

**ADDRESS: 4245 FULLERTON****APPLICATION NO: HDC2025-00109****HISTORIC DISTRICT: RUSSELL WOODS-SULLIVAN****APPLICANT/OWNER: TARSHISH NEWBERRY****DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 04/25/2025****DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 03/10/2025**

**SCOPE: DEMOLISH GARAGE & REMOVE TREES (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL), ERECT GAZEBO**

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The parcel addressed as 4245 Fullerton includes a two-story, single-family dwelling that was erected ca. 1920. The building features a side-gabled roof with wood fascia and soffits, decorative brackets, and Classically-inspired eave returns. Exterior walls are clad with red brick and windows are the original double-hung wood units. Note that several windows on both sides of the house have been covered with plywood. It is therefore unclear if the original sash remains in these openings. Louvered wood shutters flank windows at the building's front façade, second story. A partial-width brick porch with original metal guardrails and handrails remains at the front façade.

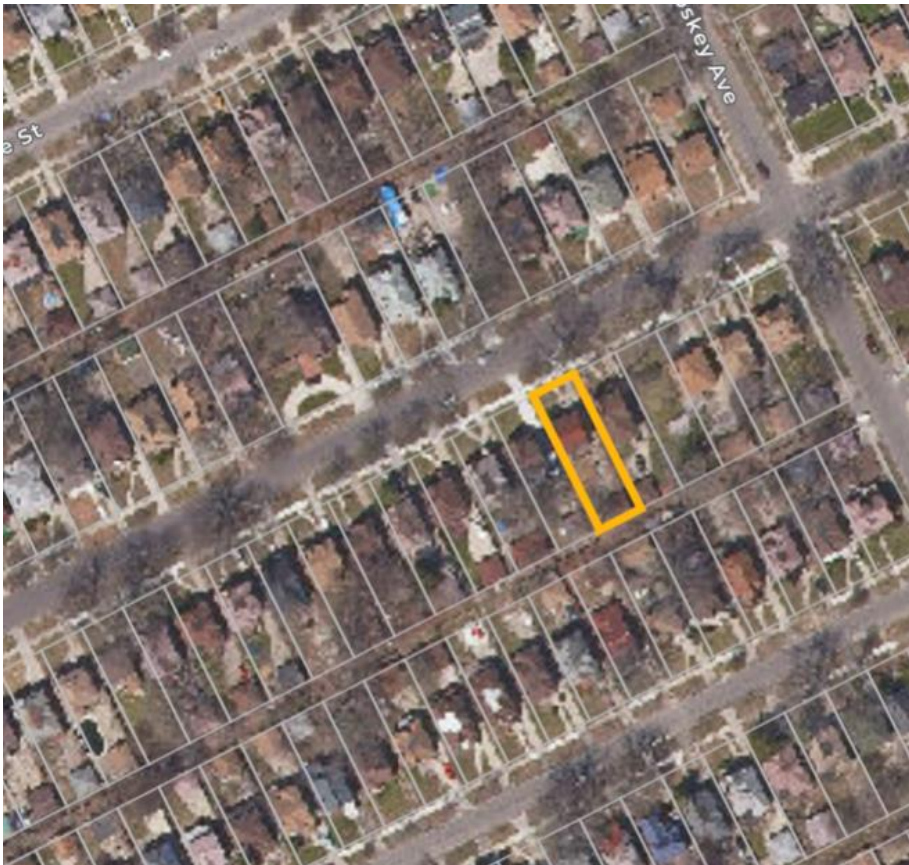


**4245 Fullerton, current appearance. Taken by staff on 4/25/2025**





**4245 Fullerton, current appearance. Taken by staff on 4/25/2025**



**4245 Fullerton, outlined in yellow. Detroit Parcel Viewer**



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1971. 4245 Fullerton outlined in red

## PROPOSAL

The applicant is seeking the Commission's approval for work items which were undertaken without HDC approval in addition to work which she has yet to initiate. Specifically, the proposal includes the following:

- Demolish historic-age garage (work completed)
- Remove trees from rear yard (work completed)
- At rear yard, install new gazebo and fire pit (specifications for fire pit and exact location for both gazebo and fire pit not indicated)
- Install new vinyl fencing (location not indicated)

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District was designated in 1999
- A review of HDC files indicates that the HDC approved the issuance of a COA for the installation of the current "blue" asphalt shingle roof in April 2021.
- In March of 2025, HDC staff was made aware of exterior work being undertaken at the property. Specific work identified included the demolition of the historic garage and the



removal of landscaping. Staff reviewed HDC files and BSEED records and determined that the work had not been approved. The property owner has therefore submitted the current application so that the Commission might consider the appropriateness of the unapproved work/the outstanding violation.

- The property owner has provided the below photo which documents the condition of the garage prior to its demolition. Note that the garage sat in a state of ruin, with the roof having caved in and the walls being partially collapsed. Although the building was of historic age, it HDC staff's opinion that it lacked the integrity necessary to contribute to the site's and/or the district's historic significance due to its poor condition. It is HDC staff's opinion that the remnants of the garage merited removal.



**4245 Fullerton, appearance of garage prior to demolition. Photo provided by applicant**

- With respect to the landscaping which was removed without HDC approval, please note the following:
  - See the below photo of the trees that were removed from the property's backyard without HDC approval. The applicant noted that the tree at the fence line which is labeled as "Tree A" in the below photo was "...dying and hanging over on neighbor's property," while the trees labeled as "Trees B," appear to have been removed when the garage was demolished. Staff reviewed the submitted photo and was unable to confirm that the tree at the fence line (Tree A) was dying. However, staff can discern that it was a large mature tree which was in need of limbing to prevent it from hanging into the neighboring yard and overhead power lines. It is staff's opinion that the removal of Tree A was inappropriate because it is unclear that it was diseased and in need of removal. However, the trees which were to the front of the garage (Trees B) appear to have been junk trees of a relatively recent age. It is staff's opinion that these trees/Trees B merited removal as they did not contribute to the property's historic character.



**Garage and trees (labeled Tree A and Trees B) removed without HDC approval. Photo provided by applicant**

- The property owner also removed foundation plantings/shrubs at the property's front yard. See the following photo to note the appearance of the foundation planting/shrub at the front yard that was removed without HDC approval. Per the district's Element of Design, # (13) *Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments*, "...foundation plantings, often of a deciduous nature and characteristic of the period 1920-1960, are present virtually without exception." Although it is not likely that the shrub itself was historic age, the Elements do note that it is typical to find foundations plantings within the district. Staff therefore recommends that new landscaping/foundation plantings "...of a deciduous nature..." be planted in the same location as the shrubs that were removed without HDC approval. The shrubs should be maintained at a height that is lower than the existing window sill.





**4245 Fullerton, staff photo taken in 2024. Red arrow indicating shrub removed without HDC approval**



**Staff photo showing current conditions/location of shrub removed without approval (indicated by red arrow)**

- The application materials include a screen shot image of vinyl fencing. However, a site plan has not been included to indicate where the applicant wishes to install the fencing. Note that the staff **does not** recommend the installation of vinyl fencing because it does not provide an adequate approximation of natural wood fencing due to its synthetic appearance, high sheen, and poor durability.
- With respect to the application's proposal to install a gazebo and firepit, staff does note that the documents do not provide a dimensioned site plan to indicate the location of the elements. Staff is also not able to discern if the gazebo would be of an appropriate scale when compared to the house. Finally, the application does not include specifications which describe the firepit's appearance or dimensions. Staff does have administrative authority to approve such elements, as long as they meet the Standards/do not detract from the property's historic character. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission approve the installation of a gazebo and firepit within the property's rear yard with the condition that the applicant provide a detailed, dimensioned site plan which indicates the location of the elements as well as final specifications for the elements to staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of the project's permit.

## ISSUES

- Foundation plantings are a distinctive, character-defining feature of the property and district/plantings are particularly important to the character of the district. As the mature shrubs have been removed without HDC approval at the front façade foundation, they should be replaced in kind with shrubs of compatible size and maturity as feasible
- The application does not include documentation which indicates that mature tree that was removed from the property's rear yard, near the fence line was diseased/dying. Therefore, a new shade tree should be planted in the rear yard to replace it.
- Vinyl fencing is not appropriate to the district's historic character due to its synthetic appearance, high sheen, and poor durability. Traditional fencing materials like wood are widely available and compatible.
- The application does not provide a dimensioned site plan to indicate the location of the proposed gazebo and fire pit. Also, specifications which describe the firepit's appearance or dimensions have not been included in the application.

## RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

### **Recommendation 1 of 1, Certificate of Appropriateness: Demolish garage, remove landscaping, erect gazebo**

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

- New landscaping/foundation plantings "...of a deciduous nature" be planted in the same location as the mature shrubs that were removed without HDC approval, ie. at the house's front façade foundation. As feasible, plantings of appropriate size shall be selected
- A new shade tree shall be planted in the property's rear yard to replace the mature tree that was removed without approval. Staff shall have the final authority to review and approve the species and location of the tree prior to the issuance of the project's permit.
- Vinyl fencing shall not be installed at the property because it does not provide an adequate approximation of natural wood fencing due to its synthetic appearance, high sheen, and poor durability. Traditional wood fencing is widely available and would be compatible within the site. Should the applicant desire to install new fencing, they must submit a complete application

to staff for review and approval, which notes the proposed height and style of the new fencing, as well as a site plan/drawing that indicates the proposed location of the new fencing and the footprints of all extant buildings within the parcel. Staff shall approve the work if it conforms to the HDC's Fences and Hedges Guidelines. If the proposed work does not conform to the HDC's Fences and Hedges Guidelines, the application will be forwarded to the Commission for review at a regular meeting.

- Should the applicant wish to install the proposed gazebo and/or firepit, they shall submit a site plan/drawing which indicates the location of the new elements. The applicant shall also provide final specifications which describe appearance, material, and dimensions. Staff shall have the final authority to review and approve the proposed elements prior to their installation.