

**STAFF REPORT: DECEMBER 11, 2024 MEETING**

**PREPARED BY: A. DYE**

**APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00650**

**ADDRESS: 235 E. BOSTON BOULEVARD**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT: ARDEN PARK-EAST BOSTON**

**APPLICANT: ROBERT NAEYAERT, LUNAR GARAGE & MODERNIZATION, INC.**

**PROPERTY OWNER: EUGENIA & RICKY HARDAWAY**

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: NOVEMBER 18, 2024**

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: NOVEMBER 26, 2024**

**12/10 Staff report was updated to include revised elevation drawing of proposed garage.**

**SCOPE: ERECT GARAGE**

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The building located at 235 E. Boston Boulevard is a 2 ½-story single-family residence that is on the northeast corner of East Boston Boulevard and John R. Constructed ca. 1900, the dwelling is clad in a variegated brown brick with slate tiles at the gable ends and dormers. The asymmetrical façade is balanced by two linear components – to the west a slightly projecting wall with front-facing gable, and to the east a two-story bay with peaked roof. The elevated front entry door is accessed via an uncovered central porch platform. The multi-gable roof is covered in brown asphalt shingles and features brick corbel chimneys at the east and west sides of the front roof surface. The house has a generous setback, and the front yard has a slight rise. A garage was originally located at the far northwest corner of the lot at the alley, but it no longer exists. Multiple concrete slabs exist at the rear yard and are accessed from East Boston Boulevard via a concrete driveway running along the west side of the house.



*Façade facing E. Boston Boulevard. Staff photo, November 26, 2024.*





*View of existing conditions at rear yard of 235 E. Boston Boulevard looking southwest from public alley. The historic garage was demolished at an unknown time; the concrete pad remains in place at the northwest rear corner of the lot. An overgrown concrete pad is near the center of the rear yard (★). Staff photo, November 26, 2024.*



*View of existing alley and rear lot line fence at 235 E. Boston, looking east from the entrance to John R. Staff photo, November 26,*

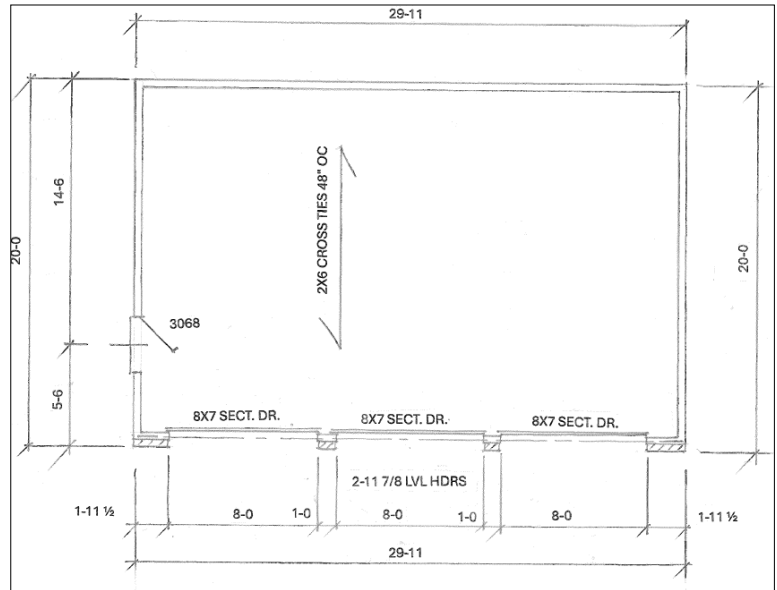
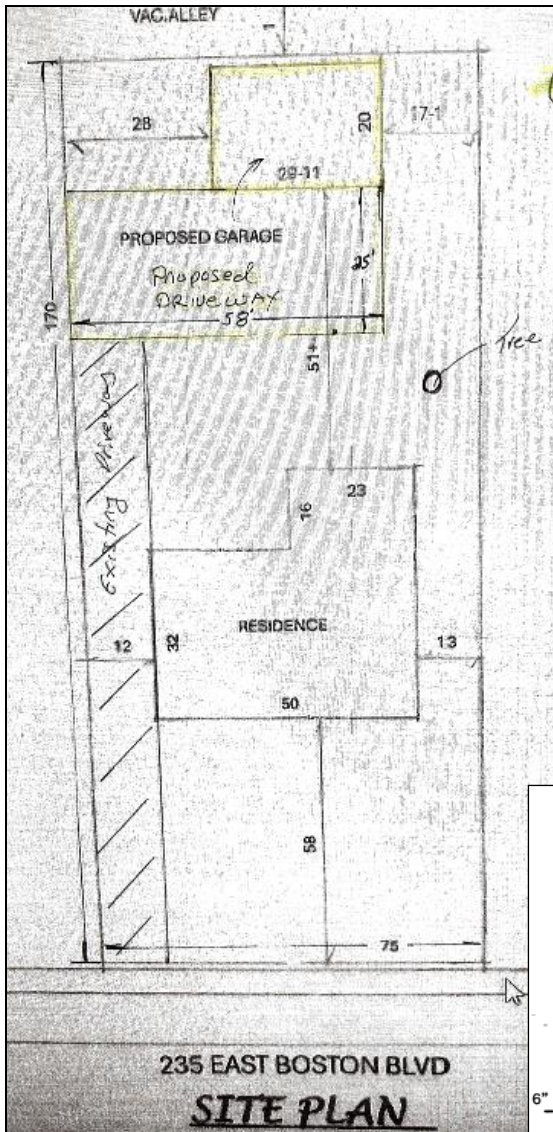
*2024. The rear, north-facing wall of the two-story carriage house at 221 E. Boston is in the foreground.*



**PROPOSAL**

Per the submitted drawings and documents, the applicant is proposing to demolish the existing concrete pad, pour a new concrete foundation and slab and erect a new 20' deep x 30' wide three-car garage and associated concrete drive and apron. Proposal details include:

- Garage to be single-story wood-framed structure.
- Modular 4" brick in a variegated brown palette will clad the south wall facing the rear of the house. The remaining three (3) walls (east, north, west) to be clad in James Hardie 7" (exposure) lap siding-smooth surface. Non-vented smooth Hardie soffit and trim board are specified. All cementitious materials will have a primed surface for painting. Paint colors have not been selected.
- Reverse gable roof to be covered in asphalt 3-tab shingles, color: Brownwood.
- Install three (3) overhead, 16-panel steel garage doors (white in color), one (1) two-panel person-door on the west wall, and install four (4) outdoor wall sconce lanterns.
- Concrete apron to be located adjacent to the garage's south elevation is to have a footprint of 58' wide x 25' deep.

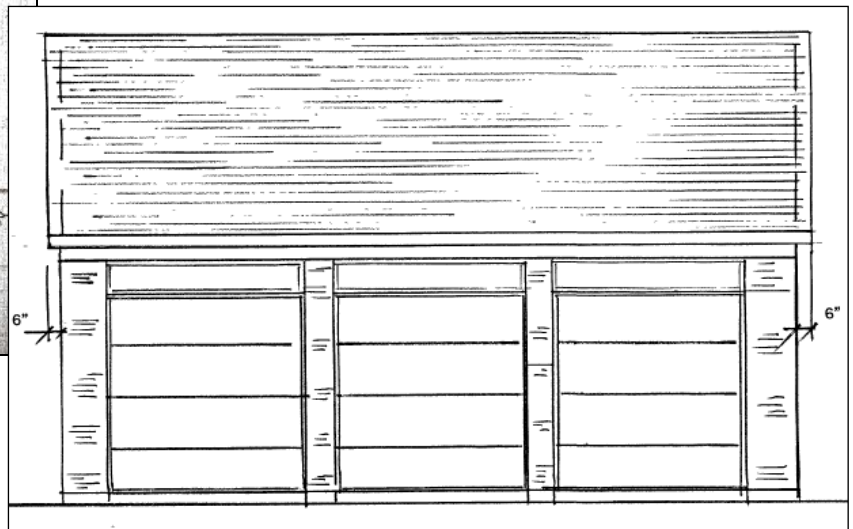


Applicant documents.

Left – site plan that shows highlighted outlines of proposed garage and new concrete apron.

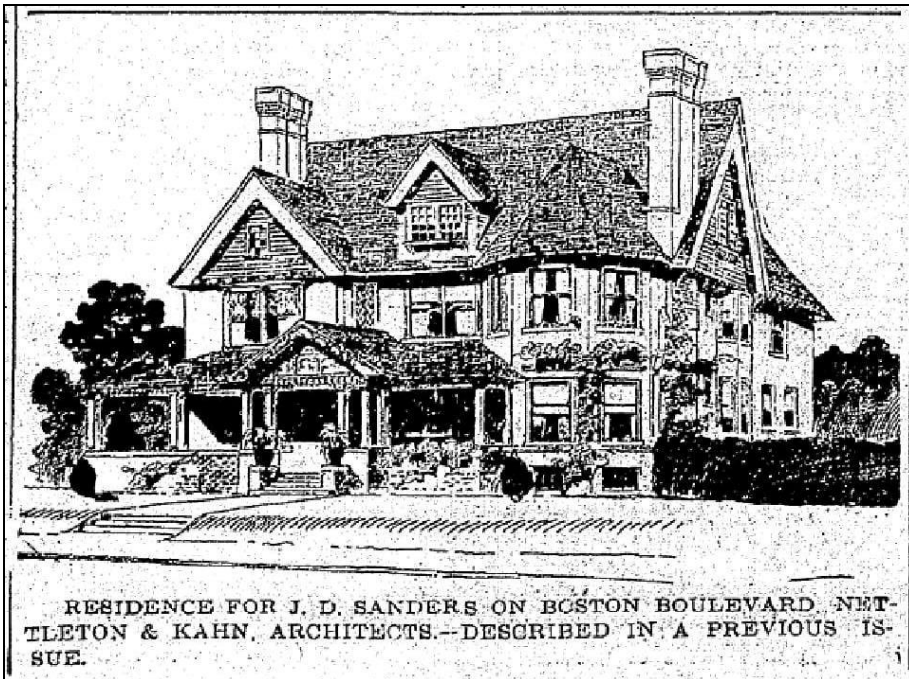
Above: Floor plan.

Below: Elevation drawing of south elevation of proposed garage. This wall faces the rear of the house. *The applicant submitted revised drawings due to a change of roof pitch (from 6/12 to 8/12).*

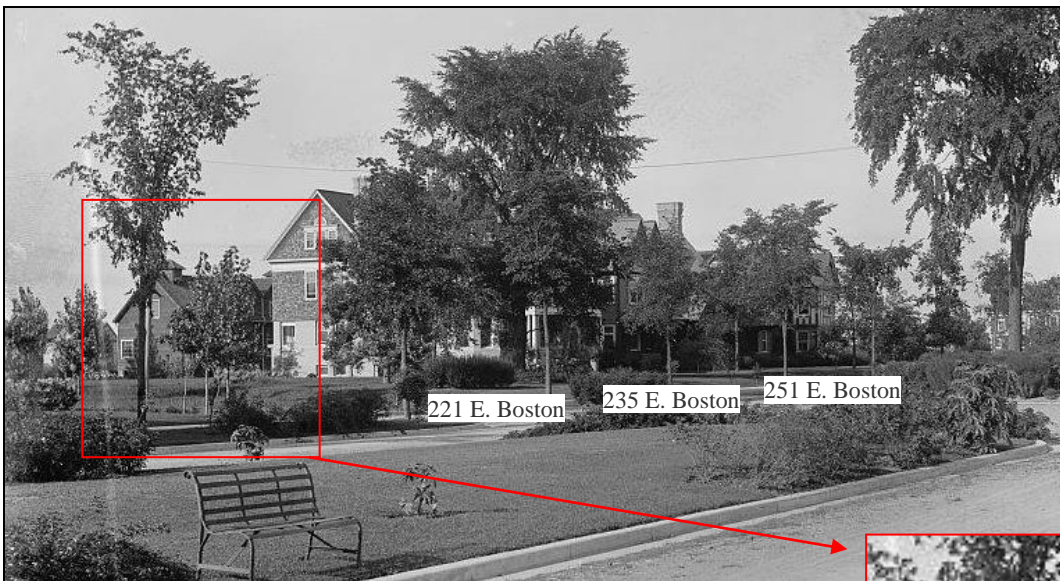


## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Arden Park-East Boston Historic District was enacted on May 28, 1981.
- The house was built in 1899 or 1900 for John D. Sanders. Architect of record is Nettleton & Kahn.



Rendering of the house from an 1899 edition of the *Detroit News*. Staff doesn't have an early photo of this house, however there is evidence on the façade's brick walls that a porch of similar profile as shown above had been in place. Staff does not know when the covered porch structure was removed.

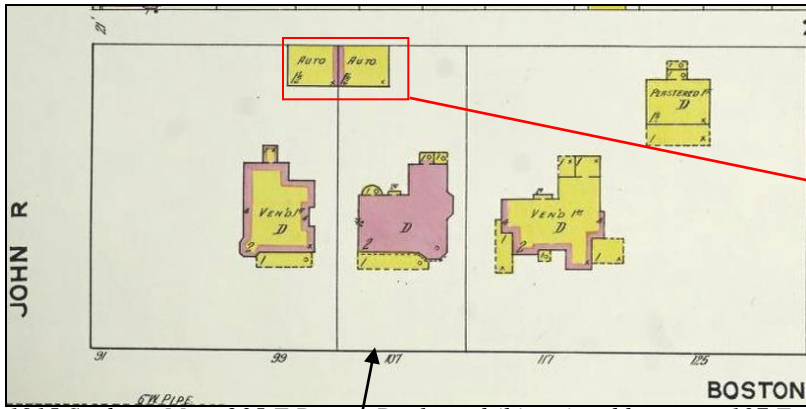


1902 photo, *Detroit Publishing Company*. Streetview shows 221, 235 and 251 E. Boston Boulevard.

At the left side of the photo is a partial view of the original wood-framed garage at 221 E. Boston. Based on the 1915 Sanborn map, 221 and 235 E. Boston had similarly sized 1-1/2 story garages.

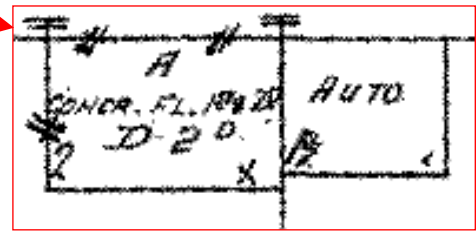
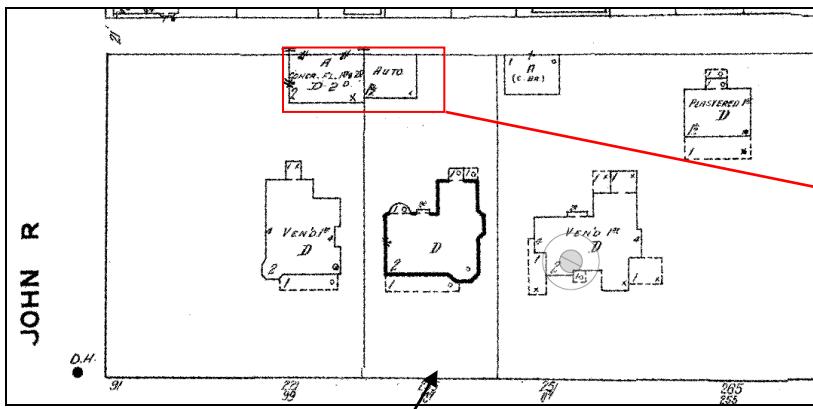






1915 Sanborn Map, 235 E Boston Boulevard (historic address was 107 E. Boston). This map indicates the two garages were erected at their respective property lines, were wood framed (indicated by yellow), 1-1/2 story structures, and attached by masonry walls (indicated in pink).

- Comparing the 1915 and post-1950 Sanborn Maps, no changes to the site or buildings at 235 E. Boston are documented. Staff does not have information on when the original garage was demolished. This map indicates the wood-framed garage at 221 E. Boston was replaced after 1915 with a larger masonry two-story carriage house.



Post - 1950 Sanborn Map, 235 E Boston Boulevard. This map shows the footprint of the 2-story carriage house (auto garage with 2<sup>nd</sup> floor "D" dwelling) at 221 E. Boston that replaced the wood-framed 1-1/2 story structure.



Looking west from alley directly behind 235 E. Boston. Staff photo, November 26, 2024.

This view of the east wall of the carriage house at 221 E. Boston clearly shows the outline of the historic garage that once stood at 235 E. Boston. This visibility indicates to staff that the garage was demolished many decades after this carriage house was erected, which staff estimates was likely built ca. 1920.

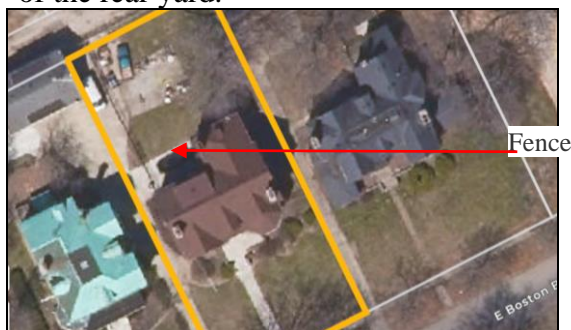
- The Arden Park-East Boston Historic District is known for its open space including the landscaped parks along Woodward Avenue, the grassy boulevards of East Boston and Arden Park, large building lots, and generous space between buildings. The Elements of Design for the Arden Park – East Boston Historic District state:

- (14) *Relationship of open space to structures.* Open space in the district was planned, for the most part, when the subdivision was platted and the lots on the corner of Woodward Avenue and Arden Park were deeded to the City for use as a park. The Woodward Avenue frontage at Boston now contains, on the southeast corner, a church structure, and on the northeast corner, a fenced-in open space relating to the Blessed Sacrament Church to the north and the Dodge House to the east. The medians in the center of the boulevards provide open space unifying the district as a whole. **The siting of all houses on their lots create rear yards as well as front yards;** where an original or early arrangement of a house and grounds included and still includes landscaped lots which form part of the landscaping plan for the residence, such landscaped lots are significant landscape features. Corner lots are sometimes shielded on the street side by shrubbery and/or fences.
- (18) *Relationship of lot coverage.* **Lot coverage ranges from 40 percent to ten percent or less in the case with homes with large yards.** Most homes are in the 20 percent to 35 percent range of lot coverage.
- (20) *Orientation, vistas, overviews.* All of the buildings in the district are oriented toward the boulevard. Buildings on corner lots may have secondary entrances or semicircular drives on the side street. **Garages are always detached, at the rear of the lot and often oriented towards the alley as well as the driveway,** or, where a house is sited on a corner lot, towards the side street. The primary vista is created along the wide boulevards by the median.



*This aerial view shows the footprint of the shared driveway between 221 and 235 E. Boston, as well as the footprint of the concrete pad that supported the original garage for 235 E. Boston. Due to the narrow driveways for the three houses visible in this photo, coupled with the width of the existing historic-age 2 – 3 car garages, concrete aprons spanning the width of the garages were poured. ConnectExplorer, March 26, 2006.*

- As shown in the above photo, the original 1 ½ story garage was located at the far northwest corner of the lot, had a small footprint within the large rear yard, and had a relatively small concrete apron. At 221 E. Boston, the driveway and apron fill a portion of space between the house and garage, but the remainder of the exceptionally large lot is covered with lawn. The apron for the garage at 251 E. Boston extends across the entire front of the garage but is compact in its depth and doesn't cover much of the rear yard.



*Aerial view, Detroit Parcel Server.*

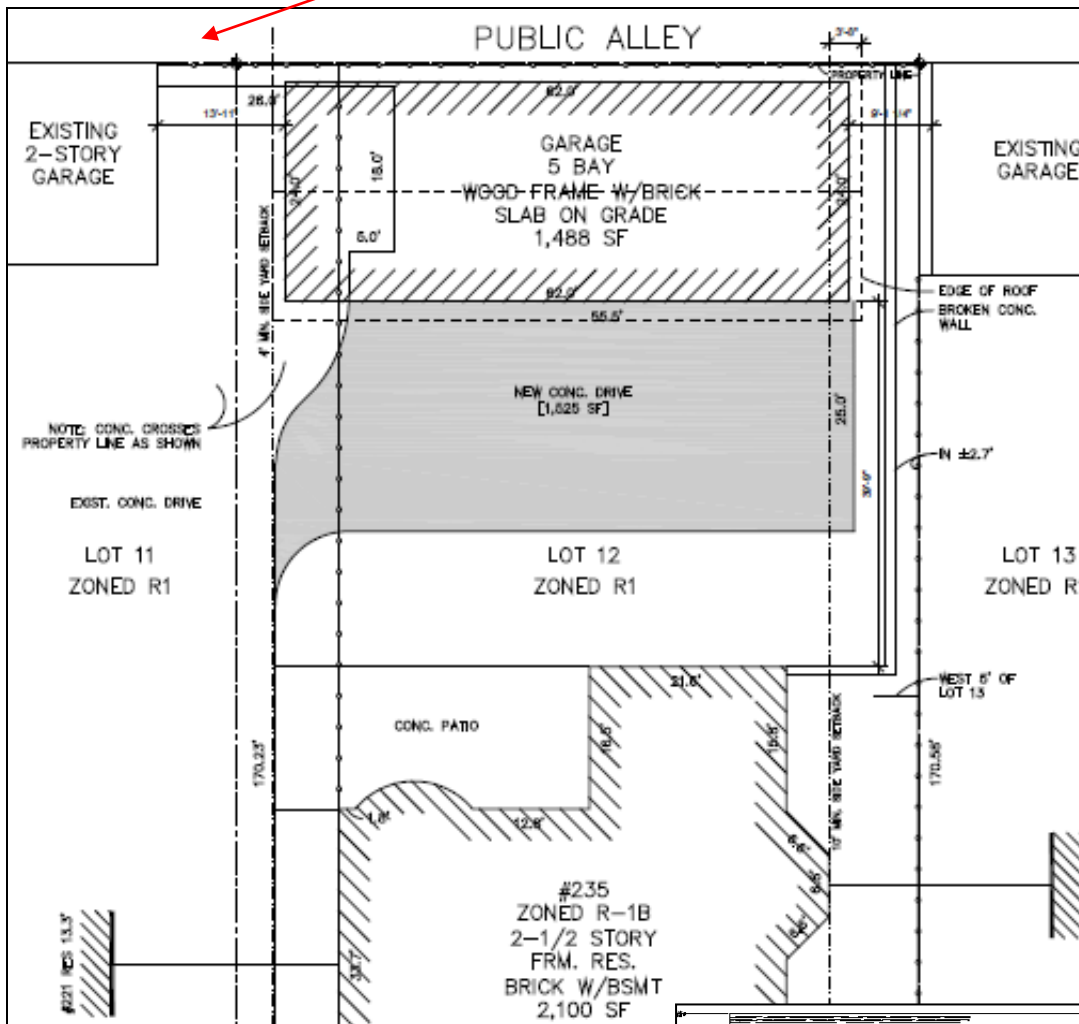


*Staff photo, November 26, 2024.*

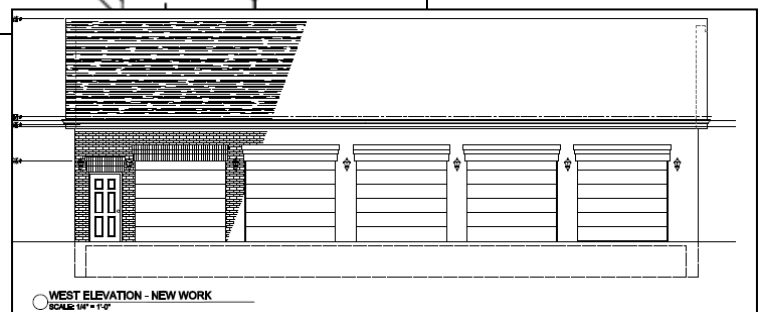
*The yellow line indicates the property lines for 235 E. Boston. A rear yard fence was installed a few years ago with a setback from the western side property line, and gives an incorrect depiction of the location of the west property line. The now overgrown concrete pad is clearly visible in the aerial photo.*



- At the March 16, 2022 special meeting, the Historic District Commission reviewed application #22-7699 for the erection of a five-car garage (62'w by 24'd) and 55'-5" w by 25' d concrete apron. The distance between the new and existing garage at 221 E. Boston was to be 13'-11". The 25' deep apron was to leave a rear yard depth of 14'-9".



Applicant drawings, #22-7699. March 2022.



A Certificate of Appropriateness was issued with the following language:

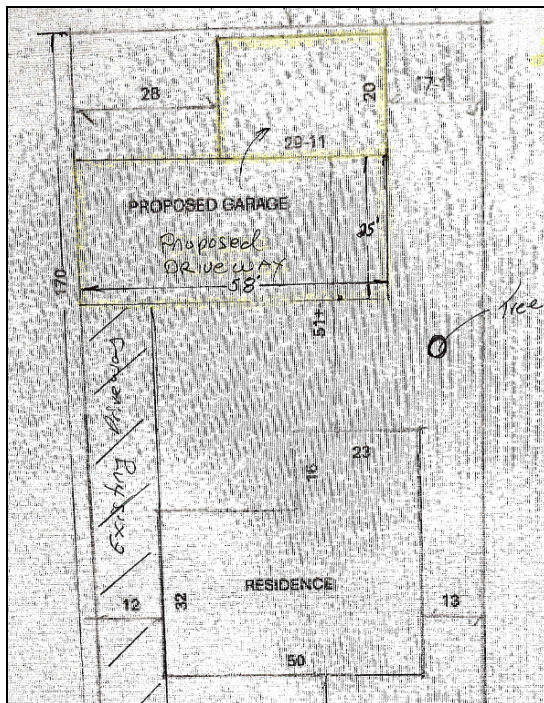
*Partially demolish the existing concrete foundation, pour a new concrete foundation and slab and erect a new garage and associated concrete drive and apron per the submitted documents, drawings, and other submitted materials.*

With the conditions that:

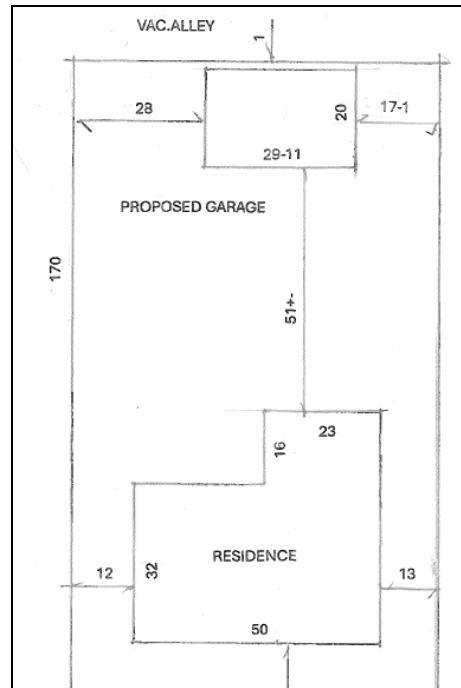
- The garage is to be four stalls rather than five by removing the eastern most bay.*
- The concrete masonry units (CMU) at the alley side of the garage are to be stained in a color that complements the property. Applicant to submit proposed stain color to HDC staff for review and approval prior to pulling the permit.*



- It is staff's opinion that the proposed three-car garage's size and architectural design, which includes a reverse gable roof, masonry front wall and smooth-faced Hardie siding for the side and rear walls, is compatible with the house and site. However, the contemporary white color selected for the garage doors is not an appropriate color for the architectural design nor for new construction in a historic district. Also, the applicant must submit paint colors for the siding, trim and person-door.



Above: Site plan including concrete apron.



Above: Site plan showing only footprint of proposed garage (no apron/drive).

- Regarding the garage's placement and related concrete apron, the applicant's current site plan shows the placement of the three-car garage would create distances between the neighboring garages of 28' and 17'-1". The dimensions of the proposed concrete apron is 58' wide x 25' deep.
  - When comparing the 2022 and 2024 site plans, staff found different distances listed between the rear of the house and proposed garages, creating a discrepancy of 8'. This means the depth of the lawn between the house and garage could be 26' (as suggested in the current site plan) or 18' (if the distance on the 2022 site plan is correct). Either way, with a width of 58', a significant portion of the rear yard is to be covered with concrete.
  - Staff suggests the proposed garage be sited in a location similar to what was proposed in the 2022 application; the space between the two garages would be reduced from 28' to 10' – 14'. Staff also questions if the depth of the concrete apron can be reduced, to be similar to that at 251 E. Boston (visible in the aerial photo on page 5). As a result, this would retain a larger area for a landscaped rear yard.
- Staff observed the completion of the following work items which were not approved by the Commission (most of which were identified in the 2022 staff report):
  - Replacement of at least 15 historic windows with replacement windows of unknown material.
  - All basement windows have been replaced with glass block.
  - Installation of two (2) concrete pads at rear yard – one adjacent to the house and one adjacent to the slab of the original garage.
  - Removal/alteration of front and rear porch platforms and roofs.
  - Removal of bow window at rear and partial enclosure of remaining bow window.
  - Replacement of multiple doors.

The work items listed above are not recent work. Google Street View shows many of the work items existing at the front elevation since at least 2009.

## ISSUES

- As identified in the Elements of Design, the open space of this district is a character defining feature, including the open space surrounding the historic houses at their front, side, and rear yards.
- The placement of the proposed garage and large concrete apron would leave very little of the rear yard's open, landscaped space.
- The placement of the garage and the size and placement of the concrete apron is incompatible with the historic character of its environment as it greatly alters the rear yard which characterizes the property and the surrounding district.

## RECOMMENDATION

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

Staff recommends that the proposed work will not alter the features and spaces that characterize the property and therefore should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Arden Park-East Boston Local Historic District's Elements of Design.

*Staff recommends the Certificate of Appropriateness be issued with the following conditions:*

- The placement of the garage will be within 10' – 14' of the west property line.
- The width of the concrete apron will be reduced in accordance with the garage's revised placement, and the depth of the concrete apron will be reduced to 15'.
- The pre-finished color for the overhead doors will not be bright white.
- Specifications for gutters and downspouts will be submitted.
- A revised site plan, cut sheets and exterior finish colors for the doors, siding and trim will be submitted for final staff review before a building permit is issued.