

ADDRESS: 14528 ASHTON DRIVE

APPLICATION NO: HDC2025-00024

HISTORIC DISTRICT: ROSEDALE PARK

APPLICANT: JOSH MADDOX/4545 ARCHITECTURE

OWNER: CASSANDRA BROWN

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 1/28/2025

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 1/21/2025

SCOPE: REPLACE FRONT PORCH, ALTER DRIVEWAY AND WALKWAY

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The building located at 14528 Ashton is a single-family, foursquare plan dwelling that was erected ca. 1920. The building is two stories in height and is clad with lapped vinyl siding, which was present at the date of the district’s designation. The building’s hipped roof is covered with asphalt shingles and features deep, overhanging eaves with vinyl soffits. A hipped roof dormer with wood, double-hung windows is visible at the front facing roof surface. The remaining windows are vinyl units, which appear to have been installed sometime between 2018 and 2022. A one-story porch with battered wood columns on brick piers, wood flooring and steps, and wood railing extends the width of the front façade. Foundation planting/shrubs line the front porch deck. A two-track/ribbon, concrete driveway extends from the front to the rear yard.



14528 Ashton facing northeast, current appearance. Taken by HDC staff on 1/28/2025

PROPOSAL

Per the current submission, the applicant is seeking to undertake the following exterior work:

- At the front porch:
 - Replace the existing non-historic wood floor and steps in kind/with new wood flooring and steps

- Replace the existing non-historic wood guardrails with new aluminum guardrails
- Replace the existing non-historic wood handrailing with new aluminum handrails
- Replace existing non-historic wood T1-11 skirting **at north and south sides** with new cement fiber panel skirting
- Replace the existing 8'-0"-wide concrete two-track/ribbon driveway with a new 8'-0" wide, single slab concrete driveway
- Replace the existing concrete front yard walkway and step with a new concrete walkway of the same width. The single step at the end of the walkway/adjacent with the porch will be eliminated
- ~~Remove the existing foundation planting/shrubs and brick paver edging to the front porch skirting~~

STAFF OBSERVATIONS RESEARCH

- The Rosedale Park Historic District was designated in 2008
- See the photos below and note the following:
 - The current front porch decking/floor, guardrails, handrails, skirting, and steps were added after the district was designated, in 2016 without Commission approval, per HDC files.
 - The current vinyl windows were installed after the district was designated. A review of HDC files and Google Streetview images indicates that this work was completed sometime between 2018 and 2022 without HDC approval. The applicant has elected not to add the unapproved vinyl windows to the current project scope. Please note that the windows have been logged as a violation and are now subject to enforcement action.
 - The current asphalt roof was added after the district was designated. A review of HDC files and Google Streetview images indicates that this work was completed sometime between 2018 and 2022 without HDC approval. The applicant has elected not to add the unapproved vinyl windows to the current project scope. Please note that the roof has been logged as a violation and is now subject to enforcement action.



14528 Ashton, designation photo facing east. HDAB staff, 2008. Note wood railing decking, and steps. Handrails are metal.



14528 Ashton, facing southeast. Photo by applicant showing current conditions. Note the wood railing, steps, skirting, and decking which were added without HDC approval in 2016.



14528 Ashton, facing east. Photo by applicant showing current conditions. Note the wood railing, steps, skirting, and decking which were added without HDC approval in 2016. Also, note the non-historic masonry paver edging at foundation planting



14528 Ashton, facing south. Photo by applicant showing current conditions. Note the wood railing, steps, skirting, and decking which were added without HDC approval in 2016. Also, note the non-historic masonry paver edging at foundation planting

- ~~As noted above, the current application proposes to remove the foundation plantings which line the front of the porch. The specific shrubs/foundation plantings which are proposed for removal are not of historic age as such plantings have a limited lifespan and staff was not able to determine if the property historically maintained foundation plantings at this location. Also, staff did review the district's Elements of Design and noted that foundation plantings are not specifically mentioned. Rather, element of design # (13) *Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments* more generally notes that "...there is variety in the landscape treatment of individual properties." However, HDC staff did note that most houses within the near vicinity of 14258 Ashton do have foundation plantings at the front porch area and it is likely that 14258 Ashton has maintained landscaping at that location throughout its history. Staff therefore supports the removal of the current foundation plantings as long as they are replaced with new landscaping/foundation plantings in the same location.~~
- Regarding the proposed driveway replacement:
 - The applicant has noted that the current project will be funded by a City of Detroit's Senior Accessibility Home Repair grant, which seeks to make safety and access improvements at the homes of low-income Detroit residents and those with disabilities. He further stated that the project is seeking to replace the current two track driveway with a single/full slab driveway because it poses an accessibility issue to the property owner and the continuous surface of the proposed new driveway will make it much safer for the owner to walk across when coming to and from their vehicle.
 - The district's elements of design do not make a specific reference to ribbon driveways. Rather, element of design # (13) *Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments* more generally notes that most properties display a "...single-width side driveway."

- Staff does note that the majority of properties within the near vicinity of the subject property have full/single slab driveways, with a smaller number of two-track/ribbon driveways. The width (single width), material (concrete), and location (side) of the nearby driveways is generally consistent with 14258 Ashton's.
- As two cars were parked in the driveway, staff was unable to fully document its condition during the 1/2025 field visit. However, see the below Google Streetview images of the driveway from 2009 (one year after the district's designation) and 2015 and note that it is in poor condition as a large portion was patched with asphalt and the concrete ribbons are cracked/broken throughout.



14528 Ashton, facing northeast, showing driveway. HDC staff photo taken on 1/28/202



14528 Ashton driveway (outlined in red), 2009. Google Streetview



14528 Ashton driveway (outlined in yellow), 2015. Google Streetview

- The proposed project will not result in the expansion of the driveway’s width, a change in its material, or a change in its location
- It is staff’s opinion that the two-track configuration of the driveway is not a distinctive character-defining feature of the property, and even if it was, it has minimal integrity.
- Staff recommends the replacement of the driveway as proposed for the above-listed reasons
- As previously stated, the current application proposes installing cement fiber panel skirting to replace the existing T1-11/plywood skirting which was added without HDC approval. The applicant has stated that fiber cement was selected because the material would provide better resilience to weather than wood. Regarding the new skirting:
 - See the below photo, which indicates that a wood, lattice type skirting, which appeared to be in poor condition, was present in 2009. As previously noted, this skirting was removed without HDC approval in 2016 and replaced with the current T1-11/plywood skirting. It is staff’s opinion that the lattice skirting present in the 2009 image likely did not date to the house’s original construction as it would be uncommon for porch skirting of this type and material to withstand long-term exposure to weather/the elements. Staff therefore supports the current proposal to install a new skirting of a compatible appearance which is made from a material that provides better resilience to weather than wood



14258 Ashton, Google Streetview image, 2009. This wood lattice skirting (outlined in orange) was replaced without HDC approval in 2016.



14258 Ashton. Photo by applicant, facing northeast, showing current condition of porch.



14258 Ashton. Photo by applicant, facing southeast, showing current condition of porch.

ISSUES

- As noted above and demonstrated in the below designation photos, the porch had wood guardrails and metal handrails at the time of the district's designation. The below Google Streetview image, taken in 2009, illustrates the dimensions, type, style, and material of the guardrails that were present at the time of designation and removed without HDC approval. Note that the metal handrails which appear in the designation photo appear to have been replaced without HDC approval with wood handrails by 2009. The wood guardrails were replaced in 2016 without HDC approval.



14528 Ashton porch, 2008 designation slide. Source, HDAB. Note the wood guardrails, steps, and flooring. The handrails (outlined in green) are metal while the guardrails (outlined in purple) are wood.



14528 Ashton porch, 2009 appearance. Source, Google Streetview. Note the wood guardrails, steps, and flooring. Also, wood lattice skirting is also visible. However, the metal handrails have been replaced with wood handrails by this point.

- Note that the current application proposes to install aluminum guardrails and handrails at the porch. Although wood would be the most appropriate material for the new handrails (along the steps) in staff's opinion, aluminum handrailing as proposed would be a compatible/appropriate

treatment for this location as non-historic metal railing was present at the time of the district's designation. However, it is staff's opinion that the installation of metal guardrails (along the side and front at the perimeter of the porch deck) does not meet the Standards as the original elements/wood guardrails were significant character defining elements of the house and were removed in 2016 without HDC approval. Therefore, new wood guardrails that match the style of the historic railing that was present at the time of the district's designation is the appropriate treatment for this scope item.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

Recommendation 1 of 1, Certificate of Appropriateness: Rehabilitate front porch, replace walkway and driveway, and remove foundation plantings

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Rosedale Park Historic District's Elements of Design, with the condition that:

- The porch's new guardrails (railing which lines the perimeter of the porch deck) shall be wood and match the style of the historic railing that was present at the time of the district's designation. The railing height shall be no higher than the minimum required by building code (36") because the railing height is a historically significant feature of the house. HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the new railing design prior to the permit's issuance.
- ~~New landscaping shall be planted to replace the shrubs at the front of the porch which shall be removed as a result of the proposed porch rehabilitation. HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the new foundation plantings prior to the permit's issuance.~~