

**400 E. Main Street
CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

HISTORY/REQUEST: Certificate of Appropriateness (CofA) for roof, screen removal and new ADA ramp at 400 E. Main Street. House is to be converted from residential use to retail and office.

DATE OF REVIEW: October 19, 2021

HISTORIC DESIGNATION AND ZONING:

“Dr. D.B. Gregg House” built 1930. Dr. Dick Bolling Gregg was Round Rock’s only physician from the late 1920s to the 1960s. Minimal Traditional with Craftsman and Colonial Revival influences. H overlay zoning with MU-2 base zoning.



400 E. Main Street, May 2021

REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS:

1. NPS Preservation Briefs #32: Making Historic Properties Accessible (mostly pgs. 1-4)
2. The Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*
 - a. Pg. 75-79: Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings
 - b. Pg. 98-101: Standards for Rehabilitation: Roofs
 - c. Pg. 147-152: Standards for Rehabilitation: Code-required elements
3. City of Round Rock *Design Guidelines for Round Rock Historic Residential Properties*
 - a. Pg. 12: Rehabilitation and Roofs at Residential Properties
 - b. Pg. 13: Finishes at residential properties
 - c. Pg. 17: Windows

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STAFF REVIEW AND ANALYSIS:

About the property:

The house was recently purchased with the intent of converting to a commercial use. Staff does not have access to photos before the 1980s, but there appear to have been few significant alterations:

- The front porch (or low-walled patio) was rebuilt in 2004 (with a CofA) because it had settled unevenly, pulling away from the house and allowing water to damage the wood frame. The new porch has the same dimensions as the previous porch and similar brick, though the new stucco has a smoother texture and has not been painted.
- A carriage house was removed in 2005 (with a CofA).
- In spring 2021 the side (west) porch was rebuilt to resemble the new front porch after cracking was noted on several inspection reports. Because the then-owner intended to rebuild as before, he did not apply for a CofA. Comparison with earlier photos, however, reveal several differences to be discussed with Request #3.

Request #1: New roofing color:

The new owner wishes to replace the current gray-green composition shingle roofing with Owens-Corning Oakridge “Onyx Black” 3-tab composition shingles. Photos indicate that previous roofing has been asphalt or composition shingle of various colors and shapes. The original roofing material is not known but is presumed to be either wood or asphalt shingle.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval as presented.



400 E. Main ca. late 1980s with gray composition shingles

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Request #2: Remove screens and place in storage:

According to the applicant, screens were not in place when he purchased the property, but he later found them outside leaning against the house. The applicant prefers not to reinstall the screens but is willing to store them in a shed onsite. The screens on the rear screened porch are fixed and he plans to keep them in place.

Analysis:

Whether or not the Craftsman-style screens are original is unknown, though they appear in photos since the 1980s. They were repaired in 2019 after damage was noted in the tax exemption inspection report. The two small 8-paned windows by the chimney don't appear to have had screens in that time.

Visually the 3/1 and 4/1 screens add a layer of detail to the 1/1 windows that is consistent with the age and style of the house. Removing the screens alters the visual proportions of the window trim, making it appear a bit chunkier. The effect, however, is easily reversible.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval provided that the screens are stored where they are protected from sun, rain, and contact with the ground.

Request #3: New accessibility ramp:

The applicants are required to add an accessible entrance when the house is converted to commercial use. Usually, an accessibility ramp can be reviewed administratively. However, in this case, the applicant's proposal involves permanent alterations to the structure. Alterations to the existing historic structure require HPC review.

The applicant proposes adding a ramp to the north side of the west porch because of the proximity to a concrete pad at the rear of the property to be used for accessible parking. He prefers to use the side porch rather than the rear screened porch because the rear porch accesses the kitchen, which will not be an area intended for customer use.

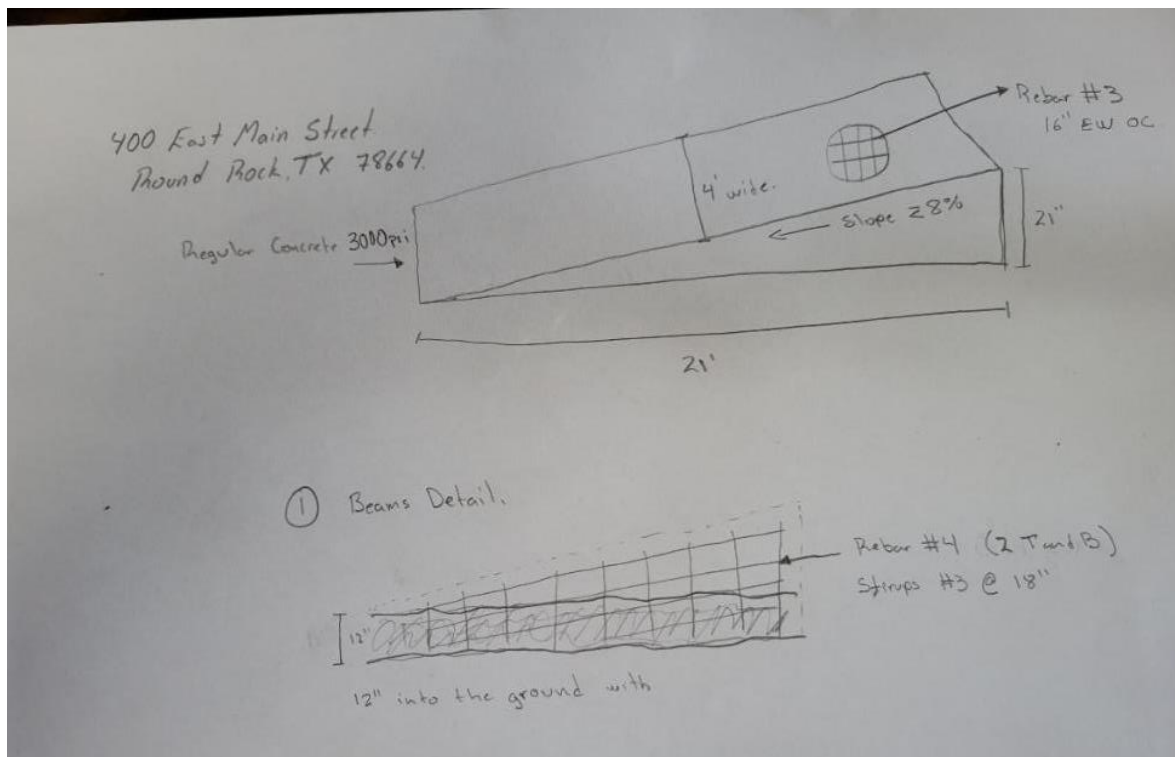


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The applicant and his contractor are evaluating several options:

Proposal A:

The proposed ramp is described as being made of concrete with a simple pipe railing. The ramp would be 21 ft long, so it would end about halfway along the screen porch in back. Drawings appear to indicate that the porch wall would be removed to the left side of the steps and remain on the right side. A few inches gap would be left between the ramp and the foundation skirting. A simple pipe railing would be located on the street side of the ramp but not next to the house.



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Applicant's examples of proposed pipe railing

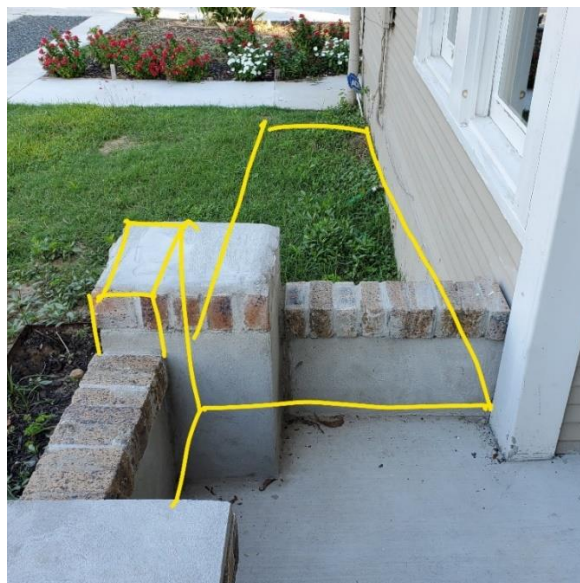


Proposal B:

A building inspector pointed out that the porch is deep enough that the minimum 36" width could be achieved while removing only part of the porch wall, leaving a 4-6-inch-thick wall on the street side of the porch. Unfortunately, the contractor did not think he would be able to slice through the corner block (stucco over concrete block). However, preservation staff believe that there are reasons that the HPC might allow the applicant to remove the existing wall and build a narrower replacement:

- The porch is not original and was built in spring 2021 by the previous owner.
- The porch design is not identical to the previous porch: the original had corner blocks only at the corners of the porch, and the rebuilt porch also has blocks to either side of the steps. The stucco texture and brick are also different.
- The applicant has expressed concerns about the quality of the repair.

*Staff illustration of proposal B
based on verbal description*



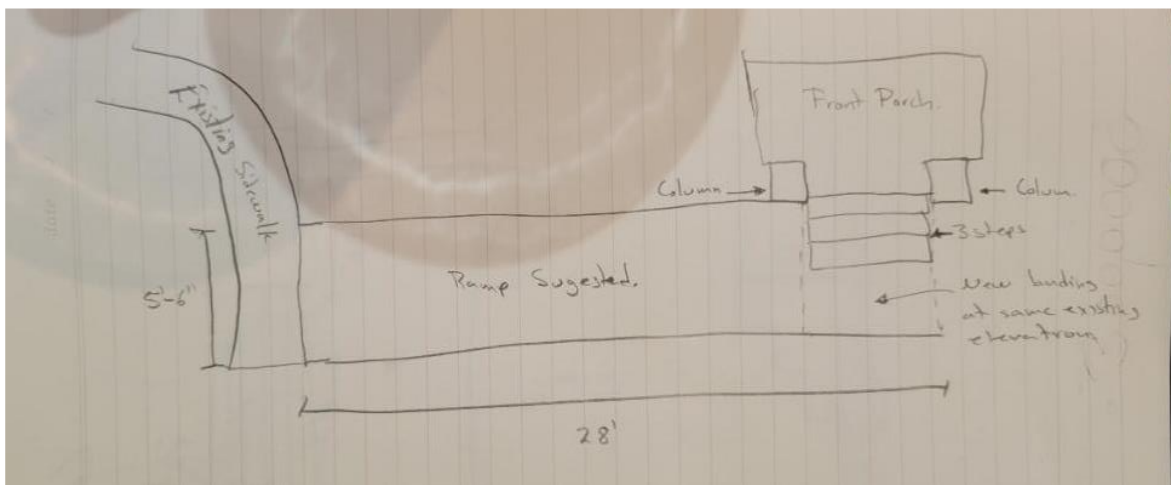
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L: porch in 2020; R: porch in October 2021

Proposal C:

After determining that he couldn't cut through the corner block, the contractor offered a third proposal. This new proposal by the applicant was brought to staff the day before meeting packets were to be distributed to the HPC. In this proposal, the ramp would lead to a landing built over the existing steps in front of the porch. The diagram does not indicate whether this would be a ramp built over the existing steps, whether the steps would be replaced, or what the proposed material(s) would be.



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Staff Analysis:

The *Secretary's Standards* #2 and #5 stress the importance of retaining character-defining features when possible, and *Standards* #9 and #10 give principles for additions or replacements when this is not possible. With respect to Code-required work, the *Standards* repeatedly state that the first step is to identify which features are to be considered character-defining. In staff's opinion the most character-defining part of the west porch is the porch and its low perimeter wall.

From this perspective Proposal A would not be acceptable because it would remove the entire perimeter wall on one side of the porch.

Proposal B would be acceptable because the west (street-facing) shape of the porch, including wall and steps, would be unaltered; however, it may not be technically feasible. Staff believes that it would be justifiable to allow the porch wall to be rebuilt in order to fit the ramp because of the opportunity to undo the features that were not part of the original porch: the extra corner blocks could be removed, the stucco texture could be roughened, and the overall workmanship could be improved upon.

Proposal C needs more detail in order to be fairly evaluated, but if constructed from wood without demolishing the steps could be the most reversible of the options. However, because it would be in front of the porch it would have a greater impact on its character. Staff believes it likely that the house will remain in commercial use for the remainder of its existence, so reversibility is not particularly relevant except that it would be preferable to options that would permanently affect its character.

Technical note on Proposals A and B:

Staff also notes some potential problems with leaving a space between the ramp and the foundation skirting: wheels could slip into the gap and pulling weeds would be difficult. Since the skirting on this part of the house is stucco-textured fiber cement siding, it is not a historic feature and would not be compromised by being attached to the ramp.

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Recommendation:

Staff does not believe that Proposal A is an acceptable option because it is a more permanent and more impactful than the other options.

Staff believes that Proposal B is a preferable option if construction is feasible. It lets the side of the porch facing the street remain in place and closer to the street than the ramp. It is an option that could remain in place for the rest of the house's commercial life and offers the possibility of reversing recent alterations.

Staff believes that not enough information about Proposal C has been provided to make a recommendation on it, but it may offer a more temporary solution if Proposal B is not feasible.

Often when the HPC evaluates a proposal with multiple options, they will defer to staff to amend the CofA, including specific guidance for items that must be included as part of the CofA moving forward. This allows the applicant to continue with the project without having to wait to meet with the HPC.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Staff recommends approving the Oakridge Onyx Black shingles as presented.

Staff recommends approving the proposal to remove the screens under the condition that they are stored where they are protected from sun, rain, and contact with the ground.

Staff recommends allowing alteration of the west porch to accommodate an ADA ramp, provided that the street-facing west wall remains intact or is reconstructed.

Staff recommends that following conditions be added to the motion regarding Proposal B:

- If the porch wall is reconstructed, the alterations made in spring 2021 will be reversed so that it more closely resembles the original west porch.
- The edge of the porch wall should be distinct from the side of the ramp, distinguished by a scored line, a slight setback, and/or a change in texture.
- The ramp may be attached to the foundation skirting (but not the wood siding).

Staff recommends that the following conditions be added to the motion regarding Proposal C:

- The platform in front of the existing porch is to be constructed over the existing steps without removing them.

Allow staff to work with the applicant to finalize the location, materials, and design of the ADA ramp as the proposal is finalized.

Since this project proposal is not finalized, if the applicant provides new information to the HPC at the meeting that is not discussed in this memo, you may choose to defer to staff or postpone a decision on the ramp.