



Battle Creek Historic District Commission

Staff Report

68/70 Frelinghuysen Avenue

Meeting: July 02, 2019

To: Historic District Commission

From: Eric Feldt, Planner, AICP, CFM

Date: July 2, 2019

Subject: The petition, filed by Calhoun County Land Bank Authority (applicant and owner), is for the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness for renovating the building at 68/70 Frelinghuysen Avenue with Zoning and Historic District Commission requirements.

Summary

Staff recommends approval of the subject petition because the proposed renovations preserve the historic integrity of the building; meets Chapter 1470 Historic Preservation, Michigan's Local Historic Districts Act; and, meets the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places.



Figure 1: Arrow points to subject site along Frelinghuysen Ave. nearby Rose Street in the Old Maple Street local Historic district.

Site & History

The subject building (68/70 Frelinghuysen Avenue) is located in the Old Maple Street local historic district just east of downtown Battle Creek. See Figure 1. According the City of Battle Creek Assessor's database, the building was constructed in 1910 as a duplex with a total area of 3,872 square foot. The building was occupied and used as a rental in the early 2000s, according to staff's records.

Sometime in 2007, the property became foreclosed and vacant. Building and property maintenance stopped. Unlawful access became an issue. The City of Battle Creek required the owner to board entrances and secure the building to prevent further unlawful access.

In 2008, the property transferred from a bank to a private entity who owned it until 2017. During that time, the new owner tried to re-occupy the duplex as a rental but did not address all building maintenance issues in order to bring the building into compliance for re-occupation. Some exterior work was done without HDC approval or other permits, including new vinyl siding over existing historic wood siding; replacing certain windows using vinyl material and other modern elements; replacing large front porch steps with smaller steps, replacing one of two front doors with substantial different style, and several minor changes. The deferred building and property maintenance continued to be an issue.

The property was again foreclosed sometime in 2017 and the Calhoun County Land Bank took ownership. The building continues to be unoccupied and maintenance issues have increased. The doors continue to be boarded to prevent unlawful access. See Figure 2. Pictures of the exterior taken by staff are attached.



Figure 2. Picture of façade of building. Years of deferred maintenance and vacancy resulted in deterioration of the front porch, vandalism, and neglect. Picture taken by City staff on July 2, 2019.

Summary of Request

The Calhoun County Land Bank ('Land Bank') has been in communication with a prospective buyer of the property who wishes to renovate the exterior and interior areas. The City of Battle Creek is currently offering a financial aid program to assist in downtown housing renovation work. The subject site may qualify for this financial aid and, therefore, may provide sufficient funds to address the building maintenance issues and required renovations for re-occupation.

The Land Bank is facilitating the prospective buyer's future renovation process by filing the subject HDC application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior work. Much of the new work will look similar or match the historic features and style seen in the attached 1940 photograph of the building. The proposed work consists of:

- Windows: Replace with painted wood, double-hung window with modern energy-efficient material and glass.
- Doors: Replace all exterior doors with wood doors to match or similar in design existing door style.
- Siding: Replace existing vinyl siding with 3" vinyl clapboard that will be similar in design to original 3" wood clapboard
- Porch: Front porch will be replaced with new design matching historic style and features, but use taller hand railing to meet current safety standards (36") instead of previous 24". Side porch will be repaired and match original style and features.

Applicable HDC Guidelines and Analysis for a Certificate of Appropriateness to renovate 68/70 Frelinghuysen Avenue.

This property is reviewed in accordance with City of Battle Creek Building and Housing Code Chapter 1470 "Historic Preservation", as amended, the Michigan's Local Historic Districts Act, as amended, and the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places as outlined in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines.

Specifically, the Commission shall follow Section 1470.09 *Review of Applications*, as follows:

(b) *The Commission shall also consider all of the following:*

- (1) *The historic or architectural value and significance of the resource and its relationship to the historic value of the surrounding area.***
- (2) *The relationship of any architectural features of the resource to the rest of the resource and the surrounding area.***

- (3) ***The general compatibility of the design, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used.***
- (4) ***Other factors, such as aesthetic value that the Commission finds relevant.***
- (c) ***The Historic District Commission shall review and act upon only exterior features of a resource and shall not review and act upon interior arrangements...***

And

1470.17 PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC FEATURES.

- (a) ***Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for a resource which requires minimal alteration of the building, structure or site and its environment, or to use the resource for its originally intended purpose.***

The project will replicate much of the historic material and style. There is no change in the use of the duplex, which is its original use.

- (b) ***The distinguishing original qualities or character of a resource and its environment shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features shall be avoided when possible.***

The distinguishing qualities/ character of the building will be re-instated with matching windows, siding, and porch. However, the front porch railings will be to current building code height of 36" instead of the previous 24" height.

- (c) ***All resources shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historic basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.***

The project will not create alterations which have no historic basis. The proposed elements will preserve the historic features of the building.

- (d) ***Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a resource and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected.***

As noted above, there were some building modifications (new vinyl siding and windows, and smaller stairs). These modifications will be replaced with features that match the historic aspects of the building. Again, the Land Bank will utilize the 1940 photograph as a template for

re-instating historic building features. Staff notes that this photograph is the earliest picture of the building.

- (e) *Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize a resource shall be treated with sensitivity.***

The project will reinstate stylistic features that were recently removed or replaced with non-stylistic features (i.e. front porch stairs, doors, modern siding, etc.).

- (f) *Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historic, physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other resources.***

Some items will be replaced such as the items installed without HDC permit (modern windows, doors, siding, etc.) with designs/ materials matching historic features. The side porch will be repaired rather than replaced due to its relatively preserved material.

- (g) *The surface cleaning of resources shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic materials shall not be undertaken.***

Staff is unaware of any surface cleaning methods needed for the various aspects of this project. Nonetheless, staff recommends a condition of approval that the use of sandblasting or other damaging cleaning methods be avoided.

- (h) *Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve archaeological resources affected by or adjacent to any project.***

Some groundwork is expected during the renovation/ replacement of the front and side porches. Staff recommends a condition of approval that if any archaeological resources are discovered that the applicant contact the City of Battle Creek.

- (i) *Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing resources shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historic, architectural or cultural material and when such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property, neighborhood or environment.***

The project involves very few contemporary designs such as installing current building code railing height of 36” instead of the previous 24” on the front porch. This will not significantly destroy the historic aspect of the porch. The existing siding will be replaced with a historic 3” clapboard siding consisting of vinyl instead of original wood element. To ensure the new vinyl does not create a contemporary feature with glossy finish, staff recommends a condition of approval that the new siding consist of a matte finish. Glossy finishes are not representative of historic features.

- (j) ***Whenever possible, new additions or alterations to resources shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the resource would not be unimpaired.***

The project does not involve any new additions or alterations of the original historic design. Many existing features that will be replaced are non-historic (doors, windows, siding, etc.). By replacing those features with historic looking items will preserve the building’s original look.

Recommendation:

As stated earlier, the project will reinstate building’s historic-era design and architectural significance. With staff’s recommended conditions, the proposed work complies with standards outlined in Chapter 1470 *Historic Preservation* and should be approved. As contained herein, staff is not aware of any issues that the Commission might find in conflict with Chapter 1470 *Historic Preservation*, the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act or the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines.

Therefore, planning staff recommends approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness with the conditions shown below for the proposed building renovation at 68/70 Frelinghuysen Avenue, as the request meets the standards outlined in Chapter 1470.09 “Review of Applications”, Chapter 1470.17 “Preservation of Historic Features” and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines, as outlined in the staff report.

Staff’s Recommended Conditions

1. The gentlest means possible should be used when cleaning, repairing, and reinstalling exterior features of the building.
2. The use of sandblasting or other damaging cleaning methods shall be avoided.
3. The applicant shall contact the City of Battle Creek if any archaeological resources are discovered.

4. The new siding shall consist of a matte finish.



City of Battle Creek

Department of Planning and Community Development

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HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Application for (check all that applies)

Certificate of Appropriateness (for repairs or rehab projects)

Notice to Proceed (for demolition requests)

Petition No. _____

Date Received: _____

APPLICANT**

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ FAX: _____

EMAIL: _____

OWNER (if different from applicant)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ FAX: _____

EMAIL: _____

****If the applicant is not the property owner, a letter signed by the owner agreeing to the application to the Historic District Commission must be included with the application.**

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS/EXISTING CONDITIONS

Address(es) of property for which the request is being sought: _____

Current use of the property: _____

List existing structures on the property and the approximate age of each.

Please list all activities/proposed work for the property area and how the proposed work relates to the building as a whole.

Indicate in which manner the proposed work will result in changes to the size and/or appearance of the features outlined in this application.

Does the work proposed include maintenance/repair of existing features of the structure, or will it create new features that do not currently exist?

Please indicate the existing building materials of the following structural features and the proposed materials if that feature is included as part of the application.

	Existing Materials	Proposed Materials (if applicable)
Roof	_____	_____
Windows	_____	_____
Siding	_____	_____
Foundation	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____

For Notice To Proceed requests only:

What options have you explored for the repair or relocation of the structure proposed for demolition?

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

As outlined in "HDC, Information and Procedure", each request requires supplementary items that thoroughly describe the existing structure and proposed project. These items are to be submitted with the completed application; incomplete applications will not be forwarded to the Historic District Commission.

APPLICANT SIGNATURE

By signing this application, the applicant hereby declares that all answers given herein are true to the best of their knowledge, and confirms that all information required for Historic District Commission review has been submitted. Furthermore, the applicant confirms that they have thoroughly read the "Historic District Commission, Information and Procedures" and agrees to comply with all requirements and procedures outlined therein.

Name

Date

Supplementary Items for 68/70 Frelinghuysen Rehabilitation Project – Exterior components

This home is an Italianate style architecture. The design is simple and clean, elements will be replaced with this style in mind.

Windows – Will be replaced with Jeld-Wen W2500 Series painted clad wood double hung window with natural interior and Low-E glass (or comparable company and product). Window style and size will remain the same as existing. Fall protection mechanisms will be installed for windows that are less than 24" from the floor.

Doors – Will be replaced with doors from The Heritage Company or other historic architectural restoration company/store. The Heritage Company has thousands of doors in their inventory. They will be selected to match the 1900-era and Italianate style.

Siding – Will be replaced with Certainteed 3" Clapboard Encore Style siding, or comparable company and product.

Aluminum window wrap – It will be examined as to what type of window trim is under the aluminum. If it is salvageable it will be used if at all possible. If it can be replaced and is more cost effective it may be replaced. CCLBA is planning to make a determination prior to the specification development.

Porch – front – Will replicate the design in this photo with safety elements to comply with build code. For example railing height will be 36" instead of 24" and guardrails with graspable handrails on the stairs.



Pictures taken by staff on May 7, 2019

