

ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Staff Report

ADDRESS: 526 Detroit Street, Application Number HDC23-0178

DISTRICT: Old Fourth Ward Historic District

REPORT DATE: October 12, 2023

REPORT PREPARED BY: Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE: Tuesday, October 10, 2023

OWNER

Name: 511 East Ann St., LLC
Address: 201 East Ann Street
 Ann Arbor, MI 48104

APPLICANT

Robert Burroughs/OX Studio, Inc
 2374 Oak Valley Dr, Suite 180
 Ann Arbor, MI 48103

BACKGROUND: This 1 1/2-story gable-front cottage features wood lap siding, a sculpted block foundation, a front entry porch with original turned posts, and one-over-one windows. The house is a reversed-twin of 528 Detroit, next door to the northeast.

LOCATION: The site is located at the northeast side of Detroit Street, north of East Kingsley and southwest of North Division Streets. It is across the street from the former Treasure Mart.

APPLICATION: The applicant seeks HDC approval to add to the house 185 square foot and 135 square foot rear additions, a composite privacy fence, infill a historic rear door opening and add four skylights; also to convert the non-contributing garage into an accessory dwelling unit by raising the roof, adding new cladding and false eaves, installing a patio, and removing existing openings and adding new ones.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS:

From the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

(other SOI Standards may also apply):

- (2) The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will 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 will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property will be unimpaired.

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

Building Site

Not Recommended: Introducing new construction onto the building site which is visually incompatible in terms of size, scale, design, materials, color and texture or which destroys historic relationships on the site.

Locating any new construction on the building where important landscape features will be damaged or destroyed.

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.

Locating and designing a new addition so that significant site features, including mature trees and landmark status trees, are not lost or damaged.

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.

Designing and constructing new additions that result in the diminution or loss of the historic character of the resource, including its design, materials, workmanship, location, or setting.

Roofs

Recommended: Retaining and preserving roofs—and their functional decorative features—that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building. This includes the roof's shape, decorative features such as chimneys, and roofing material.

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

Windows

Recommended: Designing and installing additional windows on rear or other non-character defining elevations if required by the new use. Such design should be compatible with the overall design of the building.

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

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

All Additions

Appropriate: Locating a required addition on the least character-defining elevation and keeping it subordinate in volume to the historic building.

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

Locating and designing a new addition so that significant site features, including mature trees and landmark status trees, are not lost or damaged.

Designing the addition so it is compatible in terms of massing, materials, relationship of solids to voids, and proportion of openings.

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 not exceed half of the original building's footprint, or half of the original building's total floor area.

Not Appropriate: Designing an addition that requires the removal of significant building elements or site features.

Constructing an addition that significantly changes the proportion of built mass to open space on the individual site.

Additions to Historic Residential Structures

Appropriate: Separating a larger addition from the primary historic structure and linking it with a smaller connecting structure.

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

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

Landscape Features

Appropriate: Retaining and maintaining mature trees, hedges, and other historic plantings.

Retaining historic relationships between buildings, landscape features, and open spaces.

Not Appropriate: Removing mature trees, hedges, and other historic landscaping.

Windows

Appropriate: Retaining and maintaining windows in good condition.

Not appropriate: Removing or radically changing a window that is important in defining the overall historic character of the property.

Design Guidelines for Residential Doors

Appropriate: Retaining, repairing and maintaining original doors, hardware, and trim, including transoms, sidelights, and surrounds.

Not Appropriate: Removing or replacing repairable original door, screen/storm door, trim, transoms, sidelights or surrounds.

Enlarging, reducing, or otherwise changing the door opening size.

Mechanical Equipment

Appropriate: Installing mechanical equipment and wiring in a location so it is not visible from a public right-of-way.

Using compatible screening around outdoor mechanical equipment such as vegetation and fencing.

STAFF FINDINGS:

1. The existing house (minus the dormers, which were a later addition) in its current footprint can be seen on 1947 City aerial photos. A much smaller one-car garage is present on 1947 aerial photos; the current garage is not from the period of significance.
2. A composite slat privacy fence is proposed around the rear lot line to form two distinct yard areas: one behind the house's new addition and one behind and to the side of the accessory dwelling unit (ADU). The height of the fence is not indicated; 6' maximum is appropriate per the design guidelines. The HDC will determine whether a composite fence, rather than a wood fence, is appropriate. The fence gives residents privacy in their small spaces; it also has the effect of compartmentalizing a historically open rear yard that is already being shrunk by the rear addition.

HOUSE

3. The house is currently 1,055 square feet. The proposed addition adds 320 square feet, for

an increase of 30%. The current footprint is 636 square feet and the addition's footprint is 185 square feet, for an increase of 29%.

4. *Rear addition.* The rear addition is one story with a partial second story perched over the center of the rear of the house. The one-story rear corner on the east (left) side of the house is inset 9". The roof pitch appears to match that of the house. It is clad in cementitious lap siding.

The small rooftop addition extends the current dormers farther back, though in a narrower width. This addition is extremely inconspicuous, and a rebuilt section of roof ridge on top of the dormer extension keeps a record of the existing ridge and aligns with the original rear gable (which is still visible).

5. *Doors.* If the rear door is from the period of significance, it should remain since no addition is proposed on that elevation. If the door is post-1944, staff thinks the door may be infilled, but that the opening must be memorialized somehow, using trim or inseting the infill.
6. *Skylights and windows.* Four new Velux skylights are proposed: one on each of the old dormers, one on the one-story entrance at the back of the house, and one on the new addition. Since the dormers are not historic, adding skylights is appropriate. The others are inconspicuous or invisible from the right-of-way.

One awning and two casement windows are proposed on the one-story addition; they are Pella Lifestyle, but their material is not indicated on the window schedule. For the two casement windows, a false muntin across the center to give the appearance of a one-over-one would be more appropriate. One historic double-hung window would be lost to the addition.

7. *Condenser.* A condenser is located on the northeast side of the house, along the new addition. While it could benefit from screening from the street, the location is appropriate.

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

8. Existing window, door, and overhead door openings would be infilled. The roof would be raised (approximately 1'-2', staff could not find the current height) to 15' 6 ¾". A faux eave on the front and rear form a pediment and make the roof appear to be more steeply pitched and more compatible with the house. Four new windows, a person door facing the street, and a slider on the northeast side make the ADU more residential in appearance, which is appropriate considering the current building is not a contributing structure. The CMU building would be clad in 6" cementitious lap siding that matches the cladding on the new additions. The front "pediment" would have cementitious shake siding.

The ADU would have a new concrete patio, dimensions not indicated. If it is approximately 8' x 10' (as an unlabeled line might indicate?), it is appropriate. If it is filling in the entire portion of fenced-in yard behind and below the ADU, it is inappropriately large.

9. Staff believes the design of the addition and changes to the garage are appropriate. Staff has concerns about the privacy fence's material (composite), height, and the interruption of formerly open back yards.

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 526 Detroit Street, a contributing property in the Old Fourth Ward Historic District, to add to the house 185 square foot and 135 square foot rear additions, a composite privacy fence, and a condenser, infill a historic rear door opening and add four skylights; also, to convert the non-contributing garage into an accessory dwelling unit and install a patio. 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, 9, and 10 and the guidelines for building site, additions, roofs and windows, as well as the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines* for all additions, residential additions, landscaping features, roofs, doors and mechanical equipment.

ATTACHMENTS: drawings, photos, materials information

526 Detroit Street at center, November 2020 (courtesy Google Street View)



526 Detroit Street at center, November 2020 (courtesy Google Street View)



1947 City Aerial Photo (note much smaller single-car garage)

