

## ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

### Staff Report

**ADDRESS:** 204 N Fourth Avenue, Application Number HDC23-0173

**DISTRICT:** Fourth/Ann Historic District

**REPORT DATE:** October 12, 2023

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

**REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE:** Tuesday, October 10, 2023

#### OWNER

**Name:** Chris Bilakos

**Address:**

**Phone:**

#### APPLICANT

Eric Patterson  
Terraforma, Inc  
6410 Whitmore Lake Road  
Whitmore Lake, MI 48189  
(734) 320-5654

**BACKGROUND:** See Washtenaw Bank/Chapin House building histories at the end of the staff report.

**LOCATION:** The site is located at the northeast corner of North Fourth Avenue and East Ann Street. Businesses in the building are addressed 200, 204, 206, 208, 212 N Fourth Ave and 201, 203, 205 and 207 East Ann.

**APPLICATION:** The applicant seeks HDC approval to install a 13' x 21' paver patio in front of the building at the southwest corner of the site, abutting the public right-of-way.

#### 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.
- (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.
- (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):**

**District or Neighborhood Setting – Alterations, Additions**

*Not Recommended:* Introducing new construction into historic districts that is visually incompatible or that destroys historic relationships within the setting.

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

**Residential Decks and Patios**

“To be considered a deck or patio it must be located in the rear yard, unless special circumstances exist.” (Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines, page 4-14)

*Appropriate:* Installing a patio flush with grade using stone, brick pavers, or concrete. Custom materials will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Ensuring that a deck or patio drains away from the historic resource.

**All New Construction**

*Appropriate:* Designing new features so they are compatible with the historic character of the site, district, and neighborhood.

*Not Appropriate:* Introducing a new feature that is visually incompatible with or that destroys the patterns of the site or the district.

**STAFF FINDINGS:**

1. This 1834 structure was constructed as a bank and converted to a residential home in 1847. It was a hotel by 1888, when the N Fourth Ave storefronts are present on Sanborn Maps. All of the ground floor is currently retail space and residences are above. Although the 13' x 21' area proposed to become a patio is in the front yard, and the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines* for Residential Decks and Patios says that patios must be located in the rear yard, staff believes this qualifies as “special circumstances” given the building’s long-term retail uses (it hasn’t been solely residential in 135 years!). The Design Guidelines do not include language about commercial patios.
2. The patio would be constructed of pavers that closely resemble the ones between the street and sidewalk. The patio would slope from the main entry walk to 201 E Ann toward N Fourth Avenue and a low wall with a ledgerstone cap would delineate the patio’s west corners from the public sidewalk.
3. Staff believes it is appropriate to allow an outdoor space for the building’s long-term retail spaces. The project is site-specific and reversible. Based on the SOI Standards and Guidelines and the Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines, staff recommends approval.

**POSSIBLE MOTION:** (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 204 N Fourth Ave, a contributing property in the Fourth/Ann Historic District, to install a 13' x 21' paver patio in front of the building at the southwest corner of the site, abutting the public right-of-way, 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, 2, 9 and 10 and the guidelines for District or Neighborhood Setting, as well as the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines*, particularly as they pertain to Residential Decks and Patios, All New Construction and New Construction in Historic Residential Settings.

### **MOTION WORKSHEET:**

I move that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work at 204 North Fourth Avenue in the Fourth/Ann Historic District

\_\_\_\_\_ Provided the following condition(S) is (ARE) met: 1) STATE CONDITION(s)

The work is generally compatible with the size, scale, massing, and materials and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, standard(s) number(s) (*circle all that apply*): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

**ATTACHMENTS:** drawings, photos.

201-205 E Ann, 1870 (courtesy AADL Old News)



## 201-205 E Ann History (courtesy AADL Old News)

**Year**

1836

**Description**

**201-205 East Ann Street Washtenaw Bank, 1836** In the 1830s, with land sales booming the Michigan Territory needed banks. The liberal banking laws permitted banks to be founded with very little capital, so in 1835 a group of local men formed the Bank of Washtenaw and built this Greek Revival building to house their banking rooms. When the banking system of the United States collapsed in the Panic of 1837, the Bank of Washtenaw went under and the building stood empty for almost a decade. In 1847 the property was finally sold to local businessman Volney Chapin who converted it to a residence. He and his wife Chloe made it their home for over 25 years. During that time it became a genteel showplace surrounded by exotic catalpa trees and a garden whose rose-bordered paths reached all the way to Catherine Street. The original building is stucco over brick, scored to resemble stone, a common conceit of many Greek Revival houses of this period. Though it has been enlarged to the west, one can still spot the Greek Revival detailing in the Ann Street entryway with simple Doric columns supporting a dentillated entablature. Hinges for the once massive shutters which flanked the windows are still visible as well. By the 1890s the area had become more commercial. The house became the Arlington Hotel, later renamed the Catalpa Hotel after those famous trees. Joe Parker's tavern occupied the corner commercial space from 1913 until 1920, when Prohibition drove it out of business. Joe Parker's and other saloons have been immortalized in a University of Michigan college song that reminisces about going "back to Joe's and the Orient (another saloon) back to all the money I spent." Shortly after the tavern closed, the Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce bought the building, but one can still see the name "Joe" spelled out in tile in the corner of the present bookstore. The Chamber eventually sold the property to Christ Bilakos in 1942. He renamed it the Peters Hotel after his son and the property is still owned by this family. The building now houses a variety of eclectic businesses.

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### A Former Estate at Fourth and Ann

#### **Author**

Susan Wineberg

#### **Parent ID**

[Ann Arbor Observer, June 1981](#)

June is the time when catalpa trees, with their distinctive, heart-shaped leaves, bear their big white flower clusters, to be followed by seed pods that look like long, brown string beans. But Ann Arbor's most famous catalpas—indeed, the trees from which many of the central-area catalpas are said to have been propagated—are only a memory. They stood in front of the old Chapin house, a once-handsome Greek Revival building on Ann at Fourth Avenue. The building now houses the Yoga Center, the De la Ferriere book store, and, on the Fourth Avenue side, the People's Produce Co-op and the Wooden Spoon book store. For three decades, from 1890 to 1920, the place was known as the Catalpa Hotel.

Today it takes a practiced eye to see beyond the cracked stucco and plastic entryway and recognize the dilapidated building as a once-imposing structure dating from before 1850. The house was built some time around 1840 to house the Washtenaw Bank and provide a home for its president and his family. Its solid brick walls were covered with stucco, which was then scored to resemble the stone masonry the Greek temples which inspired the Greek Revival style so popular in early nineteenth-century American architecture. Ann Arbor had so many such imitation-stone houses that it was sometimes called a "little stucco village."

In 1847, Volney Chapin, the prosperous owner of an agricultural implement foundry on West Huron, purchased the house and converted it to a private residence. For thirty years it was a local showplace, renowned for its large catalpa trees and rose-bordered paths winding through the extensive grounds extending all the way back to Catherine and up to Fifth Avenue. After Mrs. Chapin's death in 1876, the house was sold. The gardens gave way to commercial development, while the house served as a hotel with a succession of different names. The side along Fourth Avenue was remodeled into several storefronts with plate glass windows. They housed a variety of shops, including a saloon, a billiard hall, and a barbershop. In 1913, Joe Parker, proprietor of Joe Parker's College Saloon (the famous "Joe's" that figures so prominently in that favorite college song, "I Want to Go Back to Michigan"), moved his establishment into the Catalpa Hotel, where it thrived until Prohibition. Joe's went out of business in 1920, and the next year the Catalpa Hotel was sold to the Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce. The famous college hangout is still remembered with a small tile mosaic "Joe" in the corner of the Wooden Spoon book shop.

The Chamber drew up plans for remodeling the building in the then-popular colonial mode, taking advantage of its classical lines and details. Published drawings provided for an outdoor tea garden, an auditorium, and a banquet

hall. But these changes never materialized. By 1925 the Chamber had more ambitious and metropolitan plans for its property, as it began a long campaign to construct a modern, fireproof hotel, on the site. These plans, too, never came to pass. Throughout the Depression and early war years the building housed the offices of many service and welfare organizations, as well as the local bus station.

In 1942, citing its inability to meet operating expenses, the Chamber sold the building for \$11,000 to Christ Bilakos. He renamed it Peters Hotel for his son, Peter Bilakos, who now has his law practice down the street in the recently-restored building at 109 East Ann. That building housed his father's restaurant. The Bilakos family still owns the Chapin building.

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