



Agenda Item #5

Application 2026-18-CA

DETAILS

Location:

920 Conti Street

Summary of Request:

After-the-fact replacement of existing wood front entry door with new wood entry door

Applicant (as applicable):

Kevin Muscat

Property Owner:

Kevin Muscat

Historic District:

Old Dauphin Way Historic District

Classification:

Contributing

Summary of Analysis:

- An historic door was removed and the existing opening altered to accommodate a shorter replacement door. The *Design Guidelines* state that a replacement door should fit the original opening.
- The light and panel configuration of the replacement door are not entirely consistent with the period and style of the subject property.
- The replacement door is of an approvable material, and the applicant has taken efforts to ensure the alteration to the historic door surround is reversible.

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PROPERTY AND APPLICATION HISTORY

Old Dauphin Way Historic District was initially listed in the National Register in 1984 under Criteria A for community planning and C for significant architecture. The district includes most nineteenth-century architectural styles and shows adaptations of middle-class domestic designs of the nineteenth century to the regional, Gulf Coast climate. It includes “fine examples of commercial, institutional, and religious structures as well as 20th-century apartments.”

Based on historic tax records, the one-story, wood-frame cottage at 920 Conti Street was constructed in 1903. The 1904, 1925, and 1956 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps show the cottage as it existed as late as June 2024. Since then, the current owner has constructed a rear porch addition. The main block of the house remains largely unchanged.

This property has appeared twice before the Architectural Review Board (ARB). In August 2023, the ARB denied an application to relocate 920 Conti and the neighboring residence at 918 Conti to a vacant lot on Hickory Street. The current owner acquired the property in June 2024 and received multiple staff-level approvals for exterior stabilization and repairs. In September 2024, the ARB approved an application to construct a rear porch addition.

SCOPE OF WORK

1. Remove and replace a wood exterior entry door with a new wood entry door that does not fit the opening.
 - a. The wood replacement door features 3 glass lights over 2 recessed panels.
 - b. The wood door will be stained and sealed.
2. Alter the existing door surround to accommodate a shorter replacement door.
 - a. A plain board measuring has been installed over the existing decorative wood lintel to lower the door opening height to meet the replacement door.
3. The replacement door would be finished with stain if allowed to remain.

APPLICABLE STANDARDS (*Design Review Guidelines for Mobile's Historic Districts*)

1. **5.14** Preserve the decorative and functional features of a primary door.
 - Original doors and openings, including their dimensions, should be retained along with any moldings, transoms or sidelights.
 - Maintain the original position and proportions of a historically significant door.
2. **5.15** Repair or replace a damaged historic door to maintain its general historic appearance.
 - Replacements should reflect the age and style of the building.
 - Use materials that are visually comparable to that of the original.
 - Do not use solid core or flush doors.

STAFF ANALYSIS

This application seeks after-the-fact approval of the removal and replacement of a non-original wood paneled door with a new wood paneled door.

The *Design Review Guidelines* require property owners retain and preserve any original doors and openings, including any “moldings, transoms or sidelights.” If an original door is missing or damaged beyond the possibility of repair, the *Guidelines* advise that a replacement door should reflect the age and style of the subject property and use materials that are “visually comparable” to the original. The *Guidelines* stress that any replacement of an original door should maintain the “original position and proportions of a historically significant door.”

The historic paneled wood door with three lights over three horizontal panels was highly typical of the period from 1900 to 1910. Unless there is photographic evidence of a different front door at this property, it is appropriate to assume that the door was original to the property. According to the *Design Guidelines*, replacement of an original door is inappropriate unless the door has deteriorated beyond the point of repair. It is difficult to ascertain from available photos if the door had or had not deteriorated to this point.

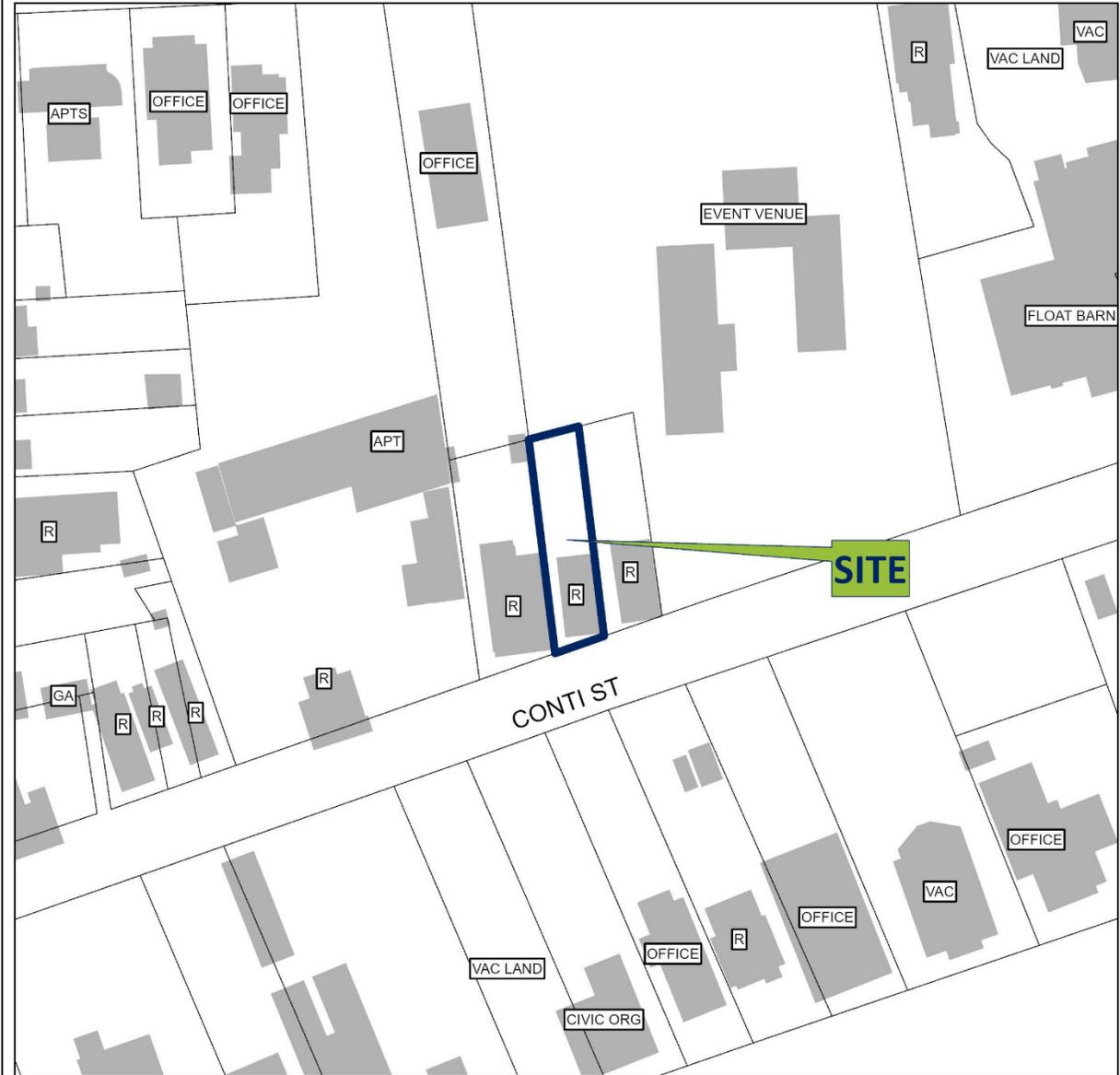
If an original door has deteriorated to the point that repair is impossible, the *Guidelines* require that a replacement door reflect the age and style of the subject property. Paneled wood doors with glass lights were common in the period between 1900 and 1910. However, the specific configuration of the replacement door – a two-over-two light above a single rectangular panel – would have been atypical when the house was constructed in 1903. At that time, the most common lighted door configurations featured one large light or two paired lights over a variety of wood panel configurations. Doors with two-over-two lights set above two or three wood panels were commercially available, but they are rarely depicted as front entry doors in the house design books of the period. This door type was uncommon and primarily used for accessory structures, such as ice houses. Staff were able to find one house design catalogue from 1900 that shows a front entry door with a two-over-two light. Instead of a single wood panel, the light is set above three horizontal panels, similar to the configuration of the door removed from the subject property.

The head height of the existing opening has been lowered to accommodate the replacement door, which is shorter than the door that was removed. In discussions with staff, the property owner stated that the existing opening was so out of plumb that it would not be possible to install a new door that was both plumb and large enough to fit the opening. To fit the new smaller door within the opening, the owner installed a flat trim board over the decorative carved lintel. This brought down the head height without requiring removal of the original lintel. In other words, the decorative lintel remains *in situ* and could be restored at a later date.

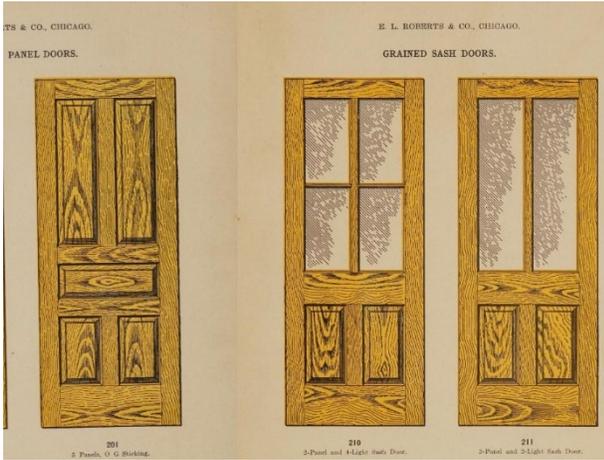
If allowed to remain, the replacement door would be finished with stain.

Site Location

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD VICINITY MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER <u>5</u> DATE <u>3/4/2026</u>	 NTS
APPLICANT <u>Kevin Muscat</u>	
PROJECT <u>After-the-fact front door replacement</u>	



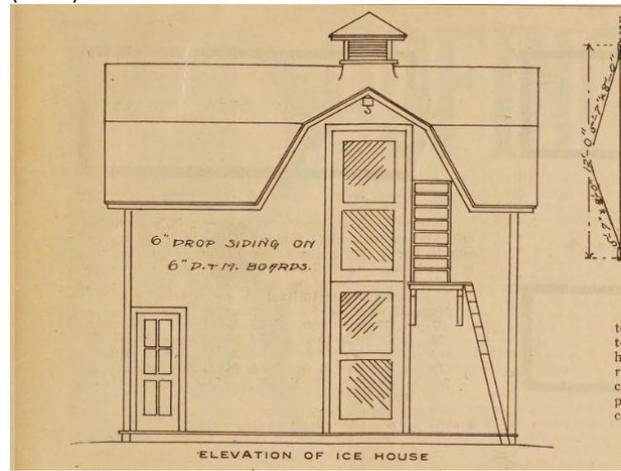
7. Door with a two-over-two light set above two vertical panels in E. L. Roberts & Co. Catalogue (1903)



8. Door with a two-over-two light set above three unequal panels in Roach and Musser Sash and Door Co. Catalogue (1905)



9. Door with a two-over-two light set above three horizontal panels in *Modern Homes* (S. B. Reed, 1900)



10. Door with a two-over-two light set above two vertical panels pictured on a design for an icehouse in Gordon-Van Tine Co. catalogue (1908)