

STAFF REPORT: 08/14/2024 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: D. RIEDEN

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00354

ADDRESS: 14846 ASHTON

HISTORIC DISTRICT: ROSEDALE PARK

APPLICANT: DEANNA FRIES, ITALY AMERICAN CONSTRUCTION

PROPERTY OWNERS: SPENCER, JOSEPH W JR & C D

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 07/22/2024

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 07/25/2024

SCOPE: DEMOLISH GARAGE AND ERECT GARAGE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1949, the property at 14846 Ashton is a 1 1/2 story, single-family residence facing west, where the backyard is along the service drive of the Southfield Freeway. The side-gabled asphalt shingled roof of the house features a large, front gable that overhangs the front entrance and features a bay of three windows which have been replaced with vinyl before the time of designation. The house is clad in stone at the front face along with vinyl siding and red brick at the side elevations. Staff learned that the house and garage's vinyl siding was also installed prior to the district's historic designation. The front entrance is recessed under a metal awning with stone cladding on each side. A modest porch steps down between a raised garden bed to the centrally placed concrete walkway. A concrete drive leads to the front gabled, asphalt shingle roof garage in the backyard. According to the owners, the garage has been hit a few times by cars coming off the free service drive, striking the northeast corner of the garage, causing the garage's slight southward lean. This wood-framed structure likely featured wood-lap siding, which has since been covered with vinyl siding, matching the house. The front man door and side window have been covered, as evidence by internal photos. The backyard has a modest concrete patio. This property has a 2020 Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) on file for replacing non-historic sliding doors at the rear porch. There are no violations.



Site Photo 1, by Staff July 25, 2024: (West) front elevation of house.



Site Photo 2, by Staff July 25, 2024: (West) front elevation of the existing garage.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to demolish the original garage, construct a new 26 ft. x 22 ft. (572 SF), two-car garage with new concrete footing/floor slab and install a driveway that retains its existing 9' width until it approaches the garage where it flares to the garage's 26' width. Note that the current garage is located inside 1' of the public easement and the new garage would be located outside of this easement, 6 feet from the rear property line.

This proposal also includes the construction of a new 12'6"x10' (126 SF) concrete patio adjacent to the rear porch entrance and northeast corner of the house.



Aerial#1 of Parcel # 22075026, showing original garage (red arrow) and driveway behind the house.

Demolition of Garage and Driveway

- Demolish original garage and driveway, dispose of materials.

Construction of New, Two-Car 26'x22' Garage (572 SF):

- At the new location, slightly offset from the original location, 1' from the south property line and 6' from the rear property line, pour concrete pad 26'x22' foundation with concrete ratwalls.
- Build new 26' x 22' wood framed garage on new cement floor, with a front gabled roof that protrudes 2' in front of the front face of the garage. The 6/12 pitch of the roof reaches a 15' 6" height at its peak.
- Roof materials are Landmark dimensional asphalt shingles, color "Resawn Shake" with two (2) vents.
- Siding is "Wicker" 4.5" dutchlap vinyl siding.
- Install 16'x8' steel sectional garage door on west elevation, color white.
- Install a 24" x 24" octagonal vinyl window in the gable of the west (front) elevation, color white.
- Install two (2) coach lights on the exterior, either side of the main garage door.

Install New Driveway and Patio:

- Install 9' wide concrete driveway from the front yard to the new garage location, where it flairs to the garage's 26' width.
- Install new 12'6"x10' (126 SF) concrete patio adjacent to the rear porch entrance and northeast corner of the house.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- Rosedale Park Historic District was established in 2007. Its Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-199) provide the following guidance for new construction and the landscape:
 - "Height... Additions to existing buildings shall be related to the existing structure. Garages are generally one-story tall..."
 - "Relationship of materials. Masonry is the most significant material in the majority of houses in the Rosedale Park Historic District in the form of pressed or wire cut brick, often combined with wood, stone, and/or stucco. Wood is almost universally used for window frames, half-timbering, and other functional trim...Aluminum siding and aluminum canted windows on later buildings are sometimes original; vinyl siding and vinyl windows, where they exist, are replacements... Roofs on the majority of the houses in the Rosedale Park Historic District are asphalt shingled..."

Garages, where they are contemporary with the residential dwelling, often correspond in materials.”

- *“Roofs of houses built later in the period of development of the district, such as those of modern inspiration, tend to have significantly lower slopes.”*
 - *“Relationship of open spaces to structures... All houses have ample rear yards as well as front yards. Wider lots in Rosedale Park permitted side drives with garages at the rear of the lots. Where dwellings are located on corner lots, garages face the side street. Garages, when original, often correspond in materials to the main body of the dwelling, but are of modest, one-story, simple box design with single- or double-doors...”*
 - *“Relationship of lot coverages. The lot coverage for single-family dwellings ranges generally from 25 percent to 35 percent, including the garage, whether freestanding or attached.”*
- Staff offers the opinion that the publicly visible original garage, even though of modest scale and utilitarian use, conveys an era of mid-century design that illustrates a strong relationship with the house with a complementary front facing gable, low pitched roof, and modest scale as described by the Elements of Design and as reflected by its presence at the time of historic designation. Staff believes that this structure is a contributing historic resource to the property despite its humble appearance.
 - Despite the lean and easement conflict, staff has the opinion that the presence of the garage likely predates the easement, which is not grounds for dismantling the structure. (The Southfield Freeway was constructed in 1959, 10 years after the construction of the house. Staff was not able to identify the precise construction date of the garage but assesses that its construction is likely close to the construction of the house in 1949. *See figures 1-2*)
 - The owner permitted staff to observe the garage up-close and inside the structure on July 25, 2024. The owner stated that the garage has been hit 3 times by vehicles coming off the service drive while they have had residence there. The garage has a slight lean from the impact hitting the northeast corner according to the owner. However, staff observed that the garage was stabilized and not in a state of deterioration. The concrete floor is cracked in



Figure 1, Sanborn vol 26, 1938-1950: showing garage presence of garage and house (red outline) at time of widening of Southfield Rd.

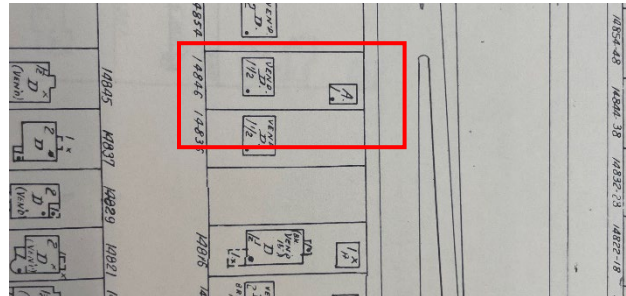
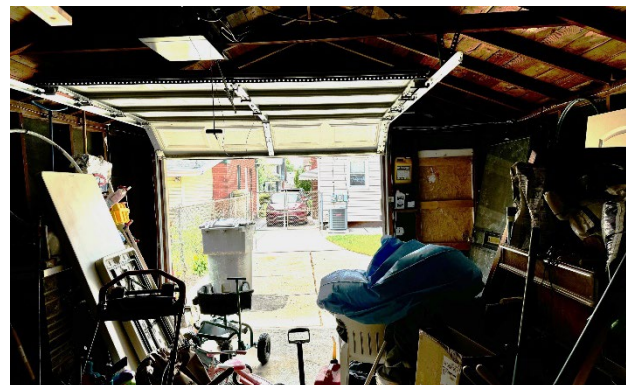
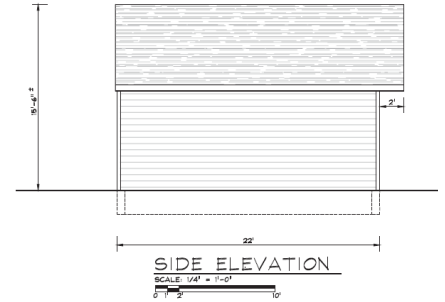
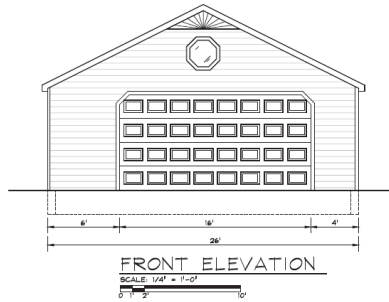


Figure 2, Sanborn 1983: showing garage presence of garage and house (red outline) with Southfield Freeway present.



Site Photo 3, by Applicant, 2024 showing interior garage entrance and boarded up man door.

several areas, but not irreparable, in staff's opinion. Staff also noticed from the interior, that a window and man door have been boarded in and the vinyl exterior siding hides these previous openings. The structure retains its historic integrity, contributes to the historic district, and is not beyond repair, in staff's opinion.



Figures 1&2, by Applicant: showing proposed front and side elevations of the garage.

- According to Detroit Parcel Viewer, the 125'x45' (5,625SF) lot currently contains a 37'x33' (1,221SF) footprint for the house and 26'x22' (572SF) new garage, which is approximately 32% of lot coverage, which falls within the 25-35% range as described in the Elements of Design.
- Staff has the opinion that the proposed height and scale of the new garage goes beyond an appropriate size that is deferential to the primary structure, i.e., the house. Also, the proposed octagonal window at the front gable introduces a new element that is not appropriate nor relates to the primary structure. It is staff's opinion that the proposed height, scale and window design for this garage are inappropriate as they do not meet the Elements of Design nor "relate to the main dwelling". Staff opines that a lower pitch roof and a smaller footprint with a simple front gable design would be an appropriate alternative should the Commission decide that the construction of a new garage is appropriate.
- While the existing vinyl siding was present on the garage and house at the time of designation, it is likely covering original wood lap siding for both structures. Vinyl siding and windows are not appropriate material for new construction in this historic district.
- Staff has no issue with the proposed concrete patio. (See Fig 3 and Site Photo 4.)
- It is staff's opinion that the proposed driveway either match the dimensions of the existing drive, or at a width that matches a reduced scaled garage should the Commission approve a new garage.

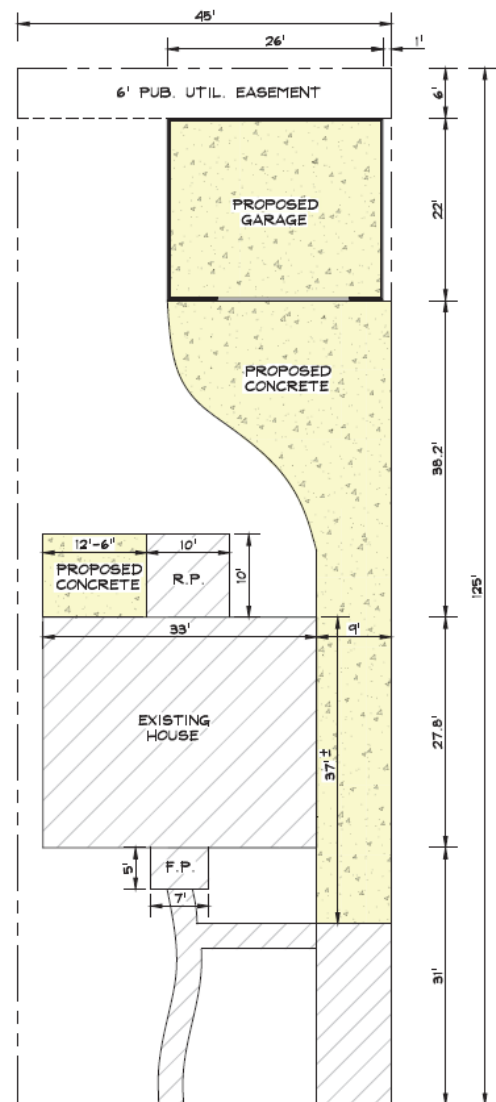


Figure 3, by Applicant: proposed site plan showing garage, driveway and rear patio locations.

ISSUES

- No documentation establishing that the original condition of the original garage was beyond repair was submitted or available.

- It is staff’s opinion that the existing garage is a contributing historic building to the property as it was present at the time of designation, conveys a strong relationship between the garage and the main house as shown in the protruding front facing gable that matches the façade of the house, the broad pitch of the roofline that is consistent with the architectural style of the house and other nearby historic structures. Demolition of this garage and the replacement of this garage with the current proposed one, fails to preserve and retain the historic character of the property, and introduces a new, larger structure that lacks compatibility in terms of scale, massing, and material composition.
- Staff offers the opinion that the scale of the garage, particularly it’s width, height, and material use of vinyl siding and introduction of an octagonal window is demonstrably inappropriate because it does not relate with the house nor follows the Elements of Design, where “Garages, when original, often correspond in materials to the main body of the dwelling, but are of modest, one-story, simple box design with single- or double-doors.”



Site Photo 4, by Staff, July 25, 2024, showing location of proposed concrete patio.



Site Photo 5, by Applicant, showing north side of the existing garage. The arrow indicates the location of past vehicle impact.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation 1: Demolish Garage, Erect Garage

Staff finds that the demolition of the garage, construction of a new garage does not meet the Secretary of Interior Standards for the following reasons:

- No documentation establishing that the original condition of the original garage was beyond repair was submitted or available.
- The original garage is a contributing building that was present at the time of historic designation and exemplifies the modest, yet character-defining features that bore strong relationship to the main house, namely the lower pitched, overhanging front gable with support posts that complements the front façade of the house, which is indicative of the modest form of mid-century architecture that defines this historic district.
- The proposed garage does not relate to the main house in design, scale or materiality, and conflicts with the Elements of Design. The proposed vinyl siding and vinyl windows are not historically appropriate materials as they do not conform to the District’s Elements of Design.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the above work items, as they do 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.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

Recommendation 2: Install Patio

It is staff's opinion that the construction of the rear concrete patio and driveway is appropriate. Staff therefore recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed because it meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Rosedale Park Historic District's Elements of Design.

Staff recommends the COA be issued with following conditions:

- The driveway is replaced within its current footprint.