

STAFF REPORT: 10/11/2023 REGULAR MEETING
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2023-00052
ADDRESS: 14811 ROSEMONT
HISTORIC DISTRICT: ROSEDALE PARK
APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER: DANNELL WILKERSON
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 9/18/23
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 9/21/23

PREPARED BY: D. RIEDEN

SCOPE: REMOVE TREE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1934, the property at 14811 Rosemont is a 2 story, single-family residence facing east located near the corner of Rosemont and Eaton Street. The cross-gabled, asphalt shingle roof features a dormer with aluminum siding. The first floor is clad in brown brick with brick detailing above and below each window. The front entrance is recessed under the second floor’s overhang, which is the ceiling to the raised front porch, supported by wood posts. A modest stair leads to meandering concrete path through the open lawn to the public sidewalk. The property is dappled in the shade from a large maple tree located to the left of the path and near a midpoint between the house and the walkway, which is the subject of this application.



Site Photo 1, by Staff September 21, 2023: (East) front elevation, showing maple tree to the left of the house (arrow).



Designation photo 2007: (east) front elevation. Front yard maple tree is not visible in this or adjacent designation photos.



Site Photo 2, by Staff September 21, 2023: Looking north from the corner of Eaton Street and Rosemont, showing the maple tree that is proposed for removal on the left (arrow).



Aerial#1 of Parcel # 22077020, showing location of maple tree (arrow).

PROPOSAL

This proposal is to remove a large maple tree in the front yard.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Rosedale Historic District was established in 2007. Its Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-199) provide the following guidance for the landscape:
 - *“Relationship Of Significant Landscape Features And Surface Treatments...The typical treatment of individual residential properties is that of a dwelling erected on a flat or slightly graded front lawn. The front lawn area is generally covered with grass turf, subdivided by a straight or curving concrete or brick walk leading to the front entrance and a single-width side driveway leading to a garage. 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 on the public right-of-way should be characteristic of the area and period.”*
 - *“Relationship Of Open Space to Structures...Public sidewalks line each side of the street and are set back from the road by a tree-lawn that widens when not opposite a landscaped traffic island. All houses have ample rear yards as well as front yards.”*
 - *“General Environmental Character. The Rosedale Park Historic District is a solid, fully developed large residential area of just under 1,600 moderately-scaled single-family dwellings, built-up in the period between World War I and World War II and complemented with typical examples of compatible houses from the 1950s. The landscaped features within the public rights-of-way results in a park-like setting...”*
- The designation photos for both this and adjacent properties do not show the maple tree as the photos are cropped from view of the tree’s location. However, Google Street View shows the tree is in full maturity as far back as October 2007, which is the same year as the historic designation of Rosedale Park. (See site photo 3)
- The house is positioned one property away from the corner at Eaton Street exposing the front yard and this tree to public views from the corner and along Rosemont Street. (See site photo 2)
- Staff observed the condition of the maple tree, its proximity to the house and any other historic structures, and the proximity to the public right of way. (See site photos 1-2.) The tree’s main trunk has no lean, branches are pruned clear of the roofline of the house, and the tree appears to be balanced in its overall structure and appears to be good health. Photos show that most branches are still green with life.



Site Photo 3, by Google Street View Oct 2007: (East) front elevation, showing maple tree, left of house (arrow).



Site Photo 4, by Staff September 21, 2023 (front elevation): showing healthy tree canopy.

- Staff observed that two other maples, located in the public berm in front of the house and neighboring house do show signs of stress and disease. However, these trees are not in this application.
- Staff identified this as a maple tree and requested the applicant to supply a letter from a certified arborist to confirm the tree’s health. The applicant did not supply a letter and stated that the purpose for the removal of this tree is not due to the health of the tree, but because the applicant believes it is causing moisture retention and therefore damage to the house:



Site Photo 5, by Applicant: (East) front elevation, showing roof condition.

“...the moss that is currently growing on the roof as a result of it not being able to completely dry because of the overhanging branches that drop in the gutters and on the roof. As mentioned in my previous email the gutter becomes clogged which causes the gutter to overflow which leads to more water on the roof and water infiltration behind the siding in that area. We have already discovered rotted wood on the exterior wall where most of the debris from the tree lands in the gutters and on our roof. Moss significantly shortens the lifespan of roofs by trapping water and moisture that leads to rot. You can see the moss on the pictures provided with our initial application.” (From Applicant, September 28, 2023)

- The applicant did not supply a letter from a certified arborist and the application does not contain content regarding the condition of the tree itself other than the mention of debris falling from the tree: 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.
- It is staff’s opinion that the front yard maple tree contributes to the historic integrity and the overall historic character of the property and the surrounding Rosedale 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 maple tree will destroy 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.
- It is staff’s opinion that removal of large shade trees, such as this healthy and publicly viewable maple tree, which were planted to restore the lost canopy of the American Elm, detracts from the historic landscape and neighborhood setting of the house and is not an appropriate application of the Elements of Design for Rosedale Historic District, in particular, the *Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments*, *Relationship of open space to structures* and the *General environmental character*, which aim to retain the “tree-lawn”, the “park-like setting” and the historic canopy of this neighborhood. (*Sections 21-2-199 (d) 13, 14, and 22*)
- It is staff’s opinion that the condition of the roof is a result of maintenance and not due to any direct damage by the maple tree. No evidence was provided that shows the tree is in ill-health by a certified arborist.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation: Removal of Tree

Staff finds that the removal of the front yard maple tree does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the following reasons:

- No documentation was provided to show that the tree was unhealthy or an immediate threat to historic structures.
- Removal of this tree will destroy a historic, character-defining feature that characterizes this historic property and the neighborhood.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the work as proposed, 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.