



CITY OF BATTLE CREEK

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT – PLANNING AND ZONING

AGENDA

Historic District Commission Meeting

Date: Monday, August 11, 2025

Time: 4:00 P.M.

Where: City Hall, Room 301

1. Call to Order:
2. Attendance:
3. Additions or Deletions to Agenda:
4. Approval of minutes: July 14, 2025
5. Correspondence: Calhoun County Land Bank Authority Letter
6. Old Business:
7. New Business
 - A. **H15-25 (211 NE Capital Ave)**
Petition for a Certificate of Appropriateness filed by Monty H. Bishop for the construction of a new 6-foot-tall wood fence located along the side and back yard. Parcel #5350-00-006-0.
8. Comments by the Public:
9. Comments from Commission members and Staff:
10. Adjournment:

The City of Battle Creek will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed materials being considered in the meeting upon notice to the City of Battle Creek. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aides or services should contact the City of Battle Creek by writing or calling the following: Office of the Planning & Zoning Division, 10 North Division – Suite 117, Battle Creek, MI 49016, (269)966-3348 (Voice), (269)966-3348 (TDD)

CITY OF BATTLE CREEK

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MEETING

10 North Division, Battle Creek, MI 49014
Minutes for July 14, 2025

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: By Commissioner Simpson at 4:01 p.m.

ATTENDANCE: Commissioner Simpson asked for a roll vote.

Comm. Simpson, present

Comm. Drozdowski, absent

Comm. Davis, present

Comm. Sallee, absent

Comm. Thornton, present

Comm. Steinbrunner, present

Comm. Case, present

Staff Present: Travis Sullivan, Planning & Zoning Administrator, Melody Carlsen, Administrative Assistant, Patrick Batterson, Assistant City Attorney.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Approval of the June 9, 2025 meeting minutes.

MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER THORNTON TO APPROVE THE JUNE 9, 2025 MEETING MINUTES, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER CASE.

ROLL VOTE: Commissioner Simpson asked everyone in favor to signify by saying “aye”.

ALL IN FAVOR, NONE OPPOSED, MOTION APPROVED.

CORRESPONDENCE: None.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. H13-25 (94 Walter Ave)

Petition for a Certificate of Appropriateness filed by Jose Ortiz for the construction of a new 6-foot tall white vinyl fence located at 94 Walter Ave., Parcel #0601-21-400-0.

Staff Presentation: Travis Sullivan presented the staff report for H13-25.

Commissioner Simpson noted the staff report list the address as 94 Walter Avenue but the maps labeled the address as Walters Ave. Mr. Sullivan noted the map was taken from the County GIS mapping system and is not clear as to why but our system indicates the address as 94 Walter Ave. Commissioner Simpson asked if the front of the house is located on Walter Ave, not Wilkes. Mr. Sullivan responded, yes.

Commissioner Simpson asked if the Commission's main concern is the view of the property from the street. Mr. Sullivan responded that is correct and to take into consideration that the view of Wilkes did not exist in the past due to a house being present.

Applicant Presentation: Jose Ortiz was present to speak and answer questions from commissioners.

Questions by Commissioners:

Commissioner Case noted vinyl fencing does have issues and stains over time and can't really be cleaned.

Mr. Ortiz approached the Commission to show supporting photos. Commissioner Case noted that he has not seen fencing of the type shown in that area. Added, this is a historic district and you must maintain the standards of the historic district.

Commissioner Simpson mentioned there are materials that the Commission has approved, he thinks, for fences other than wood that better mimic the design. Asked Mr. Case if the proposed fencing pattern looks anything like what was popular back then. Mr. Case responded that he went around and looked in the district and there is nothing like that and no vinyl fences in that area that are privacy fences. They are all made of wood.

Commissioner Simpson asked Commissioner Case if he was aware of many modern materials that might mimic wood that might give the applicant what he is looking for as far as durability.

Commissioner Case responded he does not think they have ever approved a vinyl fence.

Commissioner Steinbrunner asked the applicant if he was putting the fence in the back of the house and if there was fencing already back there. Mr. Ortiz responded no, just the L-shape and the neighbor has fencing in the back area.

MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER CASE TO APPROVE H13-25. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DAVIS.

ROLL VOTE: NONE IN FAVOR, ALL OPPOSED. MOTION DENIED.

B. H14-25 (200 NE Capital Ave)

Petition for a Notice to Proceed for the removal of the ADA ramp along the side of the building located at 200 NE Capital Ave., Parcel #4110-00-016-0.

Staff Presentation: Travis Sullivan presented the staff report for H14-25. Staff recommends approval to remove the ramp and rail by the entryway.

Questions by Commissioners:

Commissioner Steinbrunner asked if the applicant provided the photos in the staff report. Mr. Sullivan responded, yes. And asked if there was any plan for separation between this house and the neighboring property. Mr. Sullivan responded that the applicant has not indicated anything for a separation of the properties.

Commissioner Simpson asked clarifying questions regarding the ramp and where the ramp was located and where it was attached near the entryway. Is there a plan to put in another ramp? Mr. Sullivan responded, no, the ramp was put in to accommodate a business and the property is now a residential home and the ramp is no longer needed.

Commissioner Case mentioned he designed the ramp and recommends removal and add cedar shake back to match the rest of the porch.

MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER CASE TO APPROVE H14-25 SUBJECT TO REBUILDING THE SUPPORT RAIL THAT IS LEFT BETWEEN THE HOUSE AND THE CORNER POST TO MATCH THE CEDARSHAKE BARRIER WALL THAT IS PRESENT AROUND THE REST OF THE PORCH. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER THORNTON.

ROLL VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR, NONE OPPOSED. MOTION APPROVED.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: None.

COMMENTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS AND STAFF:

Commissioner Steinbrunner asked if the City has recommendations for applicants regarding fencing. Mr. Sullivan responded that besides the design guidelines document found on the website, we do not right now.

Commissioner Simpson brought up a previous topic regarding the possibility of turning County Club Hills into a possible Historic District and asked if a letter could be put together and sent to residents regarding this. Mr. Sullivan responded that any way you can gather feedback would be ok. There was discussion about forming a Neighborhood Association and going to the Neighborhood Council meetings for feedback.

ADJOURNMENT: Commissioner Simpson adjourned the meeting at 4:47 pm.

Submitted by: Melody Carlsen, Planning and Zoning Administrative Assistant



MEMORANDUM

TO: HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

FROM: AMY ROSE ROBINSON, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: HISTORY FOR OLD ADVENT TOWN & NPC 2

DATE: 7.16.2025

CC: NA

History of Old Advent Town Area

Since 2021, the Calhoun County Land Bank Authority (CCLBA) has had the privilege to work in Neighborhood Planning Council 2, which is home to the Old Advent Town historic district. The CCLBA was awarded \$900,000 in grant funds by W.K. Kellogg Foundation for work in this area to address and create a land reuse strategy for its two hundred + parcels. This work has helped to inform the disposition of these properties and highlight resident concerns. A main component of the grant was to work with the residents to help make these decisions for their community; therefore, the Washington Heights Neighborhood Advisory Committee was formed to guide the project. This committee of home/landowners, business owners, community leaders, and elected officials has continued to bring forth positive change for this community.

Together, we have addressed a myriad of topics, including: lighting on a corridor to protect children walking to school; the numerous demolitions across the neighborhood; the history of the historic district, both national and local, in this particular neighborhood; as well as the history of black owned businesses; and the creation of a heirs and legacy program to get properties back in the hands of families that lost them due to foreclosure.

Staff understands that the Historic District Commission intends to preserve the architecture of the structures in this designated historic district. We have often wondered if consideration could be given to the history of the area of the district and the fabric that is woven in this formerly redlined community. Many families own property here not because they wanted to, but because this is the only area where they were allowed to own property after being relocated from The Bottoms. Not all residents understand the implications of living in a historic district, nor the financial impacts that accompany this.

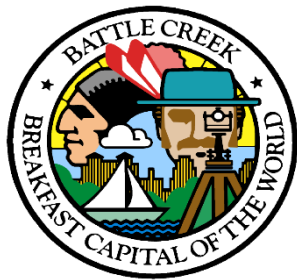
This issue arose in our work when staff invited the city of Battle Creek Planning Department to a monthly committee meeting, and they explained what that meant to members of the WHNAC. At the time, the



WHNAC wanted to see more education and signage to demarcate the districts. However, residents also need to know what that means to them and their homes when they want to rehabilitate or renovate their exteriors.

Because of our dedication to this neighborhood and its people, churches, and community, we are requesting that this body consider creating a piece that can be mailed to the neighbors of this (and all) historic districts, so they are made aware. We believe this communication will help them and this body when it is time to make exterior changes.

Staff would also respectfully ask the Commission and its staff to consider the affordability and lifespan of repairs when being approached by property owners. The CCLBA has limited grant funds to address concerns on its properties, yet many in this neighborhood do not. We are grateful that on the many occasions that we have brought forth issues with affordability that they have been granted by this Commission. However, staff is used to addressing boards, commissions, and other governmental bodies. It is extremely intimidating for residents to do the same, addressing a commission can become confusing when the scope of what the board can and cannot act on is not clarified at the meeting.



Battle Creek Historic District Commission

Staff Report

211 NE Capital Ave.

Meeting: August 11, 2025

To: Historic District Commission

From: Travis Sullivan, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Date: July 31, 2025

Subject: The petition, H-15-25, filed by Monty Bishop for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a new 6-foot tall wood privacy fence located at 211 NE Capital Ave., Parcel #5350-00-006-0.

Summary

Staff recommends approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness at 211 NE Capital Ave. (Parcel #5350-00-006-0) for the construction of a new 6-foot tall privacy fence in the secondary front yard facing Wilkes Ave. The proposed fence meets the standards outlined in Section 1470.09 “Review of Applications,” Section 1470.17 “Preservation of Historic Features” and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines.

Site & History

The subject site (211 NE Capital Ave.) is located in the Old Maple Street local historic district along the north side of NE Capital Ave. between Chestnut St. to the east and Fremont St. to the west. The Old Maple Street local historic district consists of the largest concentration of architecturally significant homes in the city, with most built near the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The subject property consists of a 3,500 sq. ft. single-family home constructed in 1900. The subject site is not independently registered on the National Register of Historic Places, as verified by staff on July 31, 2025.

According to BS&A records, the property at 211 NE Capital Ave. has been the subject of two previous Historic District Commission (HDC) Certificate of Appropriateness requests. The first was a 1999 application for the installation of an entrance ramp and a new door. The second was a 2012 application for the reroofing of the property.

Figure 1 below provides an aerial view of the subject property. Figures 2 provides a historical view of the home on the subject site (undated), courtesy of the Willard Library collection. Figure 3 provides a present-day street-level view of the home on the subject site, courtesy of Google Street View.

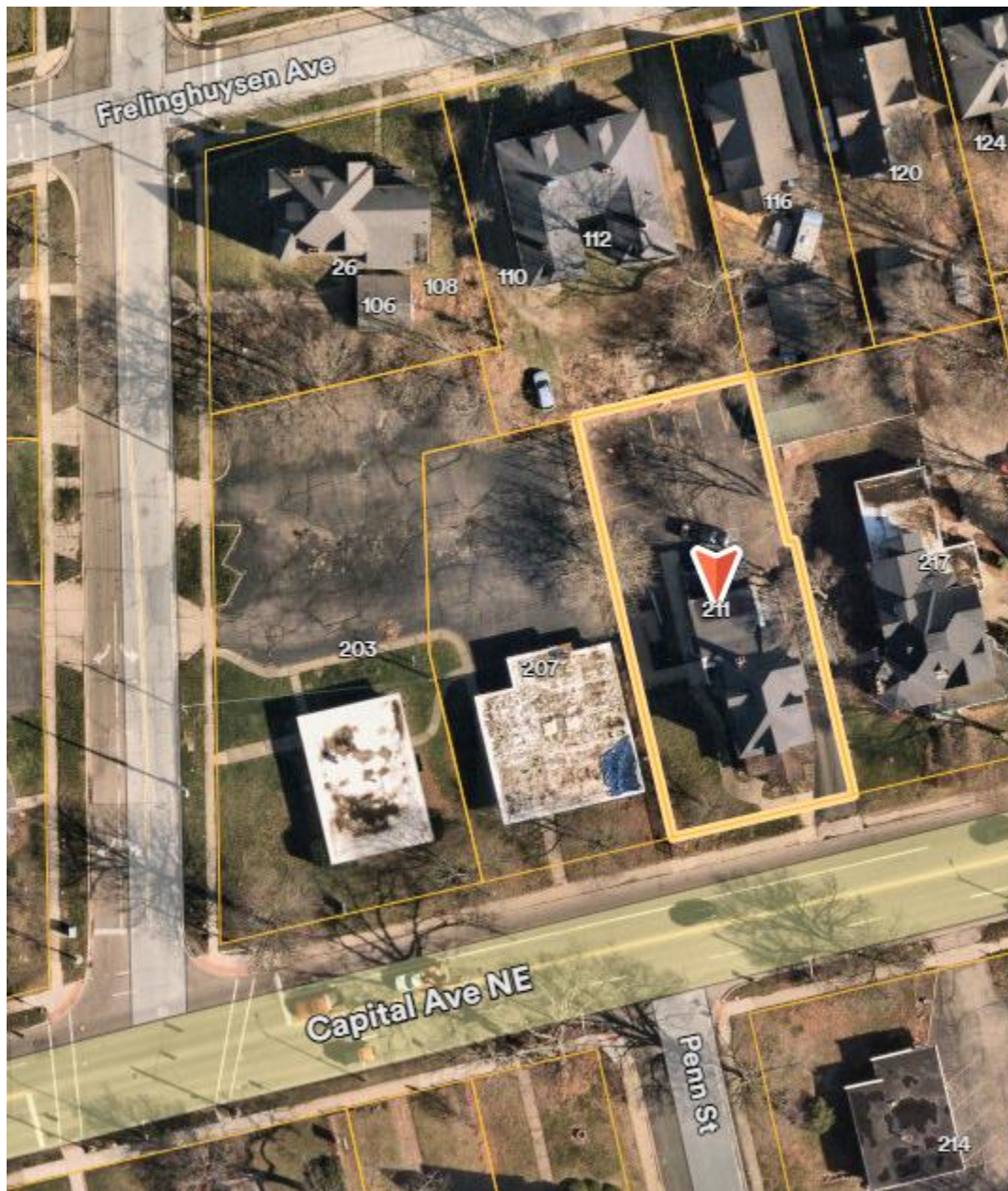


Figure 1: Aerial photo of the subject site (211 NE Capital Ave.). The thick outline and orange pin indicate the location of the subject parcel. Photo courtesy of Near Map.



Figure 2: Street view of the south-facing front of the property from NE Capital Ave., May 2025. Photo courtesy of Google Street View.



Figure 3: Historical photograph of the home on the subject property, courtesy of the Willard Library collection.

Summary of Request

The applicant has filed the subject HDC Certificate of Appropriateness application for the construction of a new 6-foot tall wood privacy fence in the rear yard of the property for 90 feet along the west (side) lot line and for 78 feet across the north (rear) lot line. The proposed fence meets the requirements of Section 1260.02 (Fences) of the zoning ordinance, as fences in a side or rear yard may be constructed to a maximum of 6 feet in height with no transparency requirement.

The applicant states that the proposed privacy fence is intended for purposes of security and to prevent trespassing upon the applicant's property.

Figure 4 below shows a graphical depiction of the fencing plan for the subject property submitted by the applicant.

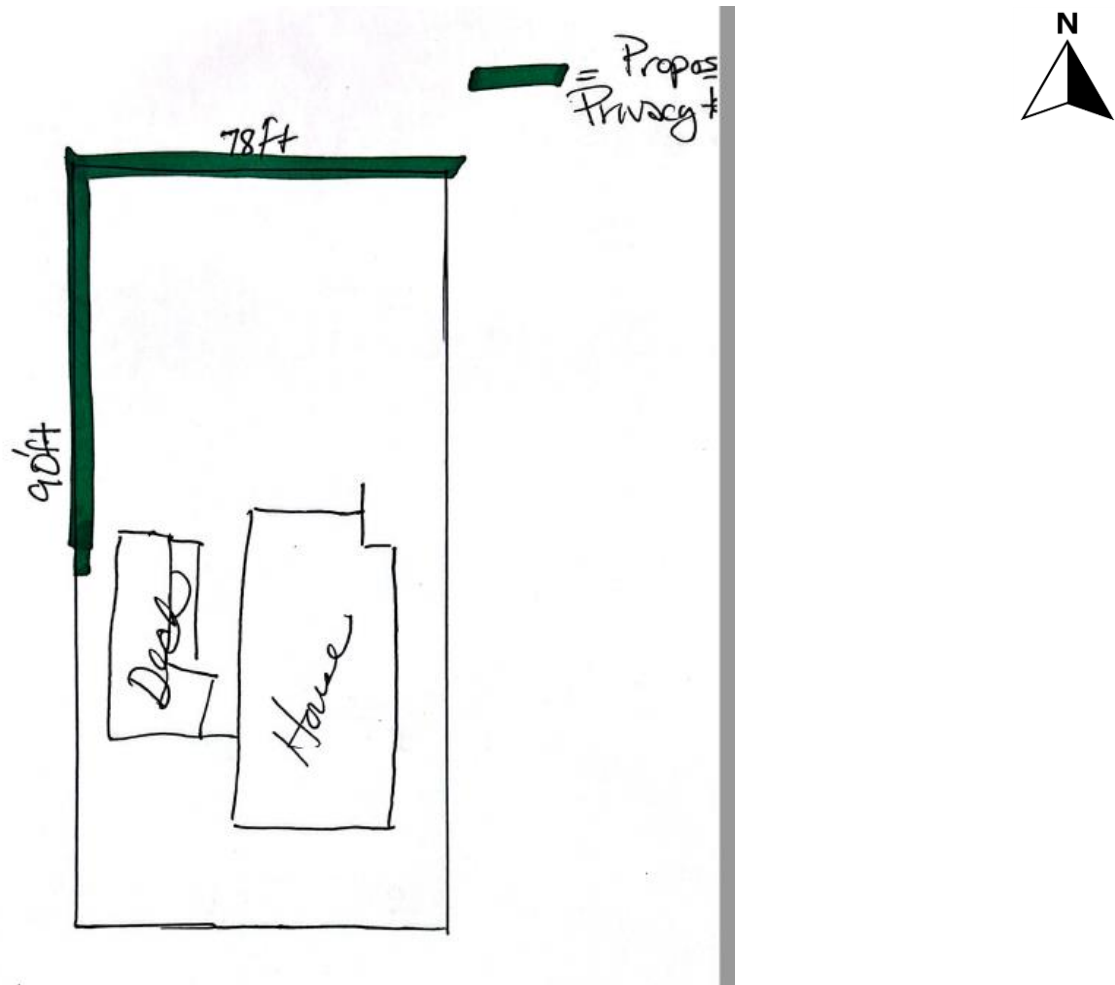


Figure 4: Sketch of the location of the proposed fencing on the property. The “north arrow” was added by staff based off of the configuration of the lot relative to the location of the house and the “deck” (or ramp).

Applicable HDC Guidelines and Analysis for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a new 6-foot tall wood privacy fence in the rear yard at the subject site, 211 NE Capital Ave. (Parcel #5350-00-006-0).

This property is reviewed in accordance with City of Battle Creek Building and Housing Code Chapter 1470 "Historic Preservation", as amended, the Michigan 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.*

Staff finds that the proposed fencing will not impact the use of the resource, and will require no alteration of the building itself.

The commission may find this standard to be met.

- (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 proposed fencing would not destroy any distinguishing original qualities or character of the resource and its environment. No distinctive architectural features would need to be removed or altered to allow for the construction of the proposed fencing.

The commission may find this standard to be met.

- (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 applicant is not proposing any alterations that have no historic basis, or which seek to create an earlier appearance.

The commission may find this standard to be met.

- (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.*

None of the proposed work at the subject site is anticipated to represent a change in any characteristic of the resource, which may have acquired significance in its own right.

The commission may find this standard to be met.

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

No distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship, which characterize the resource are anticipated to be impacted by the addition of the proposed fencing.

The commission may find this standard to be met.

- (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.*

The applicant is not proposing the repair or replacement of any deteriorated architectural features.

The commission may find this standard to be met.

- (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.*

No surface cleaning of the resource on the subject site is being proposed.

The commission may find this standard to be met.

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

Staff would recommend a standard condition of approval that any archaeological resources discovered during the construction of the proposed fencing be preserved and reported to 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 proposed work is not anticipated to impact any historic, architectural or cultural material. The proposed wood privacy fencing is characteristic of other similar fences in the vicinity of the subject property. Additionally, because of the fence's proposed location it is anticipated that the fencing would result in a minimal (if any) visual change in the property from the street.

The commission may find this standard to be met.

- (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 impaired.*

Should the proposed fencing need to be removed in future, it is not anticipated that such removal would result in the impairment of the essential form and integrity of the resource at the subject site.

The commission may find this standard to be met.

Recommendation

The applicant is proposing the construction of a new 6-foot tall wood privacy fence in the rear yard of the property at 211 NE Capital Ave. along the west (side) lot line for 90 feet and connecting with 78 feet worth of fencing along the north (rear) lot line.

Given the material composition of the proposed fencing (wood) as well as the minimal amount of resulting alteration which would be visible from the street, staff recommends approval of H-15-25, a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a total of 168 linear feet of new 6-foot tall wood privacy fencing in the rear yard of the property at 211 NE Capital Ave., as the request meets the standards outlined in Section 1470.09 "Review of Applications," Section 1470.17 "Preservation of Historic Features" and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines, as outlined in the staff report. If approved, staff would recommend the following condition:

- 1. Any archaeological resources discovered during the construction process be preserved and reported to the City of Battle Creek.**

Support Material

Historic District Commission Application
Site Plan

= Proposed Privacy

