

STAFF REPORT: MAY 10, 2023 MEETING

PREPARED BY: A. DYE

APPLICATION NUMBER: 23-8338

ADDRESS: 1920 ATKINSON

HISTORIC DISTRICT: ATKINSON AVENUE

APPLICANT: ANTONIO LUCK, NEPELU, LLC

PROPERTY OWNER: ANTONIO LUCK, NEPELU, LLC

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: APRIL 18, 2023

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: APRIL 26, 2023

05-10-2023 Revised report-applicant has offered new designs for exhaust fan and fence.

SCOPE: REVISIONS TO PREVIOUSLY APPROVED DESIGN

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The 2-1/2 story house at 1920 Atkinson was constructed circa 1920. While the overall form of the house is traditional, the siting of this house is atypical in that the front door is located on the west/side elevation so the façade facing the street is a side elevation. The house is faced with dark brown brick laid in a Flemish bond pattern.

The roof form is uniquely designed to give the effect of a gambrel roof. A pent roof extends around the west, south and east elevations creating a dominant, yet minimally detailed, architectural component that forms a strong division between the first and second floors; black asphalt shingles cover the roofs. A repeated element on the house is the pediment, which is placed at the top of each gable and within each pent roof. The pediments on the east and west elevations denote the front and rear entrances, while the centrally placed pediment on the south/front elevation is a purely decorative element. The symmetrically placed openings leads staff to believe the existing door might have replaced a window at some point in time.

A raised platform starting at the front entrance extends to the southwest corner where it turns and extends the entire south elevation. A rounded bump-out of the porch is centrally placed on the front elevation.



Front-facing (side) elevation.

Staff photos, April 26, 2023



West elevation with front entrance to house.

The dominate pattern of the multi-paned double-hung wood windows is twelve-over-twelve, however the rear bay windows are nine-over-nine and the few small windows are either six-over-six or four-over-four. Soldier, single or double rowlock courses of brick top each window opening, while deeply profiled sills further exaggerate the dimensionality of each window opening.



Staff photo, April 26, 2023. South elevation faces the street, the “rear” elevation faces east towards Rosa Parks Boulevard.

The house is sandwiched between two narrow walkways that lead from the sidewalk to the front and rear doors. There is no garage, and the rear yard is covered with concrete.

PROPOSAL

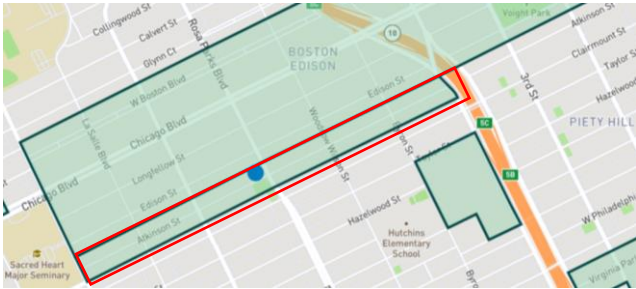
At the May 12, 2021, HDC meeting, the Commission reviewed the rehabilitation of the house for adaptive reuse as a restaurant and apartments, as well as the erection of a patio with pergola at the rear. The Commission approved the application with conditions. The 2021 staff report and COA are posted on the property page.

The current application is comprised of changes to the approved design which were added within the construction set of drawings submitted to BSEED.

- Inclusion of placement of air condensing units, 3-phase switching transformer pad, exhaust vent, and make-up air units
- Redesign of rear deck/pergola, including redesigned ADA ramp
- Redesign of rear residential entrance and rear stairs
- Relocation of concrete steps at south elevation porch
- Identification of south, front-facing window as use for pick-up window
- Erection of front yard fence, extending from the existing perimeter fence at 9321 Rosa Parks.
- Outdoor lighting on dwelling

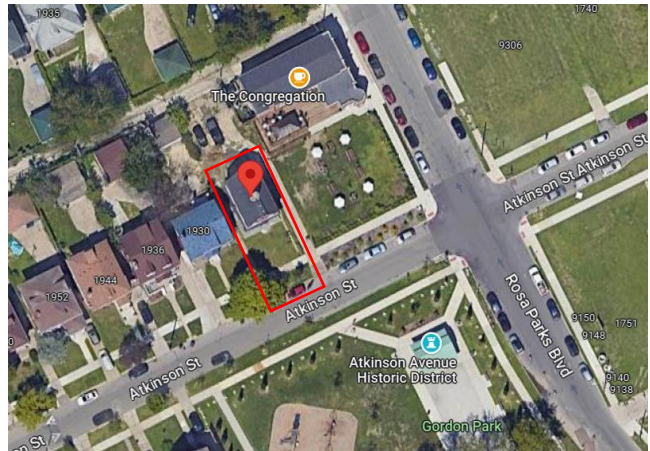
STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Atkinson Avenue Historic District was established in 1984.
- The blue dot represents the location of 1920 Atkinson. The aerial image shows how this property is the first residential structure on the north side of the street. 9321 Rosa Parks Boulevard at the northwest corner of Atkinson and Rosa Parks.



Above: HDC district map, Atkinson Avenue is outlined in red.

Right: Google aerial view.



- The rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the structure at 9321 Rosa Parks Boulevard for use as a coffee house/restaurant and the corner lot as community gathering space, now called The Congregation, was reviewed, and approved by the Commission at its May 10, 2017 meeting. Design revisions to the deck and wheelchair ramp were reviewed and approved by the Commission at its June 26, 2019 meeting.



August 2018.



July 2022.

9321 Rosa Parks – Google street view

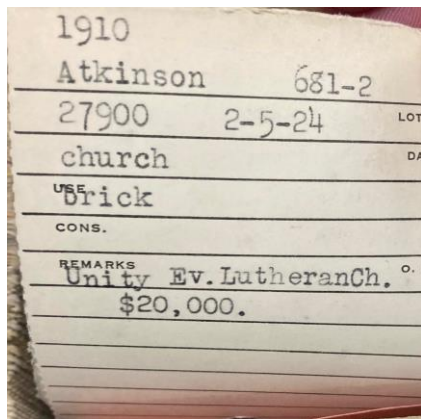


August 2018.



July 2022.

- According to the Historic Designation Advisory Board’s Final Report:
The Atkinson Avenue Historic district encompasses both sides of Atkinson Avenue between the John C. Lodge Expressway and Linwood Avenue The proposed district is comprised of six residential blocks; most of the houses on these blocks were built between 1915 and 1926 for the middle class and the majority are single-family dwellings. There are approximately 225 structures in the district.
- Front-facing entrances are the dominant residential form in this district; only 10 houses, which equals 5% of the district, have primary entrances on a side elevation.
- At the time of the staff report, staff had not located a Sanborn map to identify what structures, if any, were located between 1920 Atkinson and Rosa Parks. The historic street name of Rosa Parks was Twelfth Street. Staff located the 1924 building permit card for the church, and a 1949 DTE aerial photo that shows the corner of Atkinson and Rosa Parks as an empty lot.



Permit card, BSEED



*DTE aerial photo, 1949. Atkinson and Twelfth intersection.
1920 Atkinson is outlined in red.
9321 Rosa Parks is outlined in yellow.*

- The application references the building at 1920 Atkinson as “The Rectory”. Staff believes this term was coined in recent years to associate the dwelling with “The Congregation”, as both buildings now have the same ownership. The Congregation’s website states a small chapel was located at the northwest corner of the lot, facing Twelfth Street, until fire destroyed it in 1917. It then took the congregation several years to raise the money to erect a new structure. The property changed hands and in 1924, the existing building was erected.
- During the time the money was being secured for the new church (1917-1924), 1920 Atkinson was erected in 1920. Staff surmises that the residential structure was erected for independent residential living, based on Atkinson Avenue’s development timeline as described in the Historic Designation Advisory Board’s Final Report for the local historic district. Staff also wonders if the west-facing front entrance was deliberate, offering the quietest setting for the house, as a church had occupied the adjacent lot and Twelfth street was a major commercial thoroughfare.
- Staff located the building card for the church; note that the original address was 1910 Atkinson. It is interesting that the congregation elected to erect the building at the northernmost end of the parcel and have the building face Twelfth Street. This could explain why the corner portion of the lot always remained empty.

As further research of this site – staff compiled the following information related to the rezoning and occupancy and use classification. **This is for reference only.**

- A rezoning of 1920 Atkinson was applied for by the owner in 2020. The request was a zoning change from RD1 (Single Family Residential District) to SD1 (Special Development District. The City Planning Commission reviewed and approved the application at its September 10, 2020 meeting; the rezoning was effective February 11, 2021.

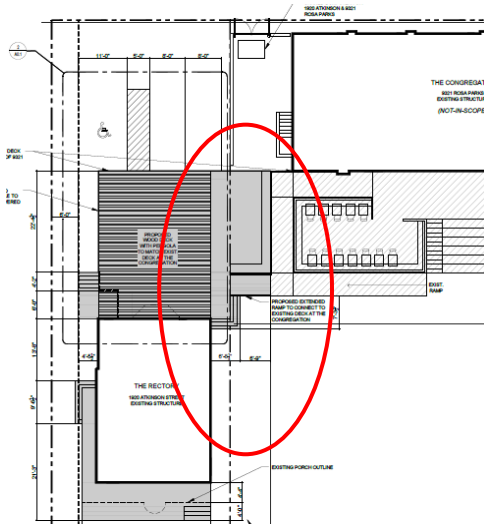
Per the City of Detroit Code, Sec. 50-11-201: *“The SD1 Special Development District is designed to encourage a complementary mixture of small-scale pedestrian and transit-oriented uses that are compatible in a neighborhood setting. It is intended to ensure a neighborhood character and place a proper balance of activities within walking distance of one another while serving the day-to-day needs of residents.”*

- The current occupancy and use classification of the structure is R-3 (single-family residence). The applicant stated within their ePlans permit application: *“The existing occupancy is R-3 (Single-Family Residence) and is being changed to Group B in the Basement and First Floor (Restaurant and Kitchen; Small Assembly) and R-2 on the Second and Third Floor (Dwelling Units).”*

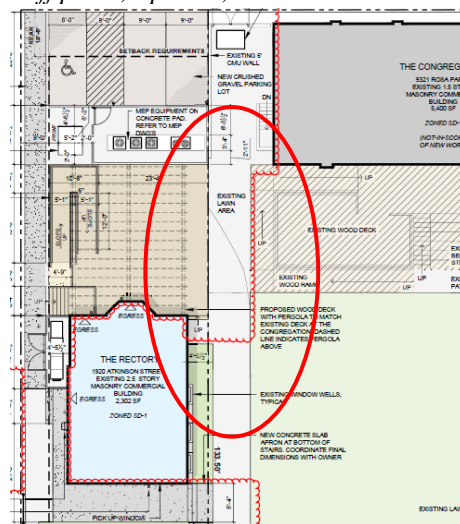
- As identified in the 2021 staff report, the distinctive character-defining features of this property include the siting of the house and its overall design and the side entrances and narrow walkways leading from the sidewalk. The distinctive character-defining features of the structure include the multi-faceted large chimney, the gambrel-like roof and pent roof, the pediments, the multi-paned window sash and openings, unpainted brown brick laid in a Flemish bond pattern, and raised platform/porch.



Staff photo, April 26, 2023



Site plan approved by HDC in 2021.



Proposed site plan.

- Staff finds the most positive revision to the current application is the separation of the rear patio from The Congregation’s raised deck, as the two lots remain individual parcels.



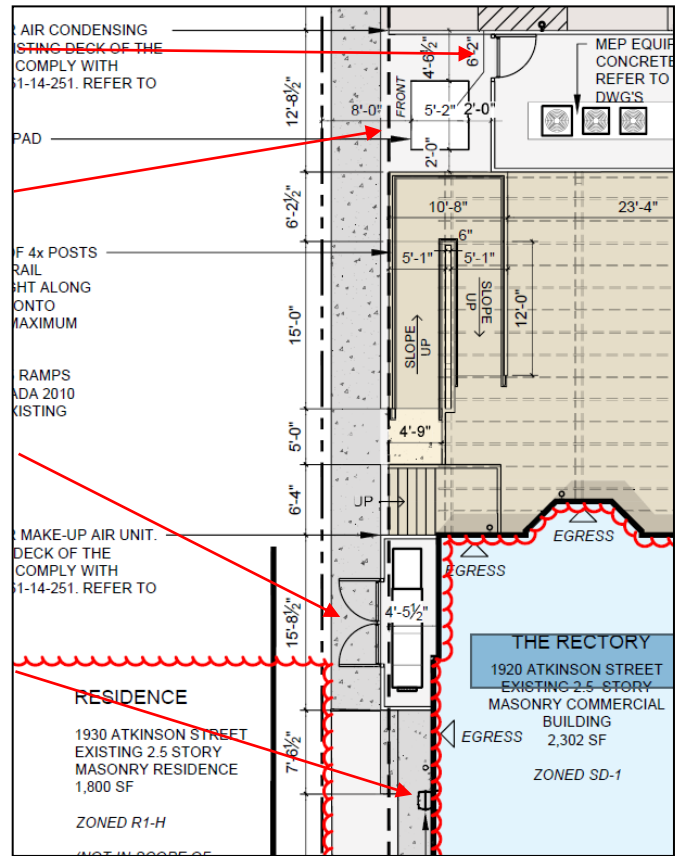
Google street view of northwest corner of Rosa Parks Boulevard and Atkinson, July 2022.

ISSUES

- The Commission’s review must remain framed in the standards and whether the proposed revisions are appropriate for a residential structure located within a residential district. Standards #1 and #2 are particularly pertinent to this application:
 - 1) *A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*
 - 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.*
- The Google street view image affirms the close placement of 1920 Atkinson to its residential neighbor, which is further emphasized by its west facing entrance. The back of the house faces the Congregation lot, and the driveway offers surface separation between the lots. To staff, this image shows how effective the site planning for 1920 Atkinson is, as it offers a distinct separation of the residential street from the commercial use(s) that face Rosa Parks.

Inclusion/placement of air condensing units, 3-phase switching transformer pad, exhaust vent, and make-up air units

- The rear yard’s enclosed location of the air condensing units will not impact the property due to being entirely hidden behind the wall of the outdoor dining area (shown on the applicant’s drawing set, page 6, A2.0, dated 4/23/2023).
- What isn’t clear at this location is what will be placed on the “3-phase switching station” and whether it should/could be fully enclosed. This unit is only eight feet from the property line and twelve feet to the adjacent residential house.
- The make-up air units enclosure will be 3’-6” above grade and will extend from the house 4’-6”. The enclosure will extend about 18” above the finished height of the porch and will extend out to the end of the stairs. It will also cover the one basement window that is high above grade (the basement openings on the west elevation are minimally above grade).
- **The currently proposed exhaust fan is 10” in diameter, the louver enclosure will be 17” square. The louver enclosure will extend from the exterior wall about 5-3/4”. Its depth is substantially decreased, but its overall size is still large.**
- **The exhaust vent, a wall mount centrifugal exhaust fan, is 21 1/4” in diameter and will extend from the exterior wall about 15”. It has a metallic silver finish.**

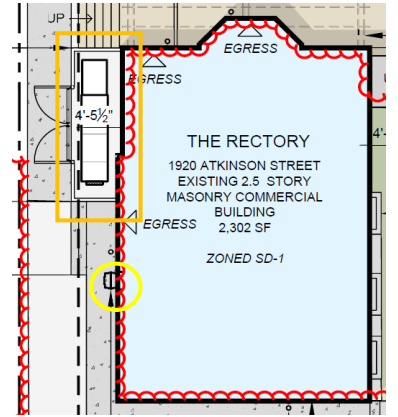


Top right: Applicant site plan.

Above and Right: Staff photos, April 30, 2021.

Above: Looking northwest into the rear yard of 1920 Atkinson. The deck and pergola will be in the foreground; the ac units will be behind the deck’s solid wood wall.

Right: Looking south towards Atkinson. The orange box shows the location of the make-up air unit.



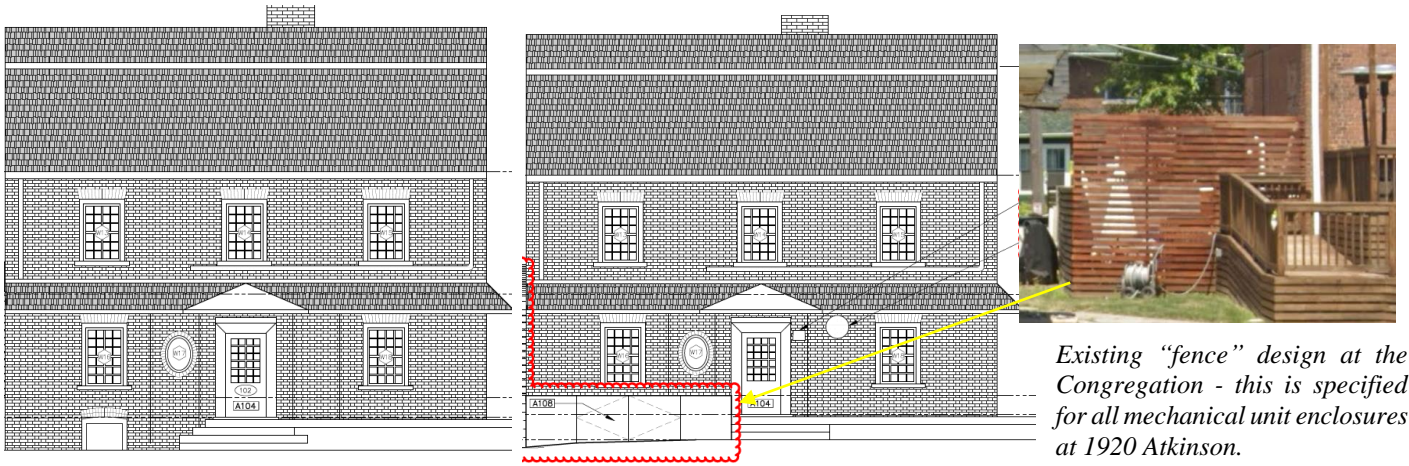
Staff photos, April 26, 2023.

Visible is the short distance between 1920 and 1920 Atkinson. Many of the mechanical units are proposed to be placed against this west elevation, facing the neighboring house.

The yellow star denotes the proposed location of the exhaust vent.

The orange box shows the location of the make-up air unit enclosure. The close-up photo shows the basement window that will be covered.

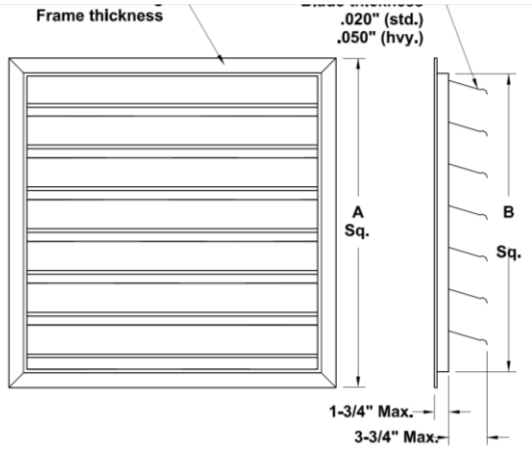




Existing "fence" design at the Congregation - this is specified for all mechanical unit enclosures at 1920 Atkinson.

Applicant drawings of existing (left) and proposed (right) west elevations.

- The make-up air unit enclosure will be partially obscured by the raised porch. As stated earlier, the enclosure will extend vertically an additional 18-inches above the porch floor and extend outward to the end of the entrance steps. It will be located near the rear of the house and will be in shadow for most of the day (please see the photo on the previous page). The enclosure will cover the one raised basement window; staff doesn't identify this basement window as a character-defining feature of the house. The fence-like enclosure design is made of wood and minimal in design; staff recommends it be painted an opaque stain to match the dark brown brick of the house. This would help the unit further visually recede in this diffusely sunlit location.
- The exhaust fan will be located on the southern side of the front entrance and closer to the public right of way. The applicant has proposed a new 10" diameter exhaust fan. The applicant confirmed the external vent cover frame will extend from the wall 1-1/2" and the louvers will extend a further 3-3/4", – offering a finished extension dimension of 5-1/2". The space between the open blades will be 3". The vinyl edge gasket is used to seal the edges; the louver system is metal and can be painted/coated to match the existing brick. ~~The fan will protrude from the masonry wall about 18 inches and is 21 inches in diameter. Additionally, the silver metal finish will offer a high contrast against the dark brick walls.~~ It is staff's opinion that the new fan will still be visually intrusive, due to its projection from the wall and visible/open louvers and proposed location adjacent the historic front entrance of the dwelling. Please see photos on pages 8 and 9 for placement. The louver unit is 17" in width and height.

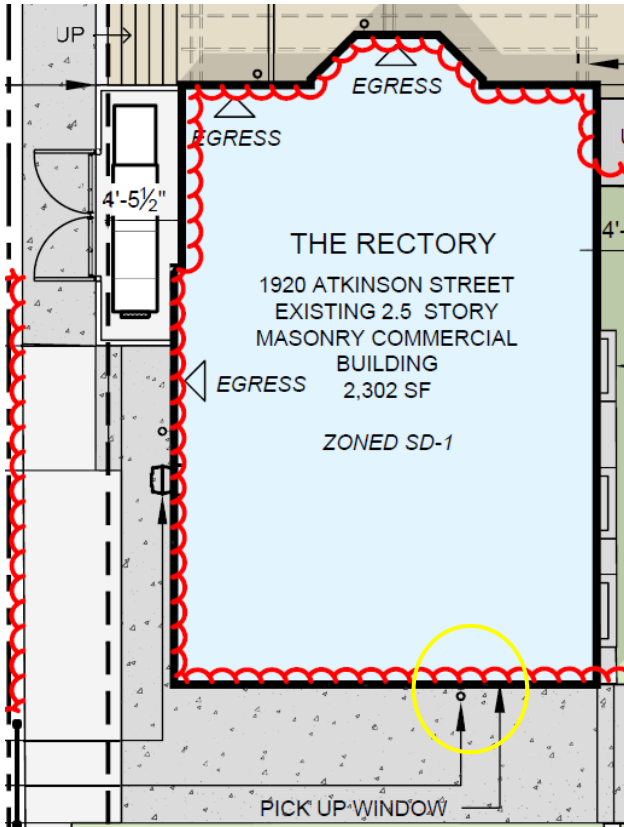


Applicant supplied drawing of external louver unit.

Photos of louver unit and fan from company website.

South elevation/front-facing pick-up window

- The site plan identifies that the front-facing window will serve as a pick-up window. The applicant told staff no changes will be made to this window or window opening (the installation of a counter was specifically discussed). However, staff would like to make sure this item is discussed as this elevation and historic wood double-hung window is susceptible to incremental changes in an effort to make the picking up of food orders easier. Although this façade is a side elevation due to the siting of the house, it is the primary elevation for this lot and must retain its residential architectural features and spaces.



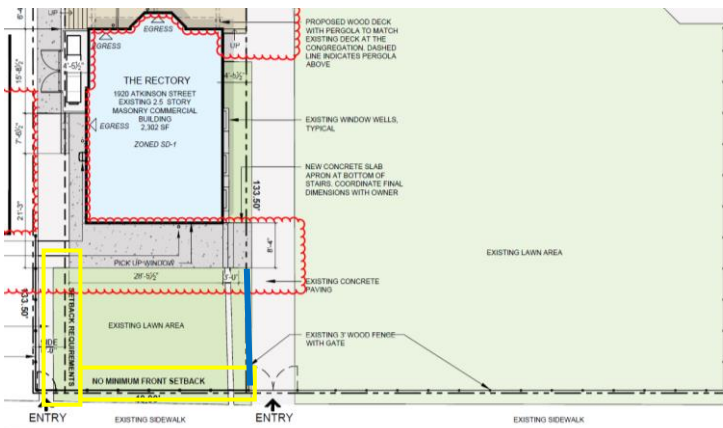
Applicant drawing



Staff photo, April 26, 2023

Erection of front yard fence, extending from the existing perimeter fence at 9321 Rosa Parks.

- The applicant revised the fence design to a picket style that is more sympathetic to the architectural style of the house. ~~The proposal is to extend the existing wood fence that encloses the adjacent open lot at the corner of Atkinson and Rosa Parks.~~ The fence would be slightly set back from the sidewalk, like the adjacent existing conditions, and then turn north to the southwest corner of the house, ending at the raised patio.



Above: Google street view. Yellow line denotes location of proposed fence. The blue line denotes staff's suggestion for extending the existing fence, as discussed in the final bullet point on this page.

Left: Applicant drawing.



- The fence at 9321 Rosa Parks was reviewed and approved by the Commission at its July 13, 2022 meeting. The Commission agreed that the design was appropriate for the open lot.
- It is staff's opinion that a fence, **regardless of its design, this design** is not appropriate for the front yard at 1920 Atkinson as it is a residential lot (in design not zoning) with a classical revival-style dwelling.
- The Atkinson Avenue Elements of Design, #13 - Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments states: *Fences extending to the front yard are rare; most back yards are fenced.*
- As staff stated earlier, the zoning for the property may have changed, but the architectural and spatial features of this lot and district remain intact. **The applicant states the enclosure is needed to comply with the Liquor Commission. Staff believes extending the existing fence design along the east property line of 1920 Atkinson, directly to the left of the driveway, would offer the required enclosure of The Congregation's corner lot while retaining the open yard directly in front of 1920 Atkinson. This suggested area is identified on the above site plan, and photo at the top of this page with a blue line.**

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

Recommendation One – Denial – Installation of exhaust fan, erection of front yard fence enclosure

Staff finds that the installation of the exhaust fan and front yard fence would alter the features and spaces that characterize the property and district and does not meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and the Atkinson Avenue Historic District’s Elements of Design for the following reasons:

- The large metal **exhaust fan and louver** enclosure is an intrusive and visible **industrial** element on the front elevation of a residential dwelling **which is visible from the public right-of-way.**
- **There are no fences enclosing residential front yards in the district, thus retaining the intact historic streetscape of single and multi-family residential dwellings.**
- ~~Front yard fences are not a common element within the district, and the design of the selected fence is not appropriate for the Colonial revival architectural style of the house.~~

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the work as proposed, as it does not meet the district’s Elements of Design #3 as well as the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standards 2, 5, 6, and 9:

1) A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

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.

Recommendation Two – COA – Air condensing units and enclosure, 3-phase switching transformer pad, make-up air units and enclosure, redesign of rear deck/ pergola/ADA ramp, redesign of rear residential entrance/rear stairs, relocation of concrete steps at south elevation porch, outdoor lighting

Staff finds that the remaining work items will be appropriate and therefore meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and the Atkinson Avenue Historic District’s Elements of Design.

Staff recommends the COA be issued with the following condition:

- The enclosure of the make-up air intake units will be finished with an opaque stain that matches the dark brown brick on the dwelling. A sample of the color will be submitted to staff for review.