

STAFF REPORT: 2/8/2023 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: D. RIEDEN

APPLICATION NUMBER: #23-8210

ADDRESS: 19515 ROSLYN

HISTORIC DISTRICT: SHERWOOD FOREST

APPLICANT: KYLE PHILLIPS (LONGTREE TREE SERVICE LLC)

PROPERTY OWNER: ROBERT ROOS

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 1/16/2023

DATES OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 1/24/23

SCOPE: REMOVE MATURE SHADE TREE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1926, the two and a half story dwelling at 19515 Roslyn features a steeply pitched, front facing gable and wing. This Tudor roof is covered with slate shingles with a turret nestled centrally over the entrance. The walls are clad with dark red brick laid in a running bond pattern and arching patterns over the second floor arched window. Casement windows are in pairs on the second floor, and the first floor has two ribbons of casements, one featured in the first-floor bay. Roughhewn stone arches over the main entrance, centrally located. A modest stoop meets the front entrance concrete walkway, which is level and scored with a square pattern leading through the front lawn to the public sidewalk. The property is dappled in shade from the great canopies of its tree canopy from trees along the street berm, of which one of the trees, a mature honey locust near the property's front entrance walkway is the subject of this application. This honey locust was captured in the designation photo with a modest flower bed around its trunk base, the larger tree today, has expanded its roots, but they have not yet approached the walkways. The tree's silhouette has vase-like shape from a single tall trunk, which contributes to the framing of the property and the experience of the pedestrian walking beneath its dappled shade.



Site Photo 1, by Staff January 24, 2023: (Northeast) front elevation showing locust tree and sidewalk conditions.



Designation Slide, 2002: (Northeast) front elevation showing locust tree and surrounding flower bed.

This property has no previous HDC approvals on Detroit Property Information System (DPI), and nor does the property list any violations for work done without approval.



Site Photo 3, Google Streetview June 2022: (Northeast) front elevation showing tree canopy in healthy condition and form.



Aerial of Parcel # 02005387.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to cut down the 20" diameter thornless honey locust tree (*Gleditsia triacanthos f. inermis*) located in the front yard.

- Remove front yard honey locust to stump. Haul away all debris
- Grind stump and surface roots below grade using a stump grinding machine.



Site Photo 4, by Staff January 24, 2023: (Northeast) front elevation, showing sidewalks are level, no heaving and in good condition.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Sherwood Forest Historic District was established in 2002. Its Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-178) provide the following guidance regarding trees:
 - “Large trees of many varieties shield some houses from view. There is variety in the landscape treatment of individual properties.”
 - “The placement of trees on the tree lawn between the concrete public sidewalk and masonry curb varies from block to block or street to street. Replacement trees should be characteristic of the area and period.”
 - “Where vacant lots exist between residences, their landscaping tends to be continuous with the adjacent lots or forested with mature trees.”
- Staff received confirmation from the applicant that their reasons for removal of the tree are:
 - Visible damage to the sidewalk and concrete walkway.

- Damage to the sewer drain running from the house to the street
 - Planted too close to larger deciduous trees that will out compete this tree
- Staff received confirmation that the tree is healthy from the applicant. Staff requested information to show how the sewer line is impacted, but did not receive any supporting documentation or utility map.
- Staff visited the site on January 24, 2023 and observed the condition of the front yard honey locust, its proximity to the house and any other historic structures, and the proximity to the public right of way. (See attached staff photos.) Staff observed that the tree appears to be upright and balanced in its overall structure and appears to be good health; most branches are budding for spring and confirmed with recent Google Street view (2022) that the canopy is green with life. Staff saw no evidence of the sidewalk heaving, cracking or impacted by the tree. Staff noticed that there are larger deciduous trees in the public berm, but did not see any significant die-back, lean or major affect on the tree as a result of the shade from other trees. (*see Site Photos 3&4*)
- Staff asked the applicant if there was any plan to plant any replacement trees, and the applicant responded that there was no plan to do so.
- Staff observed that the applicant's certified arborist, did not provide content regarding the condition of the tree itself: there is no mention of any sign of disease, infestation or other health conditions. There is only the general opinion that tree poses a potential hazard, which any tree could, but no evidence has been produced.
- Should the applicant later find that there is evidence of damage or conflict with underground utilities, by providing HDC Staff with a site plan that illustrates this conflict, Staff would potentially reconsider this recommendation, provided that the owner also provide a plan to plant a suitable replacement tree on the property.
- It is staff's opinion that the front yard honey locust, which is identified in the historic designation photo, contributes to the historic integrity and the overall historic character of the property and the surrounding Sherwood Forest Historic District.

ISSUES

- NPS guidelines state that the Setting (District/Neighborhood) is the *"larger area or environment in which a historic building is located...The relationship of buildings to each other, setbacks, fence patterns, views, driveways and walkways, and street trees and other landscaping together establish the character of a district or neighborhood."* (Pg 21. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, &Reconstructing Historic Buildings). It is staff's opinion that the removal of the front yard honey locust, which is identified in the historic designation photo will greatly degrade a historic feature that characterizes this historic property, and therefore does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, particularly Standards 2 and 4.
- Without any substantial information that shows that tree is endangering any historic resources or is in poor health, it is staff's opinion that removal of shade trees, such as this honey locust, which were planted to contribute to the restoration of the tree canopy, detracts from the historic landscape and neighborhood setting of the house and is not an appropriate application of the Elements of Design for Sherwood Forest HD

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation 1: Removal of mature shade tree

Staff finds that the removal of the honey locust destroys the historic character of this property and removes distinctive, character-defining features for the following reasons:

- The tree was identified in the historic designation slide and contributes to the historic landscape of the property and the neighborhood.
- There is no evidence that the tree is in poor health, poor condition, nor causing any damage to historic resources.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the above work items, as it does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standards:

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.