



## Agenda Item #5

### Certified Record 2026-30-CA

#### DETAILS

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**Location:**

960 Dauphin Street

**Summary of Request:**

After-the-fact approval to remove original doors, transoms, and sidelights from the south façade and replace with new wood doors that do not match existing.

**Applicant (as applicable):**

Robert Brown

**Property Owner:**

Same

**Historic District:**

Old Dauphin Way

**Classification:**

Contributing

**Summary of Analysis:**

- The *Guidelines* do not allow for removal of original features that can be repaired. If original features must be replaced due to damage or deterioration, the *Guidelines* explicitly state that the new feature must match existing in material, placement, dimension, style, and molding profiles.
- The historic doors, transoms, and sidelights had been fully repaired, painted, and fitted with new hardware immediately prior to their removal.
- All materials remain on site and are in repairable condition.
- **Update:** The applicant has submitted drawings proposing a new design for a single door with flanking sidelights. The proposed design does not replicate the original historic details and significantly alters the relative proportions of the door, sidelights, and transom.

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## PROPERTY AND APPLICATION HISTORY

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Old Dauphin Way Historic District was initially listed in the National Register in 1984 under Criterion C for significant architecture and community planning. 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 20<sup>th</sup>-century apartments.”

The two-story, wood-frame, side-hall house with rear service wing was constructed c. 1860. The 1878 Hopkins map shows the original side-hall plan with offset rear service wing and one outbuilding located at the northwest corner of the property. The 1904 Sanborn map shows the historic footprint of the house with a porch wrapping the east and north elevations of the service wing. Four outbuildings were present. Representations on the 1925 and 1956 Sanborn maps are identical. The historic porches along the east and north elevations were removed and a rear addition constructed sometime after 1956. The property is protected by a façade easement held by the Mobile Historic Development Commission, who approved the changes proposed in this application on May 6, 2024.

According to Historic Development Department files, this property has appeared five times previously before the Architectural Review Board (ARB).

In 2003, the ARB approved the addition of a screened porch at the northwest corner of the house, the enclosure with glass of the existing two-story gallery on the east elevation of the rear service wing, installation of a 6' privacy fence, and the construction of a porte-cochere. It appears the screened porch and porte-cochere were never constructed. In November 2020, the ARB approved the construction of a two-story addition on the east side of the rear wing; construction of a free-standing two-car garage; construction of a porte-cochere; fenestration changes to an apparent 20th-century rear addition, east elevation, and south elevation; and construction of a gate beside the driveway. Before this work could be completed, the ARB reviewed and approved another application in April 2021 to complete similar work, including construction of a two-story porch on the east elevation of the rear wing; construction of a two-car attached garage; and fenestration changes to the east and south elevations and to a rear addition. It appears that these projects were stalled during the selective demolition phase and were never completed.

In May 2024, the Board approved the construction of a two-story porch and a deck on the east side elevation of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century addition, minor changes to the fenestration pattern, and wholesale replacement of existing windows. In November 2024, the Board agreed to amend the previous to allow the applicant to alter window sizes to allow installation of stock instead of custom windows. At the same time, the Board approved replacing the wood siding on sides and rear with fiber cement siding and some minor alterations to the design of the previously approved two-story side porch. At both hearings in 2024, the scope of work included repairing and preserving in place the historic doors, sidelights, and transoms on the south façade.

## SCOPE OF WORK

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1. Replace original wood paneled doors and surrounds with new multi-light doors.
  - a. Remove both historic doors – including associated historic trim, sidelights, and transoms – from the south street-facing façade.
  - b. Replace the original main entry door and sidelights with double-leaf multi-light wood doors with no sidelights and a simple rectangular transom.
  - c. Replace the historic center door on the second-floor gallery with a single multi-light wood door with a simple rectangular transom.
2. Remove existing square tile porch deck and replace with rectangular ceramic tiles.

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

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1. **5.4** Preserve original building materials.
  - Repair deteriorated building materials by patching, piecing-in, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing the material.
  - Remove only those materials which are deteriorated, and beyond reasonable repair.
  - Do not remove original materials that are in good condition.
2. **5.6** Use original materials to replace damaged materials on primary surfaces where possible.
  - Use original materials to replace damaged building materials on a primary façade if possible.
  - Do not replace building materials on the primary façade, such as wood siding and masonry, with alternative or imitation materials unless it cannot be avoided.
3. **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.
4. **5.15** Repair or replace a damaged historic door to maintain its general historic appearance.
  - Replacement should reflect the age and style of the building.
  - Use materials that are visually comparable to that of the original.
5. **5.17** Preserve historic stylistic and architectural details and ornamentation.
  - Retain historic details and ornamentation intact.
  - Retain and treat exterior stylistic features and examples of skilled craftsmanship with sensitivity.
  - Repair historic details and ornamentation that are deteriorated.
6. **5.19** Where repair is impossible, replace details and ornamentation accurately
  - When replacing historic details, match the original in profile, dimension, and material.
7. **6.5** Repair a porch in a way that maintains the original character.
8. **6.6** If replacement is required, design it to reflect the time period of the historic structure.
  - Replace a historic porch element to match the original.
  - Use replacement materials and elements that are appropriate to the style, texture, finish, composition, and proportion of the historic structure.

## STAFF ANALYSIS for May 20, 2026

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The subject property is a contributing structure to the Old Dauphin Way Historic District. The application under review proposes removing the original Italianate door and surround from the main entry. The two façade doors and their surrounds are some of the last remaining elements original to the c. 1860 structure. The main entry door especially is highly indicative of the Italianate style, and its survival over the last 165 years are a testament to its excellent craftsmanship and material integrity. The application proposes replacing both the main entry and the second-floor gallery door with modern multi-light wood doors that are incompatible with the period and style of the c. 1860 Italianate-style residence. The property owner has also replaced a non-original tile floor with a modern tile floor that is not compatible in style with the dwelling.

### **Incompatible Replacement of Façade Doors**

The *Design Guidelines* clearly state original building materials be retained and repaired wherever possible (5.4). The *Guidelines* dictate that character-defining features, and especially primary entrances,

are to be preserved in their original condition wherever possible (5.4, 5.14, 5.15, 5.17). If repair of these features is not possible, the *Guidelines* stipulate that any replacements match the original in material, location, dimension, and proportions. Decorative moldings and ornaments are to be replicated as closely as possible (5.19).

While staff agree that the main entry showed considerable signs of wear, onsite inspections during the construction process indicated that the paneled wood door, sidelights, transom, and decorative trim could be repaired. Staff received no communication during the construction process that repair of the either of the two façade door assemblies was not possible. On the contrary, prior to their removal, both façade doors and their surrounds had been repaired and painted in the white and black color scheme used on the rest of the residence. New hardware had been installed on the main entry door, suggesting it was operable. Upon receiving a 311 complaint that both doors had been replaced, staff visited the site and found that the contractor had salvaged both doors as well as their decorative surrounds, transoms, and sidelights. Workmen onsite assured staff that the doors and surrounds could be reinstalled in their original location and condition.

If for any reason the doors and surrounds could not be reinstalled, the *Guidelines* specify that a new door and surrounds would need to match the original as closely as possible. Since the original door and trim survive, it would be possible to have them replicated exactly in an insect-resistant wood such as mahogany. In contrast, the current replacement doors do not replicate any detail of the original. The original single-leaf entry door with transoms has been replaced with a double-leaf door without transoms. The new trim is lacking in the characteristic detail and depth of the original Italianate door surrounds. The new multi-light doors are themselves a significant departure from the historic solid wood paneled doors.

### **Ceramic Floor Tiles at Porch**

Where the original porch floor is no longer extant, the *Guidelines* support installing a porch material that might have existed at the time the home was constructed (6.5, 6.6). When the home was constructed in about 1860, the most common porch type for the period would have been tongue-and-groove wood planks. Some high-style dwellings from the period featured mosaic floors made with either terra cotta or stone tiles. These were typically di- or polychromatic mosaics using square, hexagonal, or octagonal tiles made of either terra cotta or stone (see images 11 and 12).

Prior to this most recent renovation, the porch floor at 960 Dauphin was clad in a square ceramic tile that did not appear to be original. The original porch material is unknown. The newly installed tile floor features rectangular tiles of a single color in a simple running bond. This gives the tile floor a much more modern appearance than what would be expected of a c. 1860 dwelling. However, the material itself is one that would have been historically available, and the tile floor is minimally visible from the public right-of-way.

## PUBLIC TESTIMONY

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Mr. Robert Brown, owner of the subject property, presented the project to the Board.

Charles McLeod came forward to speak against the application. He stated the home was constructed by his great grandparents and that if the door had to be replaced due to damage, the replacement door should match the original main entry door.

## BOARD DISCUSSION

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Ms. Karrie Maurin asked the applicant what porch materials had been used.

Mr. Brown replied that the porch needed to be rebuilt and is poured concrete to match the previous porch with a different tiled surface.

Mr. Brown claimed he misread the original scope of work on the COA that was issued and that the front door has sustained significant damage.

Ms. Jennifer Roselius stated that the front door, if approved for replacement, should have been replaced in-kind with a similar door to the original.

Mr. Brown stated that replacing the door to match existing or repairing the door in-kind was cost prohibitive.

Ms. Karrie Maurin asked the applicant if he consulted an architect about the doors.

Ms. Annie Sawyer Allen provided that staff advised the applicant to repair the doors if necessary. She added during a site visit, staff observed the first-floor front door and surround. The door, casing, and surround had been sanded, painted and adorned with new hardware. They did not appear to be in need of repairs.

Ms. Maurin asked the applicant who fabricated the door.

Mr. Brown responded Jemison Window and Doors.

Ms. Roselius asked staff and fellow board members if they believe the original door is repairable.

Ms. Allen replied that no professional assessment of the condition of the door had been provided, but reiterated that during the site visit, it did not seem that the door was beyond repair.

Ms. Maurin asked the applicant why a similar door to the original was not procured from Jennison.

Ms. Roselius stated that the replacement door on the second floor and the tile on the front porch could be approved. However, consideration of the first-floor primary door should be tabled, to give the applicant time to propose an alternative to the newly installed first-floor door.

## DECISION ON THE APPLICATION

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Mr. Stephen Howle motioned to table the application.

Ms. Karrie Maurin seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

The proposal to replicate the original door and surround using new materials would result in the loss of significant historic material. This would violate the directive in the Design Guidelines that original building materials should be retained and repaired wherever possible (5.4).

At the hearing on May 20, the applicant presented images of termite and other forms of wood damage. These images include photographs of the door, the transom muntins, and modern framing inside the building wall. None of the photographs depict the condition of the sidelights, sidelight surround, dentils, or other exterior molding. The photographs cannot therefore establish that the entire surround is compromised.

The photographs of termite damage are exclusively of modern wood framing inside the building walls. Photographs of the historic door and transom do not depict significant termite damage. Old growth wood is known to be far more resistant to termite attack than modern lumber. The door also appears to be made of mahogany, a naturally insect-resistant wood.

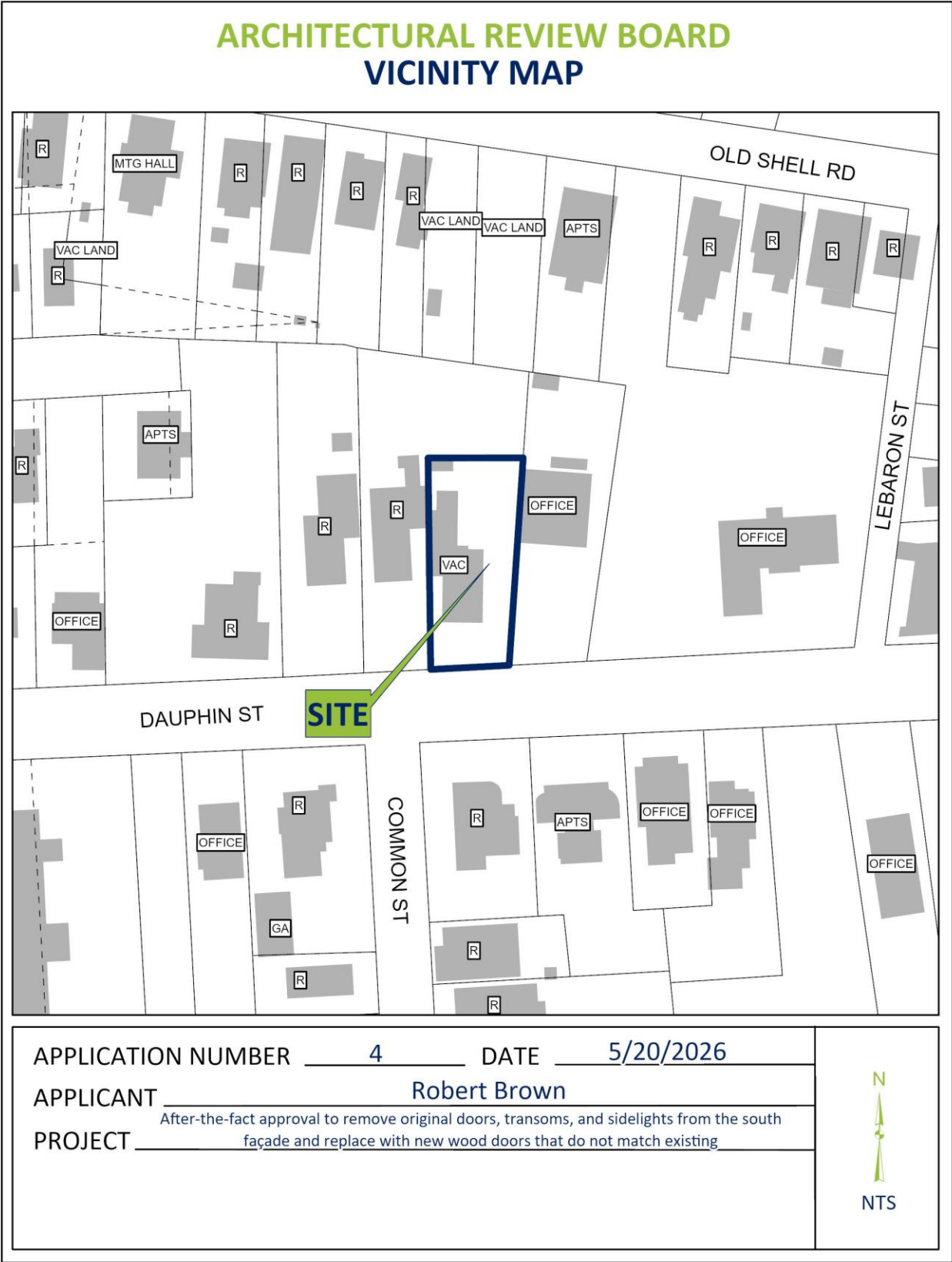
Photos of the transom show relatively minor damage that could be repaired with dutchman and/or a wood epoxy. The black material shown on the transom in one photograph appears to be surface mildew, which would not compromise the integrity of the wood itself.

Photographs do show more significant damage to the door itself. This degree of damage may require extensive dutchman repairs that would impact the visual appearance of a stained door. However, these repairs would not be easily visible on a painted door.

The quality of the historic wood materials, their location under a protective porch, the fact that the door and surround had been finished and painted in the new white and black color scheme prior to their removal, suggest that the door and surround were in repairable condition.

The CAD drawings submitted do not replicate the intricate detail of the historic surround. They also significantly alter the relative proportions of the door, transom, and sidelights. The neoclassical pilasters on either side of the door are not present at all in the new drawing. Instead of the tripartite transom of the original, the proposed drawing has a single 4-light transom. The door has been simplified, and its 1-over-1 wood panels are far more typical of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century than the c. 1860 construction date of the subject property. The dentil molding is entirely out of scale. While the new design would be a significant improvement over the current multi-light French doors, it does not faithfully replicate the original Italianate door and surround.

As the Guidelines clearly state, that replacements of known historic details must “match the original in profile, dimension, and material (5.19).” Since the exact style and detailing of the original door and surround is well documented, the only appropriate reproduction, according to the *Guidelines*, is one that fully and faithfully replicates the original. The proposed design does not meet this standard.



## Site Photos – 960 Dauphin Street



1. Primary (south) façade, looking north (1983)



2. South façade, looking northwest (2020)



3. Replacement doors (April 2026)



4. Historic entry door, sidelights, and transom (2020)



5. Interior of historic entry door (2020)



6. Original entry door with new hardware installed



7. Sidelights and door surround trim



8. Door surround trim and transoms



9. Transoms behind door trim pieces



10. New tiles on south porch deck



11. Tile porch floor, Guesnard House (c. 1855) at 51 S. Jackson Street



12. Stone porch floor, St. John-Rutherford House (c. 1857) at 201 N. Conception Street



Replace the Dental Molding

960 Dauphin Street, Mobile AL. 36604

Replace Front Door, Transom and side Lights with Solid Wood Door and paint Black to match the currnt doors and windows.