

ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Staff Report

ADDRESS: 541 S Ashley Street, Application Number HDC22-1078

DISTRICT: Old West Side Historic District

REPORT DATE: May 12, 2022

REPORT PREPARED BY: Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE: May 9, 2022

OWNER

APPLICANT

Name: Elizabeth Friedman

Same

Address: 541 S Ashley St
Ann Arbor, MI 49103

Phone:

BACKGROUND: This 2 story Queen Anne features a cut stone foundation, street-facing gable with decorative trim and shingle work, a box-bay window on the front elevation, a two-story cross gable, and side entry porch. The house first appears in the Glen V. Mills City Directory in 1894 as the home of painter Charles A. Heath, at number 95. C.W. Gill lived in the home from 1898 until the 1930s.

LOCATION: The property is located on the east side of South Ashley Street, north of West Madison and south of West Jefferson Streets.

APPLICATION: The applicant seeks HDC approval to install a solar array consisting of three sections of black-on-black panels on the roof's south and east faces.

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.
- (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:

Roofs

Recommended: Identifying, retaining, and preserving roofs--and their functional and decorative features—that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building.

Not Recommended: Changing the configuration of a roof by adding new features such as dormer windows, vents, or skylights so that the historic character is diminished.

Energy Efficiency

Recommended: Placing a new addition that may be necessary to increase energy efficiency on non-character-defining elevations.

Not Recommended: Designing a new addition which obscures, damages, or destroys character-defining features.

Mechanical Equipment

Recommended: Providing adequate structural support for new mechanical equipment.

Not Recommended: Failing to consider the weight and design of new mechanical equipment so that, as a result, historic structural members or finished surfaces are weakened or cracked.

Installing a new mechanical system so that character-defining structural or interior features are radically changed, damaged, or destroyed.

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

Solar

Appropriate: Mounting solar panels at grade or on ground pole mountings. In the absence of an appropriate ground-based mounting location, panels should be mounted on side or rear facing roof surfaces.

Installing mechanical and service equipment on the roof related to the solar units and their related devices so that they are inconspicuous from the public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure character-defining features.

For sloped roof installations, mounting solar panels parallel to and within 8" of roof surface.

Not Appropriate: Mounting solar panels and their related devices on primary elevations or roofs that face the primary elevation or in planes that are highly visible from the street view. This location has the highest impact on the historic character of the historic building and all other options should be thoroughly explored.

Any other alteration or installation procedure that will cause irreversible changes to historic features or materials.

STAFF FINDINGS:

1. The application proposes to install an array of thirteen solar panels on the south (side) and east (rear) facing roof, in three sections. Two of the sections would qualify for staff approval, but the section on facing south near the front of the house requires HDC review. Black modules with black framing are appropriately proposed. The roof has dark brown/gray asphalt shingles. The service panel and meter would be located on the north (side) elevation near an existing air conditioning unit.
2. Nine panels would cover most of the south-facing roof on the front portion of the house. Staff believes the panels will not be a visual distraction from the historic house or nearby properties.
3. Staff believes that the materials and design of the solar panels are compatible with the existing structure, neighboring buildings, and the surrounding historic district, and meet both the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines*.

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.)

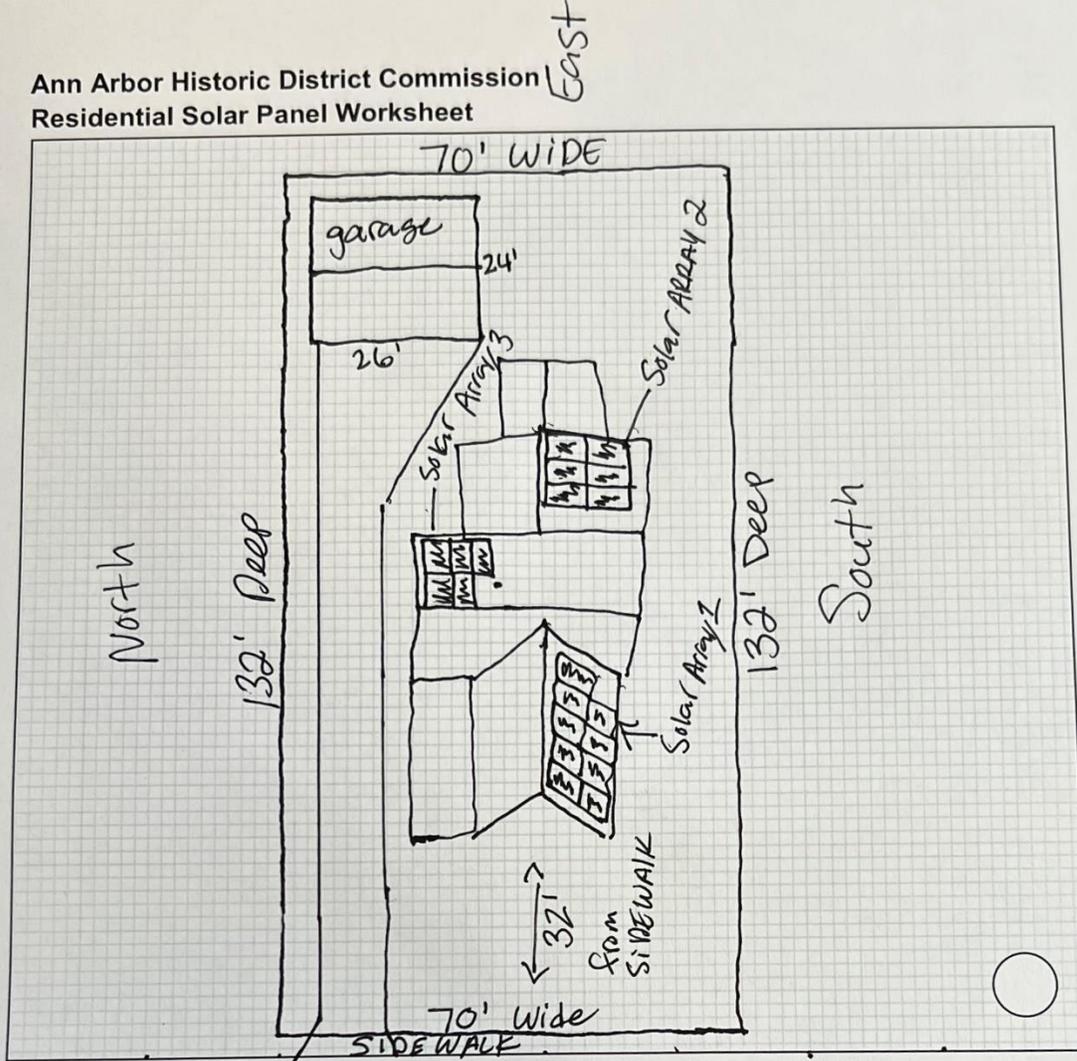
I move that the Commission issue a certificate of appropriateness for the application at 541 South Ashley Street, a contributing property in the Old West Side Historic District, to install a black-on-black solar array in three sections, as proposed. The work is compatible in exterior design, arrangement, 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, 9 and 10 and the guidelines for roofs, energy efficiency, and mechanical systems, as well as the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines*, particularly as they pertain to solar installations.

ATTACHMENTS: application, roof plan, photos

541 S Ashley Street (November 2018, Google Street View)



Ann Arbor Historic District Commission
Residential Solar Panel Worksheet



1. Drawing scale: 1 square =
2. Roof pitch(es)
3. Roof color and material
4. Solar panel color
5. Frame color
6. Size of individual panel(s)
7. Overall dimensions of installation
8. Sketch Lot plan and provide Lot dimensions
9. Show Building footprint and Roof ridge(s)
10. Label approximate distances to property lines
11. Identify north/south
12. Indicate location of adjacent street(s)
13. Show significant roof accessories (dormers, chimneys)

West

2 Foot
10/12
Gray
Black on Black
Black
72" x 40"

Install 20 panels
9 on South Array 1 = 180 SQF
6 on South Array 2 = 120 SQF
5 on Back East Array 3 = 100 SQF



East

North

South

West

-Install 20 Solar panels on the South and East roofs. The roof faces 180 degrees South and 90 degrees East. The roof has a 40-degree 10/12 pitch.



