

STAFF REPORT: DECEMBER 11, 2024, REGULAR MEETING **PREPARED BY:** T. BOSCARINO
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00659
ADDRESS: 729 SEWARD
HISTORIC DISTRICT: NEW CENTER AREA
APPLICANT: 700 SEWARD DETROIT LLC
OWNER: 700 SEWARD DETROIT LLC
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: NOVEMBER 13, 2024
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISITS: NOVEMBER 1, 2024; NOVEMBER 22, 2024

SCOPE: DEMOLISH GARAGE (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)



November 22, 2024, photo by staff.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

At 729 Seward Avenue, a two-and-one-half-story house, built in 1907, faces the street. The building is clad in brick, painted red, and has limestone details as well as cedar shake. The asymmetrical façade, lacking in applied architectural detail, is defined largely by its massing: it includes a full height, projecting bay at its western end and a raised covered porch at its eastern end; the multi-gabled roof features three dormers. The building has been the subject of several alterations in recent years, including the replacement of original windows. This work was done without approval and later received a Certificate of Appropriateness dated July 18, 2023 (23-8441).

Subject of this application, a garage once existed at the rear (south) of the property. This garage was erected pursuant to a December 2000 Certificate of Appropriateness; staff observed its demolition in progress on November 1, 2024. This work was done without approval of the Historic District Commission.



Rear of the property, viewed from the alley. November 1, 2024, photo by staff.



Rear of the property, viewed from the alley. November 22, 2024, photo by staff.

PROPOSAL

The proposed work (already completed) is to demolish the garage.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The New Center Area Historic District was established by City Council ordinance 530-H in 1982. The Final Report implies a period of significance of 1895 through 1930.

- The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-129) for the New Center Area Historic District provide the following observation:
 - “Backyards as well as front yards exist on all single- and double-family residential properties; backyards to houses on Bethune, Pallister and Delaware tend to be relatively small due to the placement of 1½- or 2½-car garages and adjoining paved parking area off the alley.”
- A brick garage was built on the property in 1916, according to building permit records. The garage was demolished prior to the 1982 establishment of the historic district.
- At some point prior to the 1982 establishment of the historic district, much of the back yard of this property, as well as adjacent properties, were paved and have since been used for parking (see images on next page).
- As the garage proposed for removal (already removed without approval) is a non-historic building, its preservation is not required. However, the condition that replaces it must be compatible with the property and its environment.



1982 Historic Designation Advisory Board photos. Note that no garage exists and much of the surrounding area is paved and used for parking.



Undated (late twentieth century) Sanborn map.



Undated (circa 2020) Google aerial image.



March 2023 photo by staff.



June 2023 photo by staff.

- The applicant has not proposed a surface treatment for the area cleared by the demolition. Treating the area with grass seed, sod, or mulch consistent with the City Code (Sec. 50-14-326) would be appropriate. Any further development, including landscaping or concrete paving, would require further application to the Historic District Commission prior to commencing the work.

ISSUES

- None.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Staff recommends that the Commission issue a *Certificate of Appropriateness* for the proposed work as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.