

**CAPITOL ZONING DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT
09/22/20
DAC / BIM**



Location: 1400 Center Street
Applicant: Jason Files & Stephanie Harris
Permit Type: Certificate of Appropriateness

Project Description: This application is for a Certificate of Appropriateness to allow for the installation of a repurposed shipping container for use as a backyard storage shed. *NOTE: The drawings also show new fencing, an extension of the front porch roof, a semi-covered carport, removal of the rear poolhouse addition, and a new roof over the rear entrance to create a covered back porch. These items can be approved at the staff level and are not covered in this report.*

Historic Significance: The lot at 1400 Center Street was developed along with many other lots in the area in the late 19th century, originally holding two homes—one facing Center Street and one facing 14th Street. The Center Street home was removed likely sometime during the 1960s. The lot remained vacant until the current Ranch-style home was built in 1981 with an energy-conscious design, featuring few windows and partially submerged on the north side. A swimming pool and screened porch were added in the mid-1980s, and the porch was later enclosed to become a pool house. The property remained under the ownership of Joe Ross and family until May 2020, when the current owners purchased it. The house is listed as non-contributing in the Governor's Mansion Historic District.

Previous Action: Agency records show the only permit granted for this property before this year was for the rear swimming pool and screened porch in the 1980s. The Commission approved an application for an addition to the north side of the house in July of this year.

Zoning: This property is located in Zone "M", the Mansion Area residential zone. This zone makes up the majority of the Mansion Area and accounts for nearly the entirety of Center Street within the District.

Review Standards for Certificates of Appropriateness:

Capitol Zoning District Commission Rule, Section 2-105, Permit Approval Procedure

C. 1. (b) A Certificate of Appropriateness shall also be required for the erection of any new structure, including accessory structures, or site improvements, such as retaining walls, fences, ponds, or pergolas... Capitol Zoning staff may issue Certificates of Appropriateness for new construction only when the proposed changes substantially comply with all applicable review standards, and:

ii. The proposed new construction is an accessory structure similar to those traditionally seen in the District, such as storage sheds, unenclosed walkways, gazebos, animal enclosures, tree houses, carports, green houses, etc.

Staff finds the proposal constitutes a request for a major modification and the placement of a new accessory structure. Staff cannot determine whether the proposed structure is similar to those seen traditionally. Therefore, the application must be reviewed by the Design Review Committee and approved by the Commission.

F.1. All changes in the Capitol Zoning District will be evaluated according to the General Standards and the applicable Area Master Plan. Also,

a. Changes to historic structures or site features shall be evaluated according to the Rehabilitation Standards for Historic Properties.

i. Structures and site features 40 years or older are assumed to be historic, unless they have been significantly altered, and reversing the alteration(s) would be impossible or wholly unreasonable. ...

Staff finds the structure does not date to the period of significance, is not a contributing resource to the Mansion Area Historic District, and it does not fall within the 40-year period to be considered historic as it was built in 1981. Therefore, it should be evaluated using the General Standards, the Mansion Area Master Plan, and the Mansion Area Design Standards, but does not meet requirements to be held to the Rehabilitation Standards.

Capitol Zoning District General Standards, Section 3-201, Zoning Requirements

Z6. Zone M “Mansion Area Residential” This zone, comprising most of the Governor’s Mansion Area, allows for the continuation of traditional neighborhood residential development patterns. Single-family residences should be the predominant, though not the exclusive, land use and building form in this zone.

2. Ground coverage ratios

Enclosed floor to lot area = maximum 1.1 : 1.0

The lot coverage is well below this ratio, even with the new addition and the 340 sq. ft. container.

Capitol Zoning District General Standards, Section 3-202, Additional Zoning Requirements & Definitions

Z9. Accessory uses and structures are allowed by right.

2. An accessory structure is a structure built or operated in conjunction with an accessory use, located on the same parcel of land as a principal structure containing the principal use. Accessory Structures must comply with the following requirements:

a. An accessory building or structure may occupy not more than thirty percent of the required rear yard.

b. All single and two family residences shall be separated from accessory structures by a distance of not less than six (6) feet.

c. No accessory building or structure shall be allowed in the front yard setback but in the side or rear yard, they shall maintain at least a three (3) foot setback from any property line ...

The proposed accessory structure meets all these placement requirements.

Mansion Area Design Standards, Section 8-201, Design Standards for New Construction in Zones “M” and “N”

M30. A secondary structure should be compatible with the primary building.

• While the roof line does not have to match the house, it is best that it not vary significantly.

M31. A secondary structure should be similar in character to those seen traditionally.

• Basic rectangular forms, with hip, gable or shed roofs, are appropriate.

• Contemporary interpretations of traditional secondary structures should be permitted when they are compatible with the historic context.

The new container shed will be rectangular in form with an added gable roof. Staff believes this represents a contemporary interpretation of a traditional secondary structure.

Mansion Area Master Plan, Section 6-201(A), Mansion Area Goals

2. To revitalize existing housing ...

4. To create an improved image and stronger sense of identity.

9. To establish a sense of visual continuity within the Mansion Area neighborhood.

Staff believes the proposed accessory structure is generally consistent with these goals.

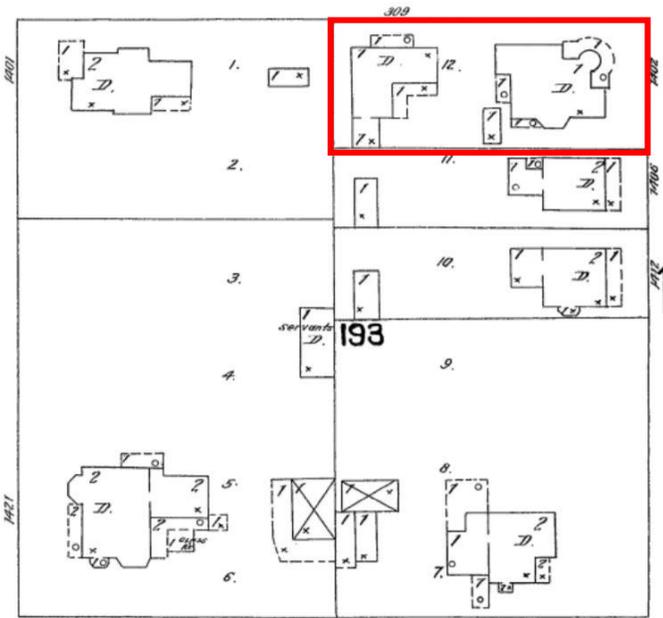
Neighborhood Reaction: None to date.

Staff Recommendation: Staff believes the application proposes the placement of an obviously uncharacteristic site feature, but also that the applicants have taken measures to mask the uncharacteristic elements of the proposed structure to an agreeable level. Therefore, recommends **approval** with the following conditions:

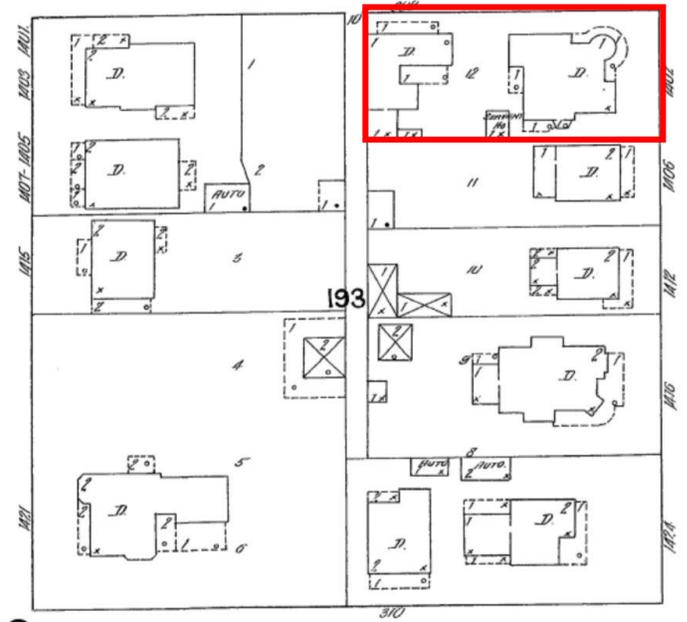
1. That all State and City Codes be followed at all times; and

2. That the property be maintained in a neat and safe condition at all times.

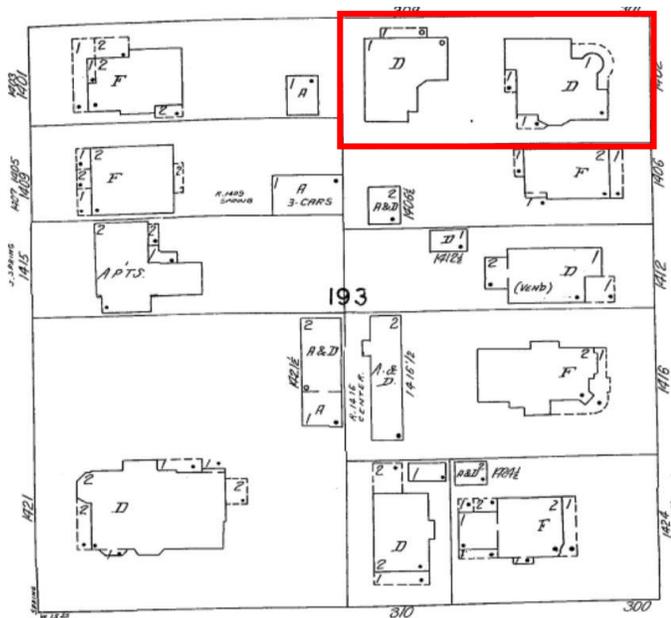
Details from Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. Maps



1897 – Original homes on the lot.

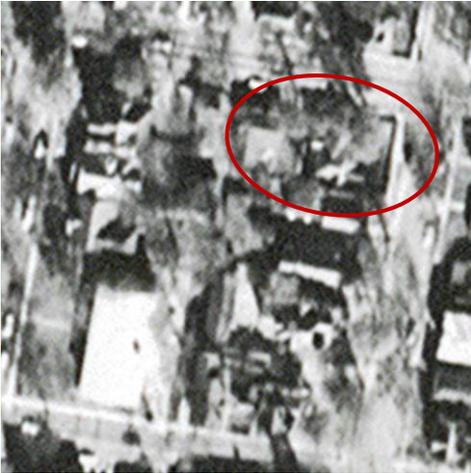


1913 – Some alterations to the homes and outbuildings, but no real change.



1939-1950 – Homes still remain by 1950.

Aerial Photographs



1960 – The home on the corner of Center and 14th Streets is still apparent.



1972 – The original house is gone.



1980 – The lot remained vacant until the current structure was built in 1981.

Arkansas Gazette article on the home's construction



Brick floor retains heat admitted into room by southern windows.

A berm, an earthen bank, is built up around north end of house.

Ross' Latest Enterprise: Passive-solar Home

By PAT T. PATTERSON
Gazette Staff

Joe Ross and his wife built a solar home in Fayetteville some years back. It had solar collectors and a hot-water heating system. It was snug and warm. Now, in Little Rock, they have built another solar home, this one with a passive solar system.

On the southern exposure of this small brick house is a bank of windows that will shed sunlight on the heat-retentive brick floor.

That's it, folks, that's the system.

There are some who would say this solar system is so passive that it will go virtually unnoticed on a cold February day. But Ross is confident. He designed the house and its heating system and plans to live in toasty comfort. He has also installed central heating, in case the sun doesn't shine.

The thing about this one-room house

is that it's just as the Rosses want it. They designed and contracted it, and Ross, 69, participated in nearly every phase of its construction. "I think building this house is the most fun I've ever had," he said. "I'd build another one tomorrow if I could."

The house is just one in a series of major undertakings by Joe Ross. He has been featured in the *Gazette* before for his Enterprise College, a one-man institution, with Ross teaching business practices to people interested in starting up on their own. (He lists the owners of Le Casse Crouete among his successful students and hopes to teach another set of classes through the public library after the first of the year.) He got his law degree late in life and is now the junior partner in his son's law firm.

Ross says there are a lot of projects in the back of his mind, enough to take

him to age 100. "After that, I'll start all over again," he said.

In designing the house, Ross and his wife sat down to discuss what they wanted. "We wanted a music room and a dining room and two bathrooms," he said. "And we wanted a one-room house."

This conflict was neatly solved. There are nooks in each corner of the 1,500 square-foot floor plan. On the south corners, open to the living area, are a nook for the baby grand piano and one for the small dining table and chairs. The bathrooms are in the north corners, closed off. The only other enclosure is a closet that almost covers the north wall.

The couple managed to incorporate other "wishes" into their one-room plan. "We had always liked the idea of a sunken living room," Ross said. So the carpeted sleeping area is raised a step

above the brick floor of the living area. Kitchen appliances are neatly lined up on the west wall.

In Fayetteville, Ross had seen a roof he liked, and he ordered one for his house. It's a park pavilion roof with natural wood planks and laminated beams, coated with polyurethane. "We had some trouble getting the roof," he said. "This company also builds bridges, and they evidently had a lot of bridges in the works when we were needing our roof."

The wooden planks are covered with two inches of foam insulation, then plywood, then Fiberglas roofing. The beams, Ross says, help trap heat in the high-ceilinged room.

There are other energy conserving measures, most notably an earth berm built up against the northern exterior wall to keep cold from seeping in. All the windows are double glazed. Aside

from the bank of south windows, there are small windows in each corner of the house to help with cross ventilation, and two ventilator windows up close to the ceiling.

One-room living is something to ponder. There are plenty of couples who have a hard time finding space "to be alone" in houses with a number of rooms. And think of this. The whole house is in view all the time. No door to close to hide the mess.

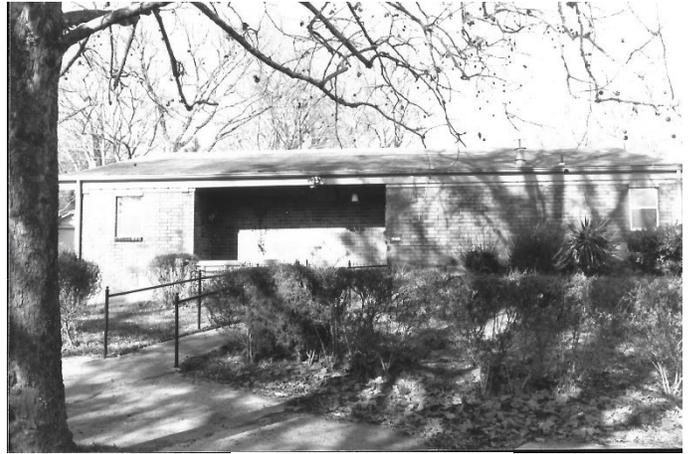
"It's not so much," Ross said. "There are millions of people in the world living in efficiency apartments, when you think about it."

Besides, he said, he and his wife have temperaments well-suited to a one-room house. "She's neat," he said. "She picks up things and makes the bed the minute we're out of it. And I'm sanitary. I make sure the dishes are washed and put away right after a meal."

1998 Photographs



South façade.



Front (east) façade.



North façade

Current Photographs



South façade



Front (east) facade



Berm along the northeast corner.



Berm continued



CAPITOL ZONING DISTRICT COMMISSION

APPLICATION FORM

PROPERTY ADDRESS 1400 Center Street, Little Rock, AR 72202

PROPERTY OWNER Jason Files and Stephanie Harris

PERSON FILING APPLICATION _____
if other than owner

APPLICANT PHONE AND EMAIL _____

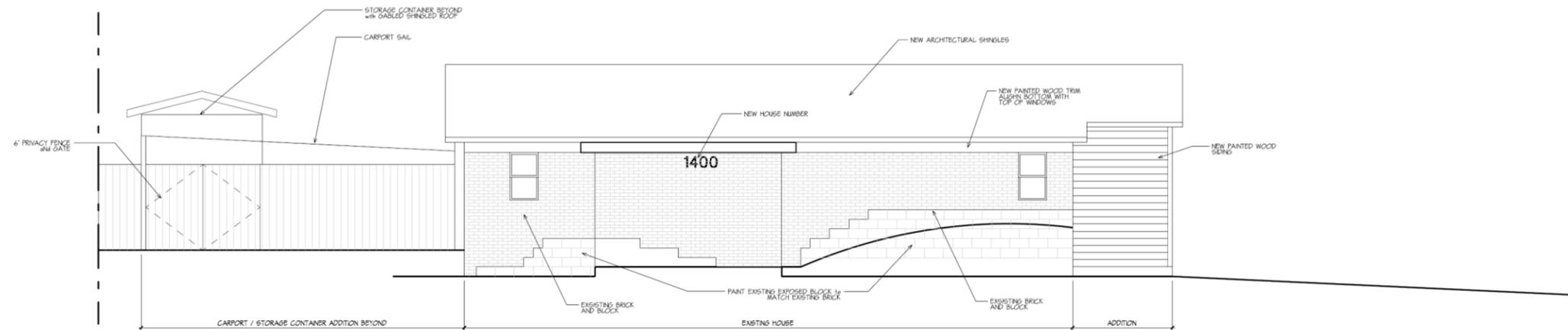
APPLICANT SIGNATURE AND DATE 

Signature certifies that applicant is authorized to represent this property, and that all information presented in this application, as well as in any supporting materials, is true and correct to the best of the signatory's knowledge.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORK AND / OR USE

When we replace the roof, we would like to extend the mudroom roof over the patio area, as seen in the drawing. We also want to use a shipping container in the backyard for storage and as a workshop. Reusing materials is in keeping with the environmentally-conscious spirit of the builder, Mr. Ross. We will add a gable roof to the structure, as pictured. The doors will face the alley. We would also like approval to extend the roof into the yard to create a covered seating area. It will be painted charcoal to match the trim on the house and to help it blend into the backyard. Very little will be seen from the rights-of-way.

Attach as many pages or supporting materials as necessary. The Commission and its staff cannot make a determination on your application without a complete description of the property's proposed appearance, materials, and/or function. An application is not complete until all applicable supporting materials have been submitted to staff. Electronic submittals (email, scanned documents, PDFs, digital images, etc) are welcome.

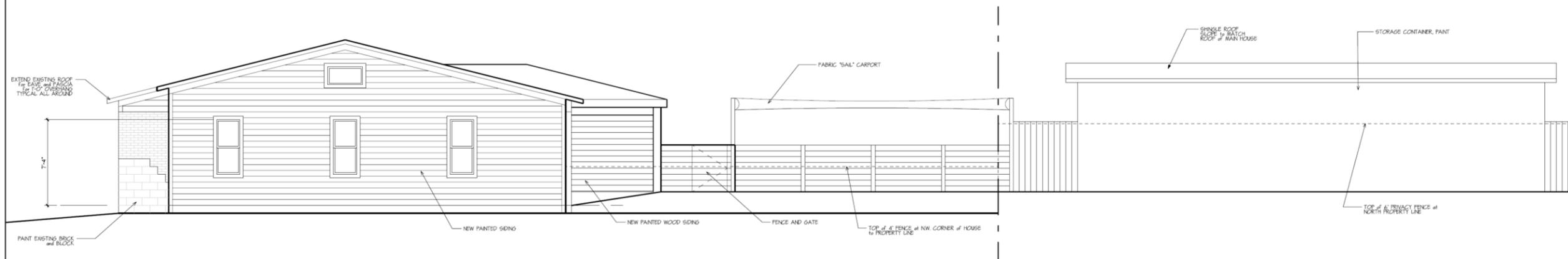


CENTER STREET ELEVATION

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



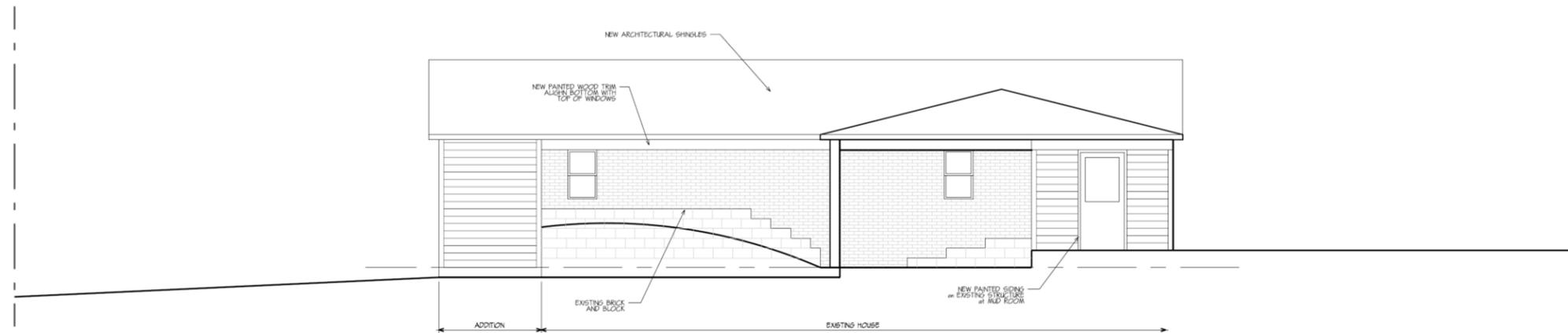
EXTERIOR PAINT:
 COORDINATE EXACT COLORS AND LOCATIONS WITH OWNER.
 BRICK AND BLOCK: WHITE w/ OFF-WHITE, CHARCOAL GRAY at BACK WALL of FRONT ENTRY
 TRIM and WINDOWS: CHARCOAL GRAY
 EXTERIOR DOORS: ACCENT COLOR #1
 EXPOSE LAMINATE BEAM & FRONT PORCH CANTILEVER: ACCENT COLOR #2
 STORAGE CONTAINER: CHARCOAL GRAY



DAISY BATES DRIVE ELEVATION

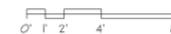
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



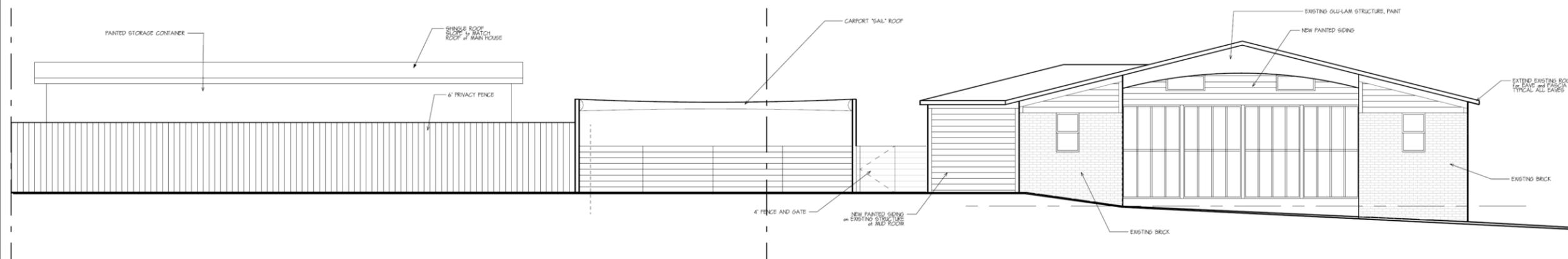


BACK ALLEY ELEVATION

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



EXTERIOR PAINT: COORDINATE EXACT COLORS and LOCATIONS with OWNER.
 BRICK and BLOCK: WHITE w/ OFF-WHITE, CHARCOAL GRAY at BACK WALL of FRONT ENTRY
 TRIM and WINDOWS: CHARCOAL GRAY
 EXTERIOR DOORS: ACCENT COLOR #1
 EXPOSE LAMINATE BEAM & FRONT PORCH CANTILEVER: ACCENT COLOR #2
 STORAGE CONTAINER: CHARCOAL GRAY



DRIVE WAY SIDE ELEVATION

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"









