

STAFF REPORT 06-12-2024 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00230

ADDRESS: 3515 BEAUBIEN

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BRUSH PARK

APPLICANT: YOUSEF HAMAWI/HAMAWI INVESTMENT

DESIGNER: A & M CONSULTANTS

OWNER: HO GROUP INVESTMENT LLC

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 05-08-2024

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 05-24-2024

SCOPE: ERECT COMMERCIAL BUILDING



View of current overgrown vacant lot at 3515 Beaubien, looking west/north-west. 430 Mack, a non-contributing single-story medical office building in the district, is visible across the alley. Hospital buildings across are in the far background. Staff photo, May 24, 2024.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The subject property is a vacant parcel of approximately 8,600 SF near the extreme northeast corner of the Brush Park Historic District, just south of Mack. A building erected on this site would be the most northeasterly building in the district, at the very edge. Per HDAB's designation report, prepared in 1980, no buildings were on the site at that time, nor have any been erected in the decades since.

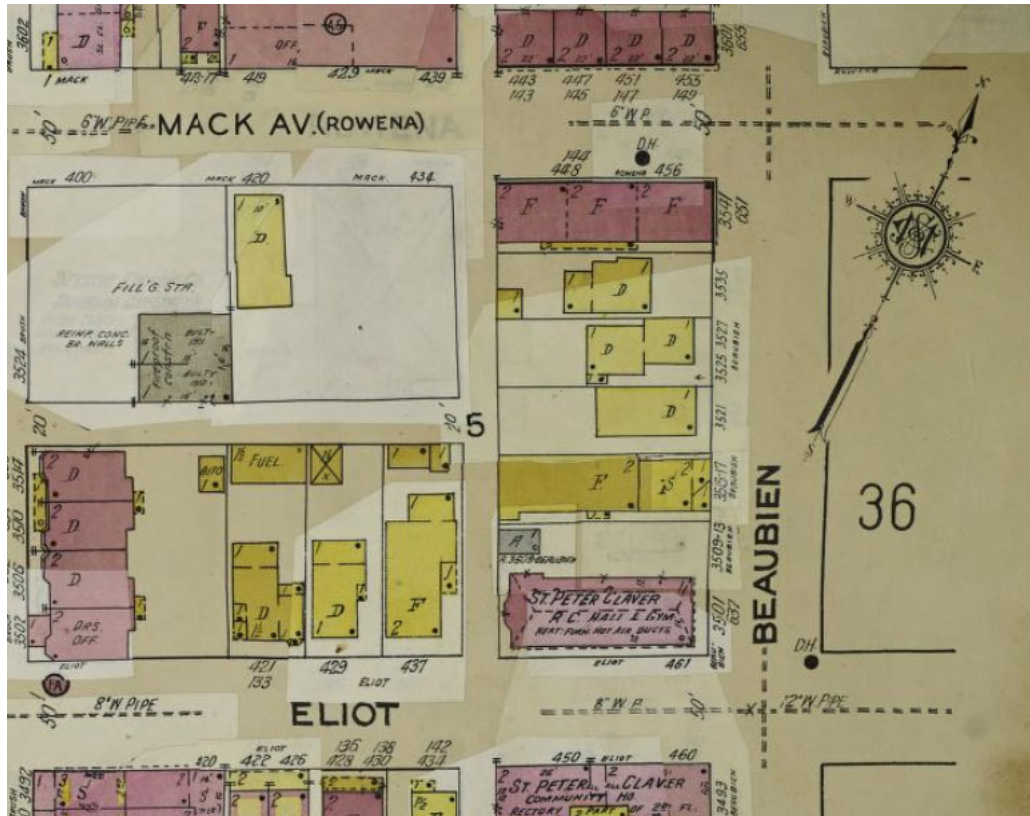
In the historic era, per the Sanborn map on the next page, the site now known as 3515 Beaubien was three individual residential parcels. Two of these parcels held small single-story frame dwellings; the third parcel held a 2-story frame building divided into flats (apartments).

To the west, across an alley and fronting on Mack, is 430 Mack. Originally a non-contributing mid-century building, major alterations/additions approved by the Commission in 2002 and 2006 resulted in this building.

The site is also adjacent to the St. Peter Claver Roman Catholic Church building, addressed as 461 Eliot. In February 2024, the Commission approved alterations to window and door openings at that property.



Parcel at 3515 Beaubien per Detroit Parcel Viewer, outlined in yellow. 430 Mack is red arrow.



1950 Sanborn map of vicinity. The parcel now known as 3515 Beaubien was formed via the combination of the three parcels outlined in red. Frame (wood) buildings are shown in yellow; structural brick buildings are shown in red. D=dwelling, F=flats, S=stores.



View to the south/southwest, showing the Peter Claver Roman Catholic Church building at the intersection with Eliot. Subject site at center. Staff photo, May 24, 2024.



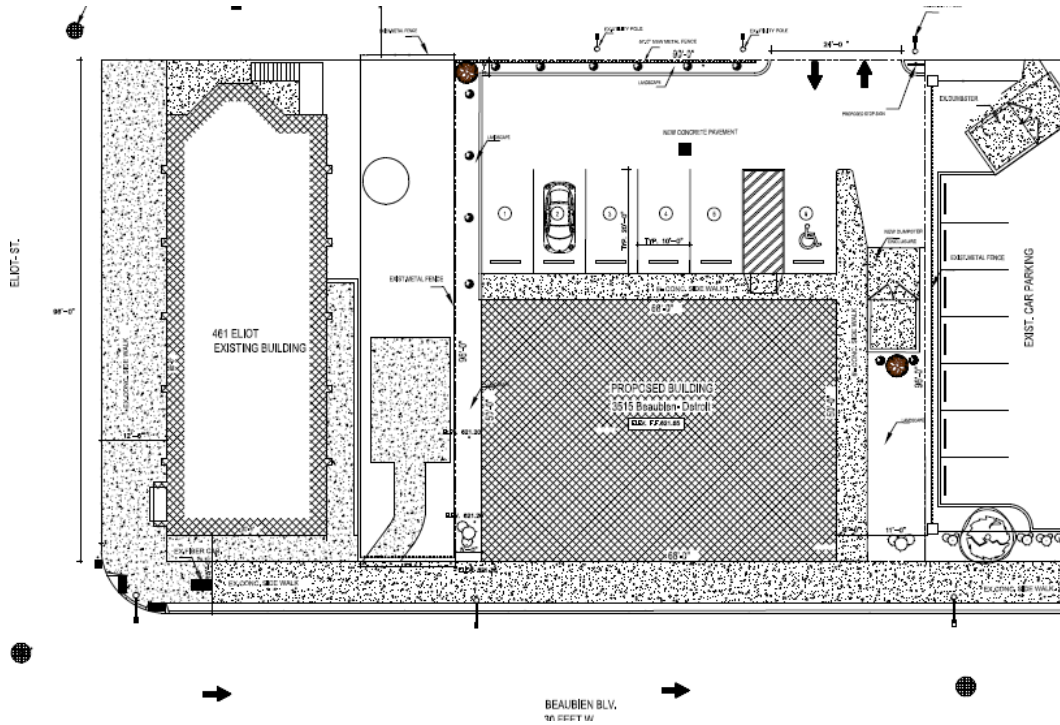
View of site from sidewalk. The non-historic medical office building in background (430 Mack), is a heavily altered non-contributing building (approved by HDC in 2006), and is also in the historic district. Staff photo, May 24, 2024.

PROPOSAL

Per the submitted drawings and documents, the applicant proposes a single-story office building to serve as a dental office. The building will be approximately 3,400 SF, and features a brick veneer exterior with limestone/concrete accents.



Applicant's rendering of proposed building, above. Site plan below.



STAFF OBSERVATIONS

- The Brush Park Historic District was established in 1980. A pre-war period of significance, extending from circa 1870 to 1940, is generally accepted.
- The Elements of Design for the Brush Park Historic District should always be studied when new construction, additions, or substantial exterior alteration are proposed. Staff notes the following excerpts from these codified elements, as such (emphasis added):
 - **(1) Height.** *Height varies in the district from one to 11 stories. ...East of Brush, the original development ranged from one to 2½ stories.*
 - **(2) Proportion of building's front façade.** *Buildings in the district are usually taller than wide; horizontal proportions exist only in incompatible later buildings, except for row house buildings.*
 - **(3) Proportion of openings within the façades.** *Areas of void generally constitute between 15 percent and 35 percent of the total façade area, excluding the roof. Proportions of the openings themselves are generally taller than wide; in some cases, vertically proportioned units are combined to fill an opening wider than tall.*
 - **(4) Rhythm of solids to voids in front façade.** *Victorian structures in the district often display great freedom in the placement of openings in the façades, although older examples are generally more regular in such placement than later examples. In later apartments, openings tend to be very regular.*
 - **(5) Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets.** *The area between Woodward Avenue and Brush appears to have been developed in a very regular spacing, with 50-foot lots. This regularity has been disrupted by the demolition of many of the houses, and the vacant land resulting, as well as the occasional combination of lots for larger structures, particularly close to Woodward Avenue. East of Brush, smaller lots were used in subdividing, but many buildings stand on more land than one lot, and the parcel sizes are now quite irregular, as is the placement of buildings.*
 - **(6) Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections.** *Most buildings have or had a porch or entrance projection. The variety inherent in Victorian design precludes the establishment of any absolute rhythm, but such projections were often centered...*
 - **(7) Relationship of materials.** *By far the most prevalent material in the district is common brick; other forms of brick, stone and wood trim are common; wood is used as a structural material only east of Brush. Some later buildings have stucco wall surfaces. Originally, roofs were wood or slate with an occasional example of tile; asphalt replacement roofs are common*
 - **(8) Relationship of textures.** *The most common relationship of textures in the district is the low-relief pattern of mortar joints in brick contrasted to the smoother or rougher surfaces of stone or wood trim. Slate, wood, or tile roofs contribute particular textural values where they exist, especially in the case of slates or shingles of other than rectangular shape.*
 - **(9) Relationship of colors.** *Brick red predominates, both in the form of natural color brick and in the form of painted brick. Other natural brick and stone colors are also present. These relate to painted woodwork in various colors, and there is an occasional example of stained woodwork. Roofs of other than asphalt are in natural colors; older slate roofs are often laid in patterns with various colors of slate. Original color schemes for any given building may be determined by professional analysis of the paint layers on the building, and when so determined are always appropriate for that building.*
 - **(10) Relationship of architectural detail.** *On the buildings of the Victorian period, elaborate detail in wood, stone, or sheet metal was common; areas treated include porches, window and door surrounds, cornices, dormers, and other areas. Later buildings are generally simpler, but include less elaborate detail in similar areas.*
 - **(11) Relationship of roof shapes.** *Examples of many roof shapes, including pitched gable roofs, hip roofs, mansard roofs, and gambrel roofs are present. Different types are sometimes combined in a single structure, and tower roofs, cupolas, lanterns, belvideres, monitors, conical roofs are used on various Victorian houses. Flat roof areas in the center of hip or mansard roofs are frequent. Later apartment and commercial buildings generally have flat roofs not visible from the ground. The generally tall roofs add height to the houses of the Victorian period.*

- **(12) Walls of continuity.** *Between Woodward Avenue and Brush, the houses originally honored common setbacks which provided for front lawns. Some of the later apartments have not been set back to the same line as the houses amongst which they were built, thus disturbing the original line of continuity. On Woodward Avenue, the commercial development is typically at the sidewalk, creating a wall of continuity. This is not entirely continuous due to parking lots and some buildings set well back. On John R and Brush, and east of Brush, buildings are typically placed at or near the sidewalk with little or no front yard. Where buildings are continuous, a wall of continuity is created.*
- **(13) Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments.** *The major landscape feature of the district is the vacant land, which creates a feeling that buildings are missing in the district. ...*
- **(14) Relationship of open space to structures.** *There is a large quantity of open space in the area, due to demolition of buildings. The character of this open space is haphazard as it relates to buildings, and indicates the unplanned nature of demolitions due to decline. The feeling created is that buildings are missing and should be present. ...*
- **(15) Scale of façades and façade elements.** *In the large houses between John R and Brush, the scale tends to be large, and the façade elements scaled and disposed to emphasize the large size of the houses. Towers, setbacks, porches and the like divide façades into large elements. East of Brush, the scale is smaller and the detail less elaborate, creating a more intimate setting with the buildings closer to the street. Later apartments are in scale with simple but large elements near the ground and repetitive window openings above, frequently capped by a substantial cornice.*
- **(16) Directional expression of front façades.** *A substantial majority of the buildings in the district have front façades vertically expressed. Exceptions are some commercial buildings on Woodward Avenue, row houses on John R or Brush, and some duplexes or row houses east of Brush.*
- **(17) Rhythm of building setbacks.** *Buildings on the north-south streets generally have little or no setback, while older houses on the east-west streets between Woodward Avenue and Brush have some setback, which varies from street to street, though generally consistent in any one block. Later apartments and commercial structures in that area often ignore the previously established setback. Between Brush and Beaubien, setback is generally very limited, only a few feet, if any, of lawn space being provided between sidewalk and building.*
- **(18) Relationship of lot coverage.** *Older single-family houses between Woodward Avenue and Brush generally occupy about 25 to 30 percent of the building lot, not including coachhouses or garages. Later apartments and commercial buildings often fill a much higher percentage of the lot, sometimes approaching or reaching complete lot coverage. Between Brush and Beaubien, lot coverage for residential structures is generally about 40 percent, with commercial and later apartment buildings again occupying a larger percentage of their lots.*
- **(19) Degree of complexity with the façades.** *The older houses in the district are generally characterized by a high degree of complexity within the façades, with bay windows, towers, porches, window and door hoods, elaborate cornices, and other devices used to decorate the buildings. Newer houses in the northern end of the district and older houses in the southern end tend to be somewhat simpler than the high Victorian structures between them; later apartments and commercial buildings tend to have more classical decorative elements of a simpler kind.*
- **(20) Orientation, vistas, overviews.** *Houses are generally oriented to the east-west streets, while apartments and commercial structures are more often oriented to the north-south streets. The construction of the Fisher Freeway has created an artificial public view of the rear yards on Winder between Woodward and Brush. The vacant land in the area, largely the result of demolition, creates long-distance views and views of individual buildings from unusual angles which are foreign to the character of the neighborhood as an intensely developed urban area.*
- **(21) Symmetric or asymmetric appearance.** *In the Victorian structures, examples of both symmetric and asymmetric design occur; symmetry is more characteristic of the earlier houses, while the high Victorian examples are more likely to assemble elements in a romantic, asymmetric composition. Later houses to the north are more often symmetrical, especially when*

derived from classical precedent. Asymmetrical but balanced compositions are common. Later apartments are generally symmetrical.

- **(22) General environmental character.** *The environmental character is of an old urban neighborhood which has undergone, and is undergoing, considerable change. The original development, reflected in the Victorian period houses, has been altered by the provision of more intensive residential development in the early 20th Century, the change in character of Woodward Avenue from residential to commercial at about the same time, and a long period of decline.*
- This project was first introduced over the winter to the city with the design below. HDC staff, along with PDD-Design Review and CPC staff (Planners in the Legislative Policy Division), met with the applicant on two occasions to suggest changes that would better conform to the neighborhood’s form-based code and other restrictions including the district’s Elements of Design highlighted above. Improvements made to the design include vertically oriented windows, elimination of false/exaggerated “historic” features, transforming the sign into a proper canopy, and cleaner lines overall. Access and parking revisions were also made, eliminating a curb cut from Beaubien. While the revised building design is still horizontally oriented, staff does not assess that it is incompatible (and thus inappropriate), for this isolated location in the district, noting that less distinguished single-story buildings occupied this remote block historically. The design also shares a vocabulary with the previously approved medical office building across the alley, and builds density.



Design as originally proposed to LPD and PDD.

ISSUES

- None. As described above, the applicant worked with CPC, PDD-Design Review, and PDD-HP staff to improve the design. The project also infills a long vacant lot.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation, Certificate of Appropriateness

Staff recommends that the proposed work should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and the Brush Park Historic District’s Elements of Design.