

ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Staff Report

ADDRESS: 609 W Huron Street, Application Number HDC15-135

DISTRICT: Old West Side Historic District

REPORT DATE: August 13, 2015

REPORT PREPARED BY: Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE: August 10, 2015

OWNER

Name: Gloria Grapentine
Address: 609 W Huron St
 Ann Arbor, MI 48103
Phone: (734) 761-2764

APPLICANT

Meadowlark Builders, LLC
 3250 W Liberty St
 Ann Arbor, MI 48103
 (734) 332-1500

BACKGROUND: This well-maintained gable-fronter, which features clapboard siding, double-hung windows, and a red-brick chimney, dates back to at least 1888-1889. It first appears in Polk City Directories occupied by driver Frederick Lutz. The Lutz family owned the house through 1933. There were two other long-term owners of the house: John Spetter from 1935 to 1942, and Homer Roebuck from 1947 to 1955.

In 1931 and earlier the house had a full-width front porch and a small single-story addition on the rear. Today there is a modern one-story addition that is about 10' deep across the full width of the back of the house, plus about eight extra feet to the west that was added in 2001.

LOCATION: The site is located on the south side of West Huron Street, east of North Seventh Street and west of Third Street.

APPLICATION: The applicant seeks HDC approval to construct a 7'0" x 26'1" addition to the side of the home. The addition will include a wheelchair accessible bathroom, laundry, and bedroom expansion.

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 (other SOI Guidelines may also apply):

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.

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.

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.

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.

Building Site

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

Retaining the historic relationship between buildings and the landscape.

Not Recommended: 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.

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

Guidelines for All 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.

Placing new walls in a different plane from the historic structure in a subordinate position to the historic fabric.

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

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's footprint should exceed neither half of the original building's footprint nor half of the original building's total floor area.

Not Appropriate: Designing an addition that overpowers or dramatically alters the original building through size or height.

STAFF FINDINGS:

1. The current homeowner has lived in the house for the last thirty years. She wants to stay in her house as long as possible, but has been afflicted with a medical condition that will require her to use a wheelchair. There is a ground floor bedroom (formerly the dining room) and bathroom in the house now, but both are extremely narrow and not conducive to adaptation for mobility aids like a wheelchair or walker. The homeowner desires to bump out the bedroom and bathroom walls on the east elevation by 7' in order to allow safe passage between them and also make space for a washer and dryer. The laundry is currently located in the basement.
2. Per the city assessor, the house is currently 1,600 square feet. From assessor and Sanborn records, staff estimates that the pre-1944 structure was around 1,310 square feet, including the rear addition that has since been replaced. That translates to 290 square feet of modern addition on the house, which is 22% of the original square footage.

Staff estimates that the original footprint was around 700 square feet. The existing footprint is 980 square feet, which means that additions are currently occupying 40% of the original footprint of the home.

3. The homeowner would like to build a seven foot wide, single-story addition on the east side elevation. The design references motifs from the historic structure (simplicity, siding) as well as the modern rear addition (metal roof, foundation). The preceding additions to the house have shed roofs, which would be repeated here. A pair of large double hung windows on the east elevation would be lost to the addition.

4. There is a 44" diameter silver maple tree in the backyard immediately behind the rear wall of the house. Any rear addition would at best harm and at worst require removal of this landmark tree.
5. Considering the appearance of the addition in terms of the surrounding historic district, it is low-key, compatible, and will blend in with minimal disruption to neighboring structures. While it's not entirely inconspicuous, it accomplishes a number of functions within a small additional footprint that does not overpower or dramatically alter the house.
6. Staff believes the work is sensitive to the house and neighborhood, preserves the large maple tree in the backyard, allows the house to be adapted to the particular needs of the homeowner, and generally meets the Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines, and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

POSSIBLE MOTIONS: (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 then make a recommendation at the meeting.)

I move that the Commission issue a certificate of appropriateness for the application at 609 West Huron Street, a contributing property in the Old West Side Historic District, to construct an addition to the east side of the home, as proposed. The work is compatible in exterior design, arrangement, texture, material and relationship to the rest of 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, 2, 5, 9 and 10 and the guidelines for additions and building site; and the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines* for additions.

MOTION WORKSHEET:

I move that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work at 609 West Huron 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: Application, drawings, photos.

609 W Huron (2008 survey photos)

