

## ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

### Staff Report

**ADDRESS:** 543 Detroit Street, Application Number HDC23-0083

**DISTRICT:** Old Fourth Ward Historic District

**REPORT DATE:** June 8, 2023

**REPORT PREPARED BY:** Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

**REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE:** June 5, 2023

#### OWNER

**Name:** Kloe Ferriman

**Address:**

**Phone:** (216) 849-7325

#### APPLICANT

Abel Thomason  
1205 Westmoorland St  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197  
(734) 320-1844

**BACKGROUND:** The circa 1850s Thorpe-Frank House is one of Ann Arbor's oldest. This Greek Revival was part of John Allen's and Elisha Rumsey's original plat of Ann Arbor in 1824. The 1853 plat map of the city shows the house on this lot, though its exact date of construction is unknown. It is an upright-and-wing style of Greek Revival, with a 1 ¾ story main block that could have been built as early as the 1830s. The one-story wing was added sometime between 1870 and 1888, per Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

In December, 2022 the HDC approved part of an application, to add a shed dormer and rear slider. In March, 2023 the HDC approved an application to construct a lower level addition, a bump out off the rear elevation, a window on the rear elevation, and a vent on the north side elevation.

**LOCATION:** The house is on the west side of Detroit Street, north of East Kingsley and south of the N. Division/Broadway/E. Summit intersection.

**APPLICATION:** The applicant seeks HDC approval to remove the wood siding and trim, reinsulate and install sheathing, then reinstall all salvageable exterior wood plus matching new custom milled cedar siding and cypress trim to match, as necessary.

#### APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

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



- (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 materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will 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.

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

**Wood – Identify, Retain, Preserve**

*Recommended:* Identifying, retaining, and preserving wood features that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building such as siding, cornices, brackets, window architraves, and doorway pediments; and their paints, finishes, and colors.

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

**Wood – Repair**

*Recommended:* Repairing wood features by patching, piecing-in, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing the wood using recognized preservation methods. Repair may also include the limited replacement in kind – or with compatible substitute material – of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of features where there are surviving prototypes such as brackets, molding, or sections of siding.

*Not Recommended:* Replacing an entire wood feature such as a cornice or wall when repair of the wood and limited replacement of deteriorated or missing parts are appropriate.

**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.

*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):**

*Appropriate:* Identifying, retaining, and preserving wood features that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building such as siding, cornices, brackets, window architraves, and door-way pediments; and their paints, finishes, and colors.

## Wood Siding, Trim, & Architectural Details

*Appropriate:* Repairing wood siding, shingles, trim, and architectural features by using recognized preservation methods for patching, consolidating, splicing, and reinforcing in order to exactly match the existing historic material appearance.

Replacing wood siding, shingles, trim, and architectural features that are deteriorated beyond repair with components that exactly match the original in dimension, detail, and texture.

Removing damaged or deteriorated paint to the next sound layer using the gentlest means possible (hand-scraping and hand-sanding), then repainting.

### STAFF FINDINGS:

1. Per an email from the applicant (attached in [STREAM](#)), the current siding is failing and has allowed water into the wall cavity, soaking the cellulose insulation and causing it to slide down the cavity. Rather than remove all of the interior plaster and lathe, the applicant proposes to remove the wood siding and trim, reinsulate and install sheathing, then reinstall all salvageable exterior wood.
2. An estimate of the amount of siding that can be reused is not indicated. The applicant's email states that salvaged materials will be reused on the front elevation, and "continue with matched materials the rest of the way." Siding and trim would be custom milled to match the existing, with premium clear cedar bevel siding and trim mill from cypress.
3. Since this is a larger replacement than staff typically approves, and for different reasons (failing siding and missing sheathing), the Historic District Commission is reviewing this application.
4. Staff believes the work is necessary to waterproof the house. At the Review Committee site visit, staff and commissioners will get a better sense of the current condition of the siding, and request more information on the amount of siding that is likely salvageable.

**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 543 Detroit Street, a contributing property in the Old Fourth Ward Historic District, to remove the wood siding and trim, reinsulate and install sheathing, then reinstall all salvageable exterior wood plus matching new custom milled cedar siding and cypress trim to match, 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 2, 5 and 9 and the guidelines for building site and wood; and the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines* for wood siding, trim and architectural details.

**ATTACHMENTS:** photos, drawings

543 Detroit Street (2004 File Photo, taken shortly after aluminum siding was removed)

