

# ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

## Staff Report

**ADDRESS:** 549 S First Street Application Number HDC24-0095

**DISTRICT:** Old West Side Historic District

**REPORT DATE:** July 11, 2024

**REPORT PREPARED BY:** Mariana Melin-Corcoran, Associate Planner

**REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE:** July 8, 2024

### OWNER

**Name:** Nick Collins  
**Address:**  
**Phone:** (646) 246-8246

### APPLICANT

Kasey Vliet  
 4621 Freedom Dr  
 Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
 (734) 210-0310

**BACKGROUND:** This home first appears in City Directories in 1896 as number 99, the home of contractor Henry Koch and his wife Mary. Christian G. Koch, a mason, lived across the street at number 96, and both worked for Koch Brothers construction, which built many of Ann Arbor's most notable buildings. Henry and Mary's son Harold was a founding member of the Old West Side Association. The house is a two-story gable-fronter with corner returns, a brick chimney, a second-floor triple window facing the street, a stone front porch with wing walls and round, tapered half columns, a front window with a leaded glass transom, and a cut stone and natural stone foundation.

On 1931 and 1948 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps the rear wing of this two-story house is a single story, with a small covered porch infilling the northeast corner. At some point the one-story wing received a second-floor addition with a hipped roof.

**LOCATION:** The site is located on the east side of South First Street, north of West Madison and south of West Jefferson.

**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 Boral siding and trim as necessary. The applicant also proposes to remove and rebuild the deteriorated porch on the front of the house. Non-original materials would be removed and replaced with wood, and original wood features that are beyond repair will be



replaced with matching materials in matching dimensions. Please note that this application does not include the stone foundation and cobblestone porch walls because they were approved to be rebuilt at the November 9, 2023, HDC meeting (Application Number HDC23-0187).

## **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):**

#### **Entrances and Porches**

*Recommended:* Designing and constructing additional entrances or porches on secondary elevations when required for the new use in a manner that preserves the historic character of the building (i.e., ensuring that the new entrance or porch is clearly subordinate to historic primary entrances or porches).

*Not Recommended:* Constructing secondary or service entrances and porches that are incompatible in size and scale or detailing with the historic building or that obscure, damage, or destroy character-defining features.

#### **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.

## **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. This includes the roof-shape, such as cupolas, cresting, chimneys and weathervanes; and roofing material such as slate, wood, clay tile, and metal, as well as its size, color, and patterning.

## **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.

## **Residential Porches**

### *Appropriate:*

Using replacement features that match the documented historic design. If no documentation exists, using a simple, plain design.

Repairing and maintaining all porches and not allowing them to deteriorate. Repairs which match the original in scale, material, and design are not considered changes.

Replacing a porch which has deteriorated beyond repair, using physical evidence to guide the new work.

### *Not Appropriate:*

Removing or radically changing an entrance or porch which is important in defining the historic character of the property.

## **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. As detailed in the application, many elements of the porch have severely deteriorated, including the wood columns, floor structure, and floorboards. The applicant proposes replacing the deteriorated wood columns with columns matching in dimension and material and replacing the floorboards with matching wood boards that run perpendicular to the house. Additionally, the floor structure does not meet current building code, so it would be reconstructed to meet code. The existing wood handrail will be replaced in the same location with a simple wood handrail that matches in materials and dimensions. In addition, a top mounted metal graspable handrail will be installed.
2. Many of the roof elements over the porch, like the structural beams, fascia, and overhangs, feature non-historic aluminum wrapping. The applicant proposes removing the non-historic wrapping and replacing the underlying wood with Boral in matching dimensions. The slightly pitched shape of the porch roof will be maintained, but the existing metal porch roofing would be replaced with a membrane roof. Though the material will change, the roof is minimally visible from the porch or right of way. The abutting siding will be carefully removed and salvaged.
3. The work is more extensive than most porch rehabilitation projects, but staff believes a rebuild using the historic design and matching materials is appropriate due to the extent of deterioration. Staff believes limited use of Boral as a substitute for wood is appropriate.
4. As detailed in the application, much of the historic wood siding is in disrepair due to dry rot, mold, and significant cracking or the original siding has already been replaced. Generally, the footers, fascia boards, window trim, and roofline are non-historic materials. The applicant has calculated that of the existing siding and trim, 54% is non-historic or already approved for replacement. The applicant proposes removing all siding, carefully salvaging the original siding material that is repairable. Then a weather barrier will be installed underneath the siding. The salvageable historic siding will be placed on the most visible elevations, starting with the street-facing side, and then covering as much of the side and rear elevations as possible. The historic siding that is beyond repair will be replaced with wood siding to match the historic in material and dimension. The non-historic or deteriorated trim will be replaced with Boral trim.
5. Though much of the original siding will be replaced, staff recommends approval given the extent of the damage and the amount of existing non-historic siding. The Boral siding and trim are an appropriate replacement while being distinct from the historic materials.

**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.)

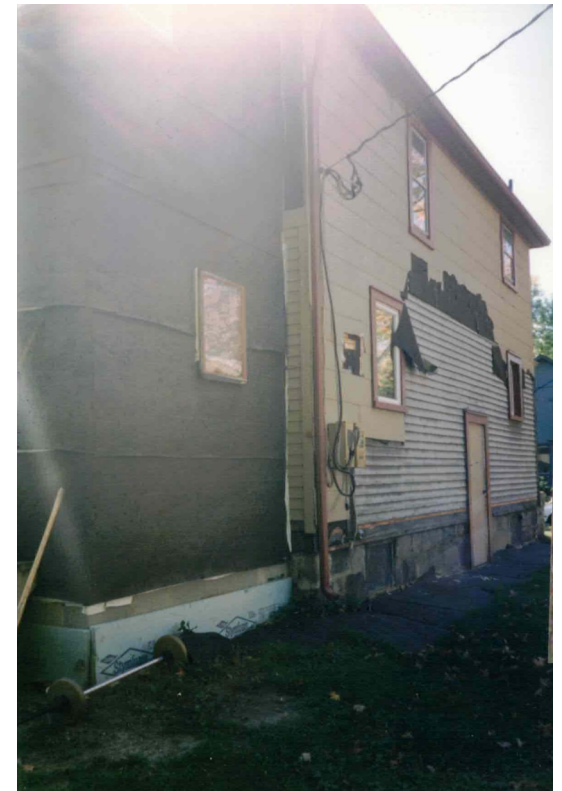
I move that the Commission issue a certificate of appropriateness for the application at 549 S First Street, a contributing property in the Old West Side Historic District, to remove and rebuild the front porch and roof and to remove and replace deteriorated siding, as proposed. The work is compatible in exterior design, arrangement, and material 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 2, 5 and 9 and the guidelines for entrances and porches, wood, building site, and roofs; as well as the Ann Arbor Historic District Guidelines for residential porches and wood siding, trim, and architectural details.

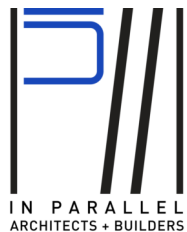
**ATTACHMENTS:** application materials, photos, drawings



photos taken at 1994



# **549 S 1ST STREET - SIDING, TRIM AND PORCH RESTORATION AND REPLACEMENT**



HOUSE IN A  
HOUSE

06/21/24

**HDC-0**

## SITUATION:

The owner is rehabilitating a neglected historic property and their intent is to repair and preserve the house, not change its exterior character. We would like to restore the original materials of the house.

The original exterior materials of the house are not in good condition. After a thorough quantitative analysis, we have found

1. **22%** of the existing wood siding is irrefutably bad (dry rot, mold, significant checking and cracking, etc.)
2. **27%** of the existing wood siding is not historic; the entire east facade was installed during a post-1940s addition
3. Many footers and fascia boards are non-original and also rotting or destroyed
4. Every window and roofline is trimmed with non-historic aluminum
5. In addition to the clearly bad **22%**, **16% of the historic exterior** has already been approved to be replaced due to patching removed elements from our previous approved application.
6. Adding the non-historic trim and fascia to this number results in **54% of the building surface area** being either non-historic or already approved for replacement.
7. There is currently no weather barrier installed underneath the siding, and therefore none of the home, the historic, or non-historic siding is being adequately preserved.

## PROPOSAL:

Given the extent of this complete house repair, and the desire to preserve this great effort for as long as possible, we propose:

1. Removing the non-historic aluminum trims, salvaging any intact historic trims, and replacing rotted trims where necessary with Boral trims in the original character of the house.
2. Properly install a weather barrier underneath the siding of the house as a preventive preservation measure, which requires removing entire facades.

With respect to the criticality of exterior materials' contribution to a historic property and neighborhood character and we will carefully salvage the remaining **51% of original siding material** and place it in the most visible elevations from the public/street in this priority:

- a. Front (west) facade
- b. South facade
- c. North facade
- d. East facade

We reiterate that a proper weather barrier is a critical method of preservation that was not available at the time of original construction. Given the large amount of siding and trims already being replaced, and the extent of the work being done, the owner respectfully implores the historic district commission to approve this preventive measure to prevent future degradation.



HOUSE IN A  
HOUSE

06/21/24

*SIDING AND TRIM*

***HDC-1***



1



2



3



DRY ROT AND SPLITTING -  
REPLACE

REMOVE AND REPLACE FOR  
NEW ROOFING TIE-IN @ WALL

HOLES @ COLUMN TOPS, TYP.

"BLISTERING" ON FACE OF BOARDS  
BENEATH PORCH, TYP.

DRY-ROT, SPLITTING, SCREWED  
THROUGH FACES -  
REPLACE

BOTTOM "BELT" TRIM AND  
BEVELED TRIM FULL OF  
PENETRATION, HOLES, NOT  
HISTORIC TREATED LUMBER -  
REPLACE W/ BORAL - TYP.

TEMP. REMOVE AND SALVAGE  
SIDING TO PATCH VENT

~127 SF  
TOTAL SIDING AREA ~325 SF  
TOTAL NON HISTORICAL TRIM ~39 SF

SIDING DRY ROT AND SPLITTING -  
REPLACE

SPLIT BOARD -  
REPLACE

SPLIT BOARDS -  
REPLACE

DRY-ROT AT COLUMN BOTTOMS, TYP. -  
REPLACE

SPLIT BOARDS BEYOND -  
REPLACE

**WEST ELEVATION**

1/8" = 1'-0"



HOUSE IN A  
HOUSE

06/21/24

**WEST ELEVATION**

**HDC-2**



1

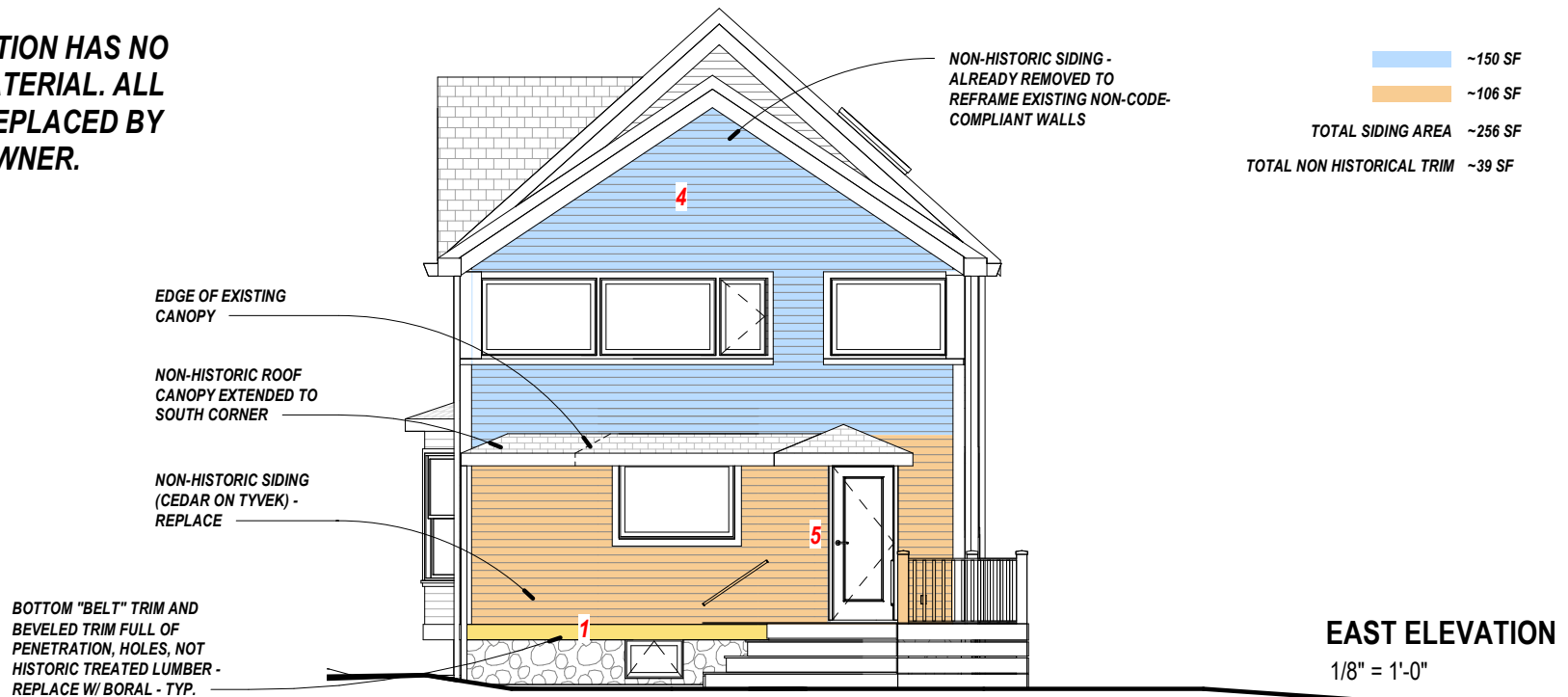


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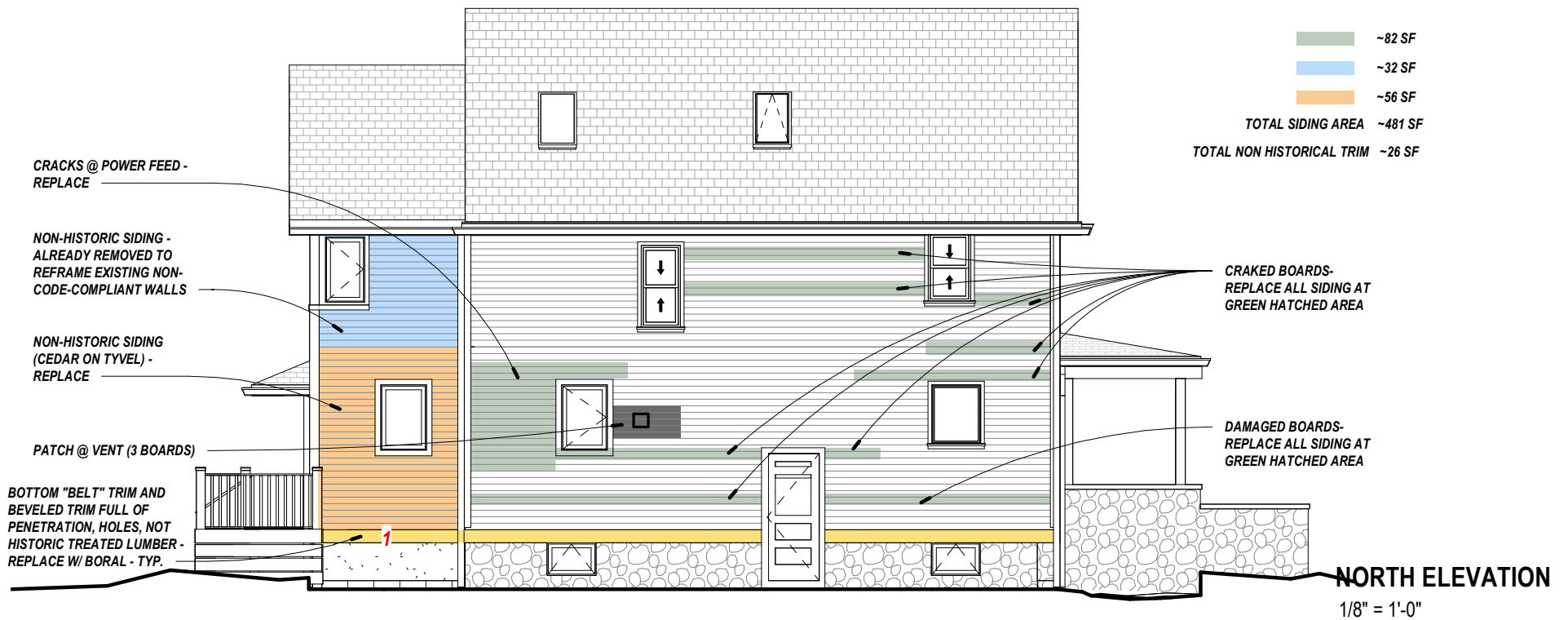
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**EAST ELEVATION HAS NO HISTORIC MATERIAL. ALL HAS BEEN REPLACED BY PREVIOUS OWNER.**





1



HOUSE IN A  
HOUSE

06/21/24

NORTH ELEVATION

HDC-4



1



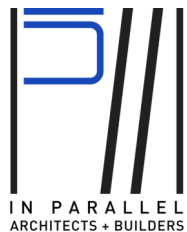
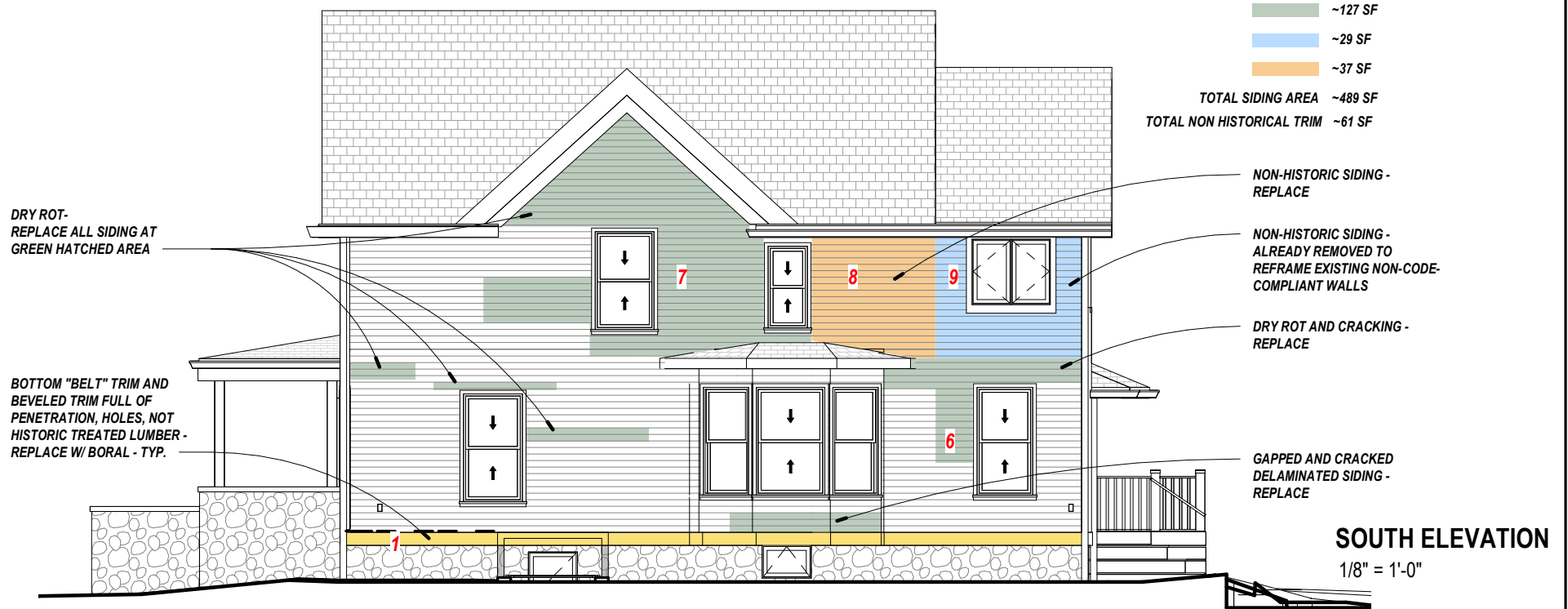
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7



8, 9



HOUSE IN A  
HOUSE

06/21/24

SOUTH ELEVATION

**HDC-5**



## SITUATION:

1. The existing porch foundation walls have been previously approved by the HDC in our first application to be reconstructed using reinforced concrete block below grade, and to repair/re-mortar the existing stones in their original locations above grade.
2. Upon construction, we also found that the existing porch structure is compromised and requires repair:
  - a. It is falling apart with rotted and damaged columns and dry-rotted porch floor boards.
  - b. The wood framed floor structure is integral to the field stone walls, and therefore would need to be deconstructed.
  - c. The wood framed floor structure does not meet current building code
  - d. There is an abundance of non-historic aluminum wrapping around the structural roof beams, fascia, and overhangs.

## PROPOSAL:

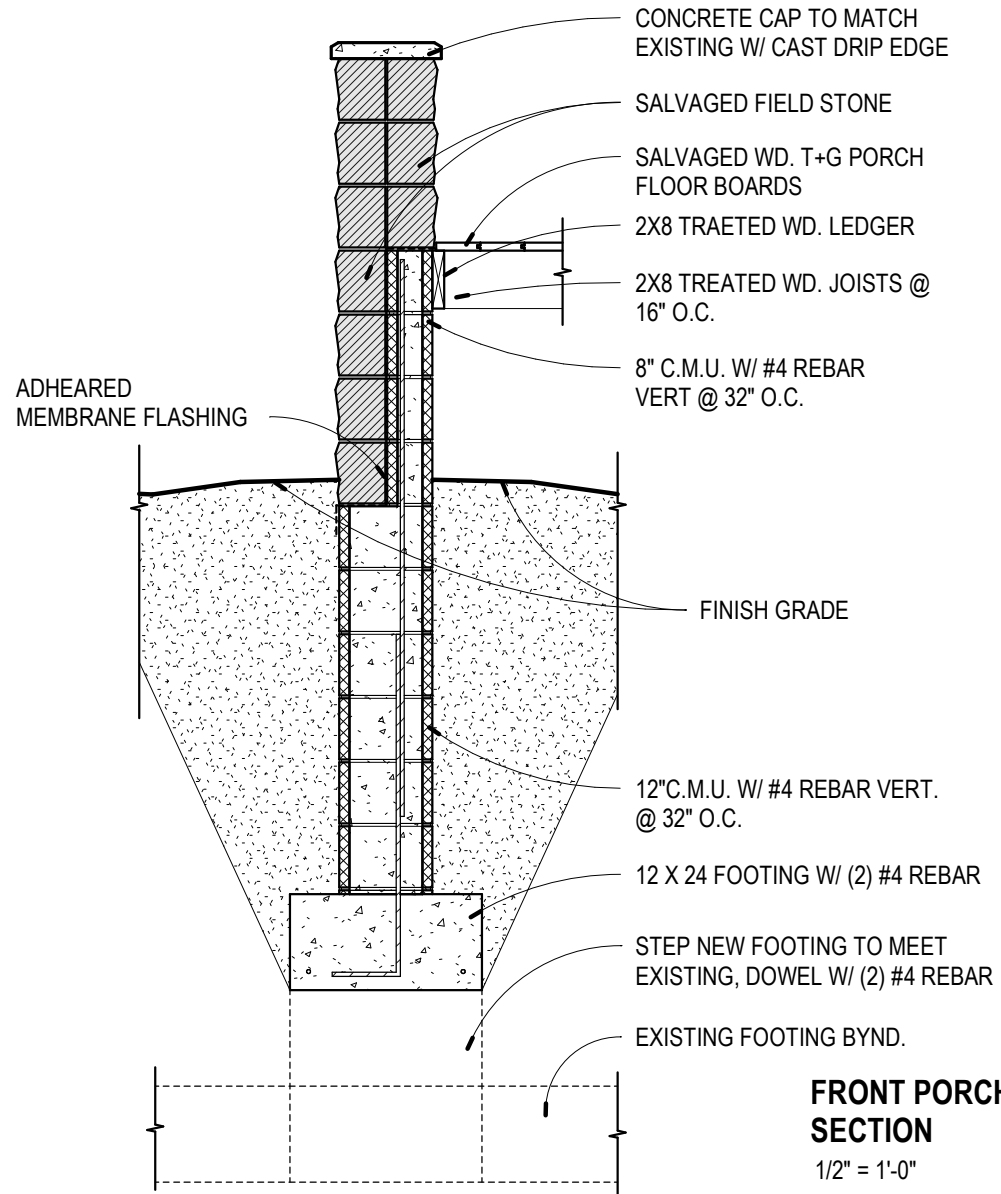
1. We would like to restore the porch to its original appearance by replacing rotten and damaged material documented in this application:
  1. Reconstruct the porch floor structure to meet or exceed current building code
  2. Remove the non-historic aluminum wrapping around the structural roof beams, fascia, and overhangs, preserving any intact historic trim underneath, and replacing where necessary with identical material and style
2. We propose to replace the existing metal porch roofing with a membrane roof, which requires careful removal and salvage of abutting siding.

During our previous appearance before the HDC, there was much discussion about the inconsistent mortar work around the house, and the especially poor existing condition of the porch. Given the dramatic forthcoming improvement in the stonework, the poor condition of the porch structure will further stand out and degrade the appearance of the house on its most visible facade. We believe the above front porch improvements will create a more walkable neighborhood while changing none of the original intended character.



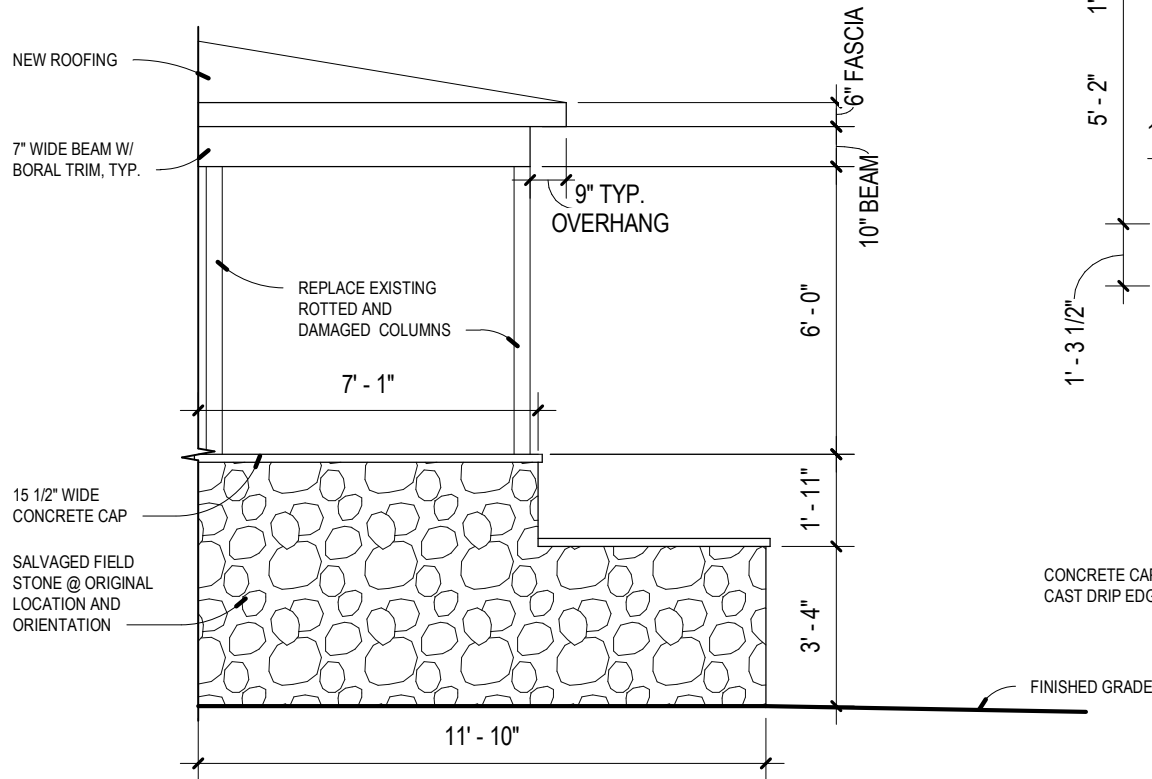


SOME 1X3 T+G  
PORCH FLOOR  
BOARDS ARE  
DRY ROTTED

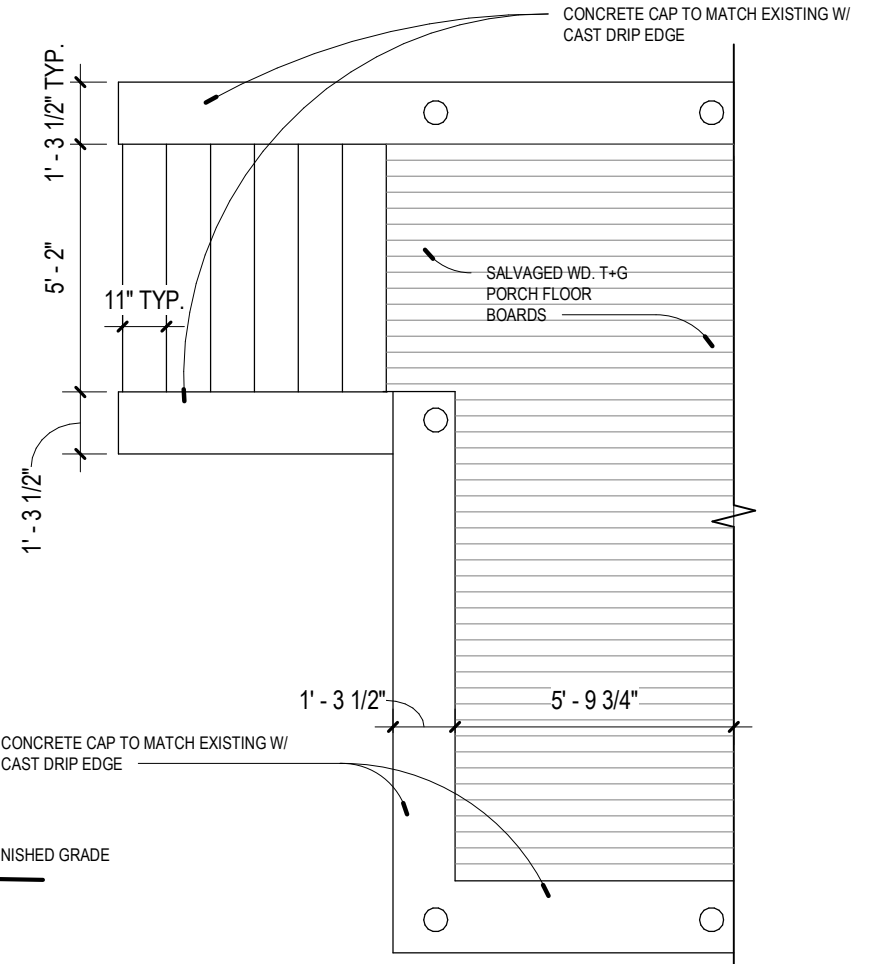


**FRONT PORCH CONCEPT  
SECTION**

1/2" = 1'-0"



**ENLARGED PORCH EXTERIOR  
ELEVATION - NORTH**  
1/4" = 1'-0"



**PORCH PLAN**  
1/4" = 1'-0"

