

ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Staff Report

ADDRESS: 522 Second Street, Application Number HDC23-0082

DISTRICT: Old West Side Historic District

REPORT DATE: June 8, 2023

REPORT PREPARED BY: Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE: June 5, 2023

	OWNER	APPLICANT
Name:	Emily Wilson-Tobin	Same
Address:	522 Second St Ann Arbor, MI 48103	
Phone:	(734) 904-7865	

BACKGROUND: This one-and-three-quarter story vernacular home features an assortment of character-defining features: 9/1 windows, a simple rake board, exposed fancy rafter tails, a steeper-than-average (for the old west side) roof pitch, a full-width inset front porch with fluted ionic half-columns over sculpted concrete block walls that match the home's foundation. The front and side doors appear to be original. The south side has a bay window on the first floor and large gable wall dormer upstairs. The roof features a red brick chimney. The house was first occupied in 1917 per City Assessor records.

LOCATION: The site is located on the west side of South Seventh Street, south of West Liberty and north of West Jefferson.

APPLICATION: The applicant seeks HDC approval to enclose a modern, roofed, balcony on the rear elevation; remove the brick chimney; and remove a non-historic trim board.

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.
- (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.

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. This house has a very tall rear addition that was built in 1999 with no corner delineation on the south side of the original house (though it is inset on the north). It was approved by the HDC under the "old ordinance" (pre-2007) where only work on the first fifteen feet of the house was reviewed by the HDC.
2. The house is currently 2,068 square feet. The 1944 floor area was 1,528 square feet. The balcony enclosure adds 62 square feet. The increase in floor area is therefore $(2068+62) - 1528 / 1528 = 39\%$ of the historic floor area. The 1944 footprint was 677 square feet and the existing addition's footprint is 278 square feet, for an increase of 41%. Note that no increase to the existing footprint is proposed. The increase in floor area complies with the Design Guidelines.
3. The enclosure of the balcony is fairly straightforward. It is slightly cantilevered over the first floor bump out upon which it sits. The three sides would be walled in, with siding to match the rest of the addition and new casement windows (that look like 6/1 sashes) of the south (side) and west (rear) elevations.
4. Staff is rarely in favor of removing brick chimneys, but the red brick chimney proposed to be removed has lost its significance, in staff's opinion, because of the looming rear addition that overshadows the chimney and renders it unusable.
5. The wide trim board proposed to be removed was probably intended to better tie the addition in to the historic home. Unfortunately, that work wasn't appropriate (the addition should be distinguished, not integrated). The board's removal and infill with matching siding is appropriate.
6. Staff recommends approval of the balcony enclosure addition and believes it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitation, 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 522 Second Street, a contributing property in the Old West Side Historic District, to enclose a modern balcony on the rear elevation, remove the brick chimney and remove a non-historic trim board, 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, 9 and 10 and the guidelines for additions and building site; and the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines* for additions.

ATTACHMENTS: drawings, photos

522 Second Street (November 2020, courtesy Google Street View)

