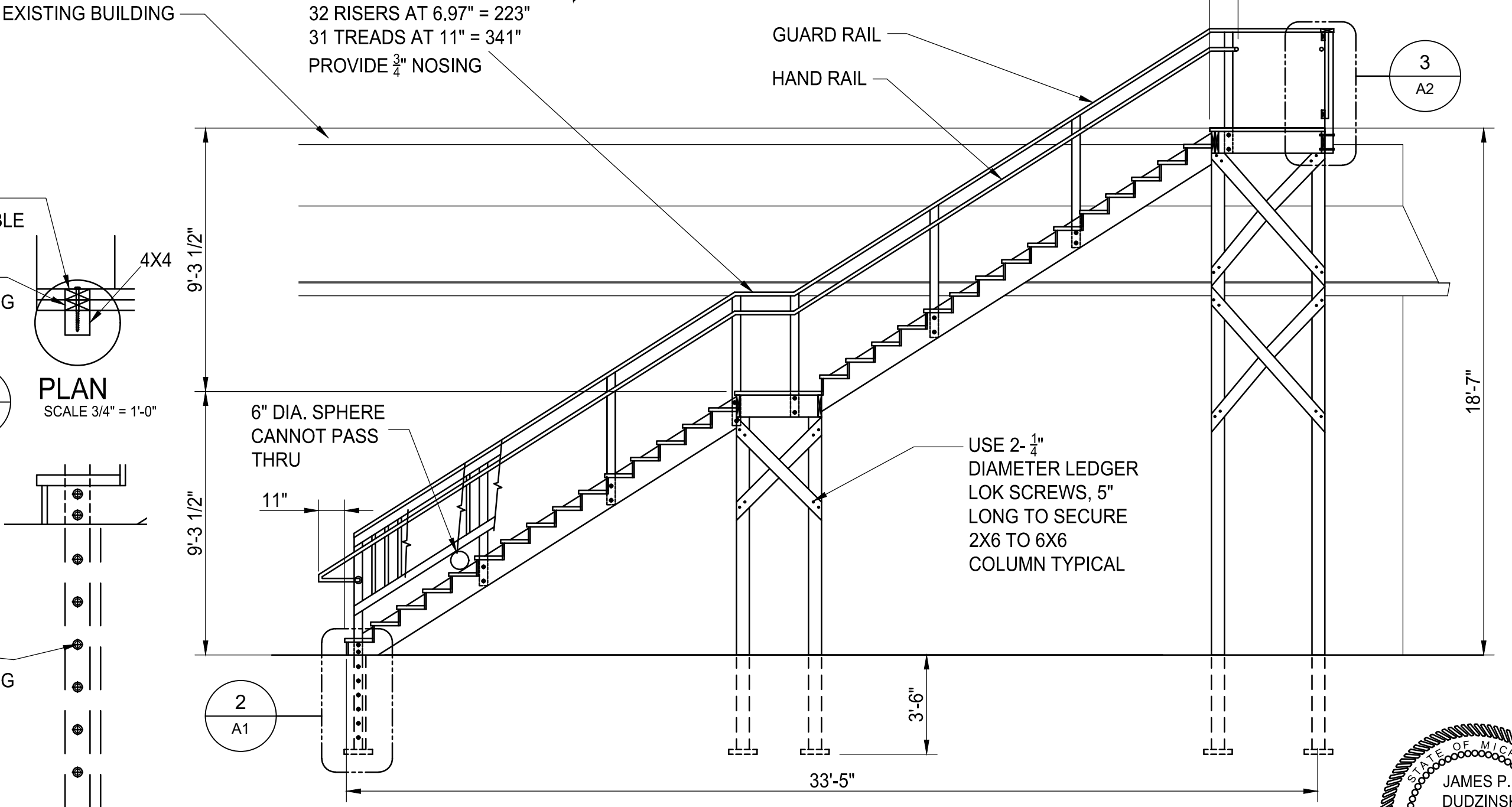
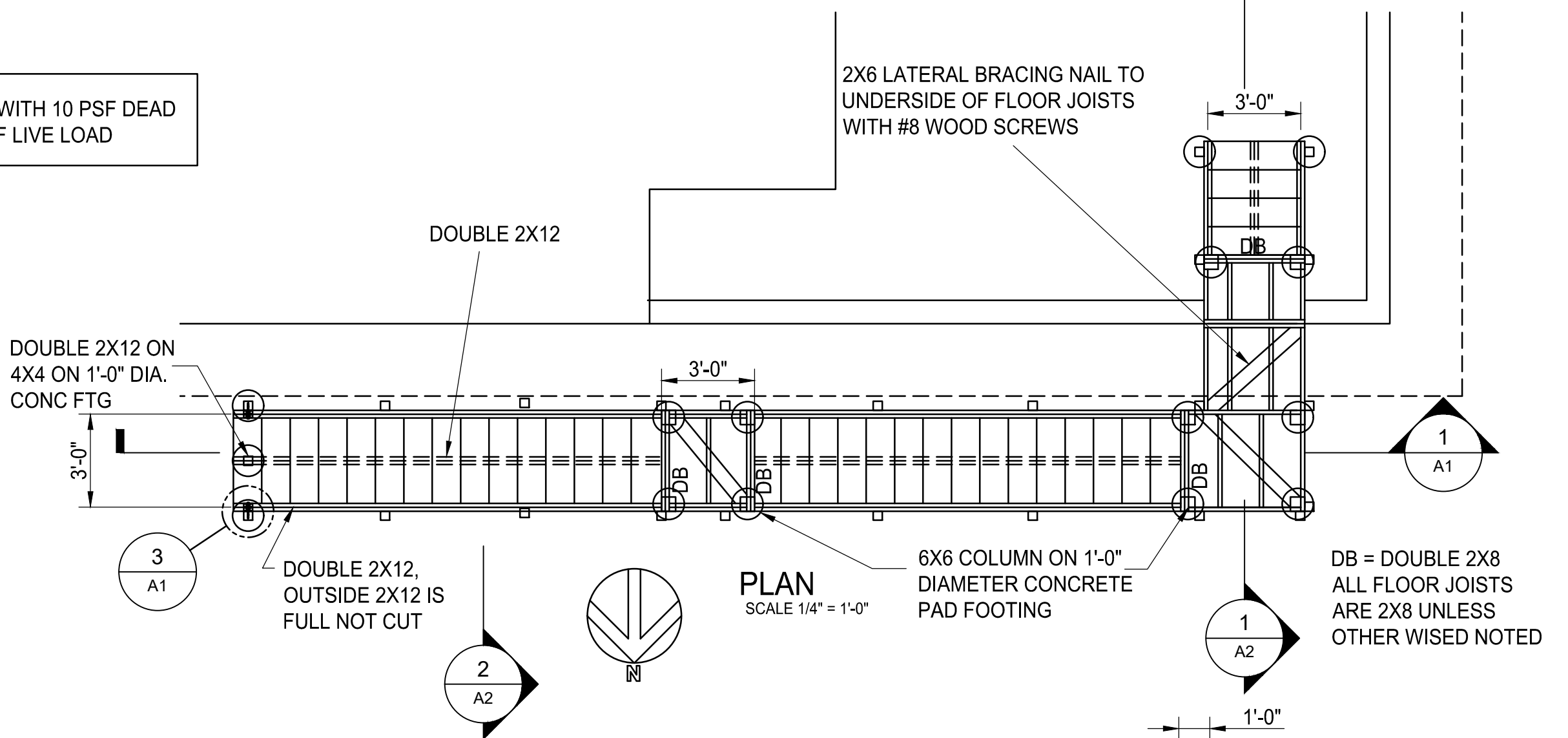
ATTACHMENTS: drawings, photos.


117 N Division (2008 staff photo)





STAIR DESIGNED WITH 10 PSF DEAD LOAD AND 100 PSF LIVE LOAD



 James Dudzinski ARCHITECT 12306 Volpe Sterling Heights, Mi. PH. (586) 864-6930	PROJECT TITLE: NEW STAIR	PROJECT LOCATION: 117 N DIVISION ANN ARBOR, MI	SHEET TITLE: PLAN ELEVATIONS	MARK:	DATE:	ISSUED FOR:	MARK:	DATE:	ISSUED FOR:	SHEET SIZE 18X24	SHEET NO: 1 OF 2 A1
					11/18/22	DRAWN					

