



DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES – PLANNING DIVISION

REPORT: 31-33 Capen Street, Hartford, CT 06106

For consideration: December 2, 2020

STAFF REPORT

TO: HARTFORD PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: Autumn Florek, Senior Planner
T. 860-757-9083; Email: autumn.florek@hartford.gov

PROJECT: 31-33 Capen Street
PARCEL ID: 133-310-053

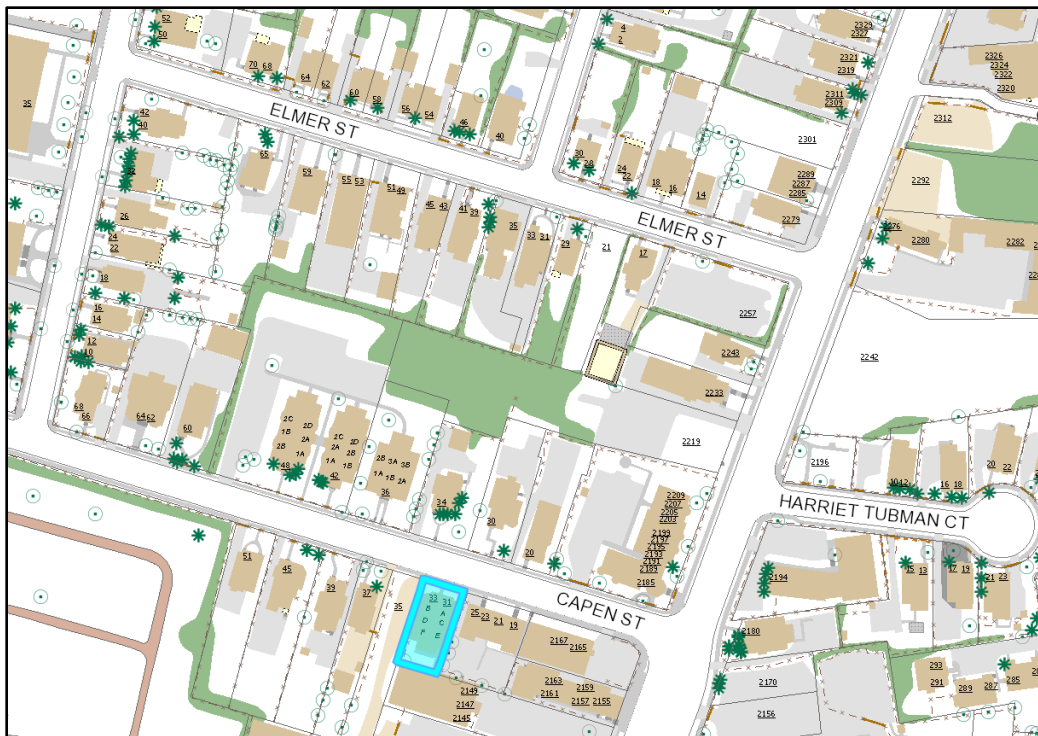
ZONE: NX-1 **HISTORIC DISTRICT:** Capen-Clark National Historic District

TYPE: ARTICLE XII HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Sec. 28-170 through 28-221

APPLICANT: Hartford Housing Authority c/o Elisa V. Hobbs

OWNER: Hartford Housing Authority

Location Map



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The subject site is 31-33 Capen Street, owned by the Hartford Housing Authority, which is a contributing structure within the Capen-Clark National Historic District. The principal structure is a 3-story brick multifamily structure, built circa 1900. The structure is a Perfect Six, with the three-story front porch and balcony characteristic of the style.



Figure 1: 31-33 Capen Street, Front Façade. Staff Photo, Nov. 21, 2020

Proposed Project: The Applicant proposes to replace several exterior elements. These include the EPDM roof in kind, the existing vinyl windows with fiberglass, four-lite (two over two) windows and doors, existing non-historic front doors in kind. The Applicant would also replace brick selectively with matching brick and bond pattern. The Applicant would also selectively repoint sections of exterior brick and repair the front porches in kind.

- Replace EPDM roof and associated trim in kind.
- Replace all vinyl windows with double-hung fiberglass windows and trim. Field verification shows that the windows are one over one. The existing and proposed plans show two over two windows.
- Provide security screens on first floor.
- Replace non-historic entrance doors and frames.
- Replace existing lattice with matching lattice work.
- Replace front steps with composite risers and square treads.

- Replace front porch columns with 4/4 columns and column wrap.
- Replace first-floor deck and portions of second- and third-floor deck underneath the columns to be replaced. New deck would be built from 5/4 douglas fir t&g flooring.
- Examine exterior brickwork and repoint and replace brick as required.
- Scrape cornices, brackets, and remaining porch features and repaint.

The proposal was subject to Section 106 review. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as approved the project, stating that the proposal would have no adverse effect on historic resource.

LEGAL STANDARD

The Commission reviews and acts upon all applications for Document of Suitability. No person or entity may, without first applying and obtaining the approval of the Commission, file an application for a demolition permit, or for a building permit for any protected property as designated in the Historic Preservation Ordinance Sec. 28-219.

STANDARDS SPECIFIC TO THE USE

The commission shall adopt the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* and the City of Hartford's *Guidelines for Renovations and Additions to Historic Buildings*.

The following sections of the *Guidelines for Renovations* are relevant:

- Masonry Replacement, page 17:
 - “Recommended: Replace units with materials as close to the original as possible. Masonry walls should be constructed using masonry units and mortar of consistent strength to avoid cracking. Used brick is not necessarily better as the hardness of the brick may be unknown and inconsistent with the original.”
- Masonry Repointing, page 17:
 - “Recommended: Rake joints by hand to avoid damaging adjacent masonry edges.”
 - “Recommended: Repoint with mortar of similar strength to original recipe and of similar color and tooling.”
- Windows and Doors, page 19:
 - “Not Recommended: Changing size or location of window or door openings.”
- Entrances and Porches, page 22:
 - “Recommended: Retain and repair porches.”
 - “Recommended: Replace missing porch features.”
 - “Not Recommended: Applying inappropriate new materials.”

FINDING OF FACTS

CURRENT USE: Multifamily Residential
YEAR BUILT: c. 1900

PROPOSED USE: Multifamily Residential
STYLE: Perfect Six

Particular Mention in historic nomination: For this specific property, the nomination only states that it was built as a brick 3-story multifamily structure, circa 1900. The nomination states that there are several such structures in the district, including on Capen, Clark, and Elmer Streets.

Current Conditions: There have been some notable alterations since it was first constructed. Non-historic metal doors have been installed as have vinyl windows. The first porch railing, front steps, and metal hand railing are also non-historical. The front porch also shows signs of deterioration, most notably, the lattice, columns, and second-story floor and dentils.



Figure 2: Existing vinyl windows, West Façade. Staff Photo, Nov. 21, 2020



Figure 3: Front Entrance and Porch. Staff Photo, November 21, 2020

Condition of other properties in neighborhood: While other properties on Capen Street have some deterioration, the properties are generally in either fair or good condition. The 2.5 and 3-story Victorian residences largely retain the original clapboard and trim, though some have replacement windows and vinyl siding. Several are vacant and have boarded up windows.



Figure 4: 31-33 Capen Street, South Side. Staff Photo, Nov. 21, 2020



Figure 5: Capen Street, North Side. Staff Photo, Nov. 21, 2020

COMMENTS RECEIVED

(None received as of November 24, 2020)

ANALYSIS

The structure currently has non-historic vinyl windows and metal hollow entrance doors. The Applicant proposes to replace the existing windows with double-hung, four-lite fiberglass windows and frames. No further detail regarding the windows was provided with the application. Staff have attempted to contact the applicant for more information to no avail. The Applicant proposes to replace the existing entrance doors with similar “stamped” metal hollow doors. It should be noted that the doors have been called out by the applicant as in kind replacement. Upon field verification, it appears that the doors are single panel metal hollow core. More information is required to identify what the applicant means by “stamped”. It should further be noted that the existing and proposed drawing set shows an arched lintel over the front door. Field verification confirmed that this feature is not present. The proposed window and doors would likely be historically inappropriate.

The front porch of the structure has some signs of deterioration. These include the lattice, columns, second-story floor, dentils, among other elements. The Applicant has indicated that the dentil molding would be restored. The proposal would also replace the deteriorated lattice and columns. According to the application, the flooring, stairs, columns, and lattice would be replaced in kind. According to the application, the porch railings would be replaced with an aluminum railing. The existing first floor porch railing is metal, but it is not clear whether the current second and third floor porch railings are metal as well. The project proposed, though, represents an opportunity to restore any porch elements to their historical condition.

As for the masonry, the Applicant has stated that repointing and replacement of brick would occur as necessary. The Applicant did not provide specific area and location of brick to be repointed or replaced. They merely stated that they would examine the brickwork to determine where such work needed to occur. They did state on the elevations submitted that any damaged bricks would be replaced with matching brick.



Figure 6, Exterior brick masonry. Staff Photo, Nov. 21, 2020

Staff believe that the proposal would bring much needed repairs and maintenance to the exterior. Damaged components will be replaced. Notably, the proposal was previously submitted to SHPO, which approved it and found that it would have no adverse effect.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of this application, subject to the following condition(s):

- (1) The Applicant should replace the front porch railing with a wood railing with square balusters and should replace the proposed square composite stair treads with wood bullnose treads
- (2) The fiberglass windows which are proposed to be replaced shall be replaced with two over two window lites
- (3) The front entrance door shall be replaced with a more historically appropriate design
- (4) Any scraping of paint should be done by hand.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Completed and signed application form.
2. Photographs of the property.
3. Letter from SHPO.
4. Floor Plan – Front Porch.
5. Front, Side and Rear Elevations.
6. Details for Front Porch Railings, Columns, Staircase, and Deck.
7. Materials List.

REVIEWED,

Aimee Chambers, Director



**CITY OF HARTFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION
31-33 CAPEN STREET
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROPOSAL**

- Whereas,** The City of Hartford Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the proposal to repair and replace elements of the three-story front porch, replace the existing doors and windows, and selectively repoint and replace the exterior masonry; and
- Whereas,** The property is located in the Capen-Clark National Historic District; and
- Whereas,** The structure is a 3 ½ story brick apartment of Perfect Six style; and
- Whereas,** The State Historic Preservation Office has performed a Section 106 review and found that the proposal would have no adverse effect; and
- Whereas,** The applicant proposes to replace the existing hollow metal entrance doors with hollow metal doors in-kind; and
- Whereas,** The applicant proposes to replace the current vinyl windows with double-hung, four-lite fiberglass windows; and
- Whereas,** The applicant proposes to replace such front porch elements as the lattice, flooring, columns, stairs, and railing in kind; and
- Whereas,** The applicant proposes to replace any elements missing from the front porch such as the dentil molding to restore its historical appearance; and
- Whereas,** The applicant proposes to selectively repoint and replace the exterior bricks; and
- Whereas,** The applicant proposes to scrape and repaint all wood and PVC exterior components

Now therefore Be It

- Resolved,** The City of Hartford Historic Preservation Commission hereby approves the proposed work with the following conditions:

- (1) The Applicant should replace the front porch railing with a wood railing with square balusters and should replace the proposed square composite stair treads with wood bullnose treads
- (2) The fiberglass windows which are proposed to be replaced shall be replaced with two over two window lites
- (3) The front entrance door shall be replaced with a more historically appropriate design
- (4) Any scraping of paint should be done by hand.

Be It Further,

Resolved, This 2nd day of December 2020.