

STAFF REPORT 11-16-2022 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG

APPLICATION NUMBER: 22-8093

ADDRESS: 226 ARDEN PARK

HISTORIC DISTRICT: ARDEN PARK – EAST BOSTON

APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER: JORDAN RATTRAY

ARCHITECT: WILLIAM FINNICUM/FINNICUM BROWNLIE ARCHITECTS

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 10-14-22

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 11-01-22

SCOPE: ERECT 2ND STORY GARAGE ADDITION, REHABILITATE FRONT AND REAR PORCHES, REPLACE DRIVEWAY



View of 226 Arden Park. Staff photo, November 1, 2022.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The property, located on the south side of the second block east of Woodward (between John R and Brush), features two closely related and contributing historic structures. The main house is a brick mansion with French Renaissance-style design elements including substantial limestone ornamentation and quoining at the building's corners. The sharply pitched hip roof features flared eaves, and is studded with deep gable-fronted dormers aligned with the openings below, creating a balancing vertical emphasis to the composition. Ornamental iron rails are featured at the second story windows. The primary expression is of restrained yet robust elegance. The exterior appears to be in generally good condition, with some deterioration at the porch. Historic landscaping has not been maintained.

The existing garage, at the rear of the parcel, takes several design cues from the main house, including brick and stone ornamentation. It features original wood windows in apparently fair condition, with original garage door at alley. The more prominent street-facing elevation has lost more integrity, with modern garage doors and other incompatible infill elements installed decades ago. The former pitched roof of the garage is no longer extant, having deteriorated and been replaced at some point with a flat substitute. Overall, the garage is in poor condition.



View of the garage and garden wall, from alley. Staff photo, November 1, 2022.



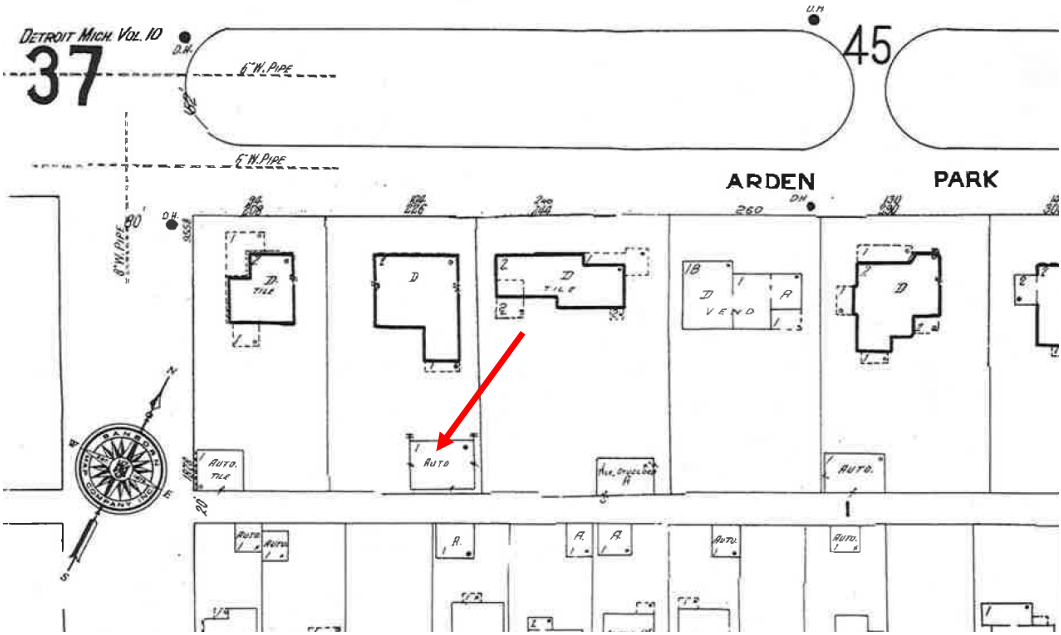
Detail view of same, showing main house beyond. Staff photo, November 1, 2022.

The adjacent brick garden wall enclosing the rear property line, matching the brick used on the buildings, is in very poor condition with active loss of brick.

The property overall has a good level of architectural cohesiveness and historic integrity.



Subject site outlined in yellow. Detroit Parcel Viewer. Red arrow indicates garage subject to expansion.





Historic Designation Advisory Board, designation photo, October 13, 1981. Note garage's original roof type, material, and geometry..

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes a major second story addition to the garage and other exterior work at the porches and driveway, per the submitted drawings, narrative, and documents. The scope of work includes, but is not limited to:

- Second story garage addition, with intersecting pitched roof lines, shed roofed and gable-ended dormers, new windows, and features like quoining that reflect the site's material and design precedents
- Restoration of existing wood windows at the garage's existing first story, if feasible.
- Replacement of vehicle doors at the garage's existing first story, new exterior lighting
- Rebuilding of front and rear porches to match historic conditions, with limestone steps
- Rebuilding of garden wall with existing and/or matching brick
- New driveway within current footprint, regrading and reseeding of lawn



Perspective view from applicant's submission.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS

- The Arden Park – East Boston Historic District was established in 1981.
- The Elements of Design for this historic district, which should be referenced by the Commission in its consideration of additions and new construction, have little to say about the carriage houses and garages, only to note that they are universally detached and oriented toward the alley. The proposed project does not alter this historic condition.
- The original garage roof evident in the 1981 designation photo is no longer present. Though there is no record of an approval for its removal, circumstantial evidence suggests the roof suffered from a long period of decay and either collapsed or was removed at some point, and replaced with the current “lid” in the mid-1990s. Given that the integrity of the original roof is lost, and that second stories on garages were common in the historic period (especially when accompanying houses of substantial size as carriage houses), staff assesses that the proposal would be historically appropriate. The design and details of the proposal, while akin to contemporary residential construction, are well-considered and consistent with a rehabilitation approach to existing character-defining materials and historic fabric found across this historic property. The historic base of the garage will continue to be readable, and a large majority of its historic features and elements are perpetuated.
- The applicant notes that each of the garage’s existing wood windows will be “analyzed individually to determine the feasibility of its restoration,” and that garage windows “beyond repair will be matched with custom or stock replacements.” Given the damaged integrity of the garage, and the substantial new addition proposed, staff assesses that the existing windows are distinctive character-defining features that will be useful in distinguishing the historic base from the later addition, per Standard 9 (i.e., “new work shall be differentiated from the old”). No detailed evidence of repair infeasibility has been submitted at this time.
- While interior scope at the garage was submitted for review, the Commission has no jurisdiction thereover, and it is not included in this body’s decision. For information, staff approves of the retention of the interior glass wall, which reinforces the preservation-minded approach that the architect has taken to this property overall.
- Other exterior rehabilitation scope, including the porches, driveway, and garden wall, addresses urgent maintenance and repair concerns and is proposed for execution in a historically appropriate manner.

ISSUES

- No major concerns. Staff recommends that the existing garage windows should be repaired absent additional data. Should the applicant decide repair is infeasible, additional documentation for staff’s review should be provided at the relevant time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

Staff recommends that the proposal for the garage addition and other exterior work at 226 Arden Park should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and the Arden Park-East Boston Historic District’s Elements of Design, with the condition that:

- The existing garage windows shall be repaired. Should additional field inspection suggest infeasibility of repair, applicant shall submit additional documentation to staff, who may approve replacement consistent with the window product submitted in this application, or other window found appropriate by staff.