

STAFF REPORT: 7/09/2025 REGULAR MEETING

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00260

VIOLATION NUMBER: 1021

ADDRESS: 14943 GREENVIEW

HISTORIC DISTRICT: ROSEDALE PARK

APPLICANTS/PROPERTY OWNERS: JOHN LUCY, JOSEPHINE LUCY

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 6/9/2025

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 4/28/25 and 6/23/25

PREPARED BY: E. THACKERY

SCOPE: DEMOLISH GARAGE, ERECT NEW GARAGE (WORK STARTED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1936, the house at 14943 Greenview is a 2-story, Tudor Revival-style residence on the west side of the street between Chalfonte and Eaton Avenues. The house is brownish brick and side-gabled and features a large, front-facing gable with a smaller nested gable that shares the same roof pitch. The smaller gable projects forward and includes the centered, rectangular entry door surrounded by cut stone. Other character-defining features of the house include steel windows with divided lights, a modest dormer that interrupts the eave, and other cut stone accents on the smaller front gable and on the house's projecting wing walls.

A driveway is along the house's north side and at the end of the drive behind the house's northwest corner, a garage has been started. It appears that there is a concrete pad. Framing that will form the north and south sides of the garage, along with the framing for the garage's gable roof, have been erected.



Site Photo 1, by Staff, June 23, 2025: (East) front elevation



Site photo 2 by staff, 6/23/25, beginning of rebuild.



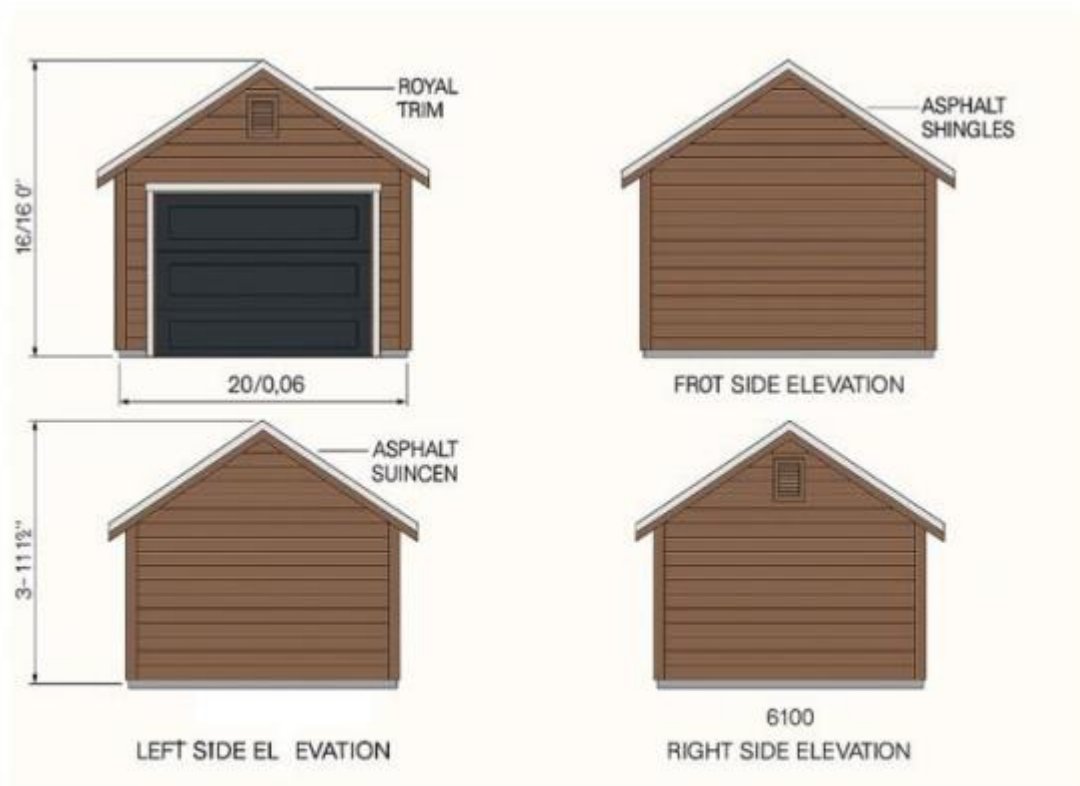
Detroit Parcel Viewer. Aerial view of Parcel 22080384, 14943 Greenview (outlined in yellow), with the old garage visible in the northwest corner of the lot

PROPOSAL

The applicant is seeking the Commission's approval to demolish a fire-damaged historic garage (work completed) and erect a new garage (work initiated) per the submitted documents and the following description from the application:

"reconstruct detached single-car garage at 14943 Greenview. Match existing footprint, height, roof pitch, siding, trim, and window/door placement. Preserve historic character in accordance with local preservation guidelines."

The application does not specify details about the planned foundation. The application describes that the new garage will have an asphalt roof, wood siding, vinyl trim, a steel overhead garage door, and will be 16' wide and 13' tall at the ridge (8' at the top of the wall). There will be no windows or a hinged entry door on the garage. (A window was originally planned but later dropped from the application.) The application describes the garage door as 9' x 7'. The image below is a screenshot from the application:



Side elevation: Height to top of wall 8 feet

Height to roof ridge 13ft

Width 16ft

Elevation drawings, submitted by applicant

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Rosedale Park Historic District was established in 2007.

Demolition of Garage (work completed)

- Along the house's north side is a driveway and slightly behind the house's northwest corner was a garage. That garage may have been built at the same time as the house in 1936 or may have been built shortly after. According to City permit records, in 1949, the garage was enlarged to 14 x 20' and an overhead door was installed. Applicant photos show that the garage had wood lap siding and an asphalt roof. The garage suffered a fire sometime after July 2022. The homeowner demolished the fire-damaged structure without HDC approval and began building a new garage, which was discovered by staff in April 2025, when enforcement actions began.
- See the below undated before- and after- photos which show the condition of the garage before and after the fire. No other documentation or assessment regarding the fire damage has been provided.



Applicant photo from before the fire.



Undated Photo, city files. East elevations, former garage visible. Photo by HDC staff.



Applicant photo from after the fire.

- The garage before the fire was of historic age and would have been considered contributing to the district because it helped tell the story of early garages in suburban developments at this time. The period of significance for Rosedale Park is 1917-about 1955, according to the City's Rosedale Park Historic District Final Report, and that report states that one of the reasons the district is significant is "its association with streetcar and automobile suburban development in relation to early twentieth century transportation corridors..." The district's final report describes how, along with buyers in the district selecting their homes' architectural styles with care, garages "also figured prominently in the building tastes of Rosedale Park homebuilders and homebuyers...[T]he automobile played an increasingly important role in the lives of Rosedale Park residents....The majority of builders and homeowners tended to select modest, utilitarian designs, 'settling for the simple box garage with a gable or hipped roof, double doors, and perhaps a stock window or two.'" (City of Detroit City Council Historic Designation Advisory Board Proposed Rosedale Park Historic District Final Report, page 10, available at <https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2018-08/Rosedale%20Park%20HD%20Final%20Report.pdf>)
- The fact that the garage at 14943 Greenview was of historic age and related to the historic context and period of significance for the district helped make the case for the garage to be considered historic or contributing to the district. However, in order for the garage to be considered historic or contributing to the district, in addition to being significant, the resource also needs to have enough historic integrity to *convey* its significance. In other words, if the building lost its essential character-defining features to rehabilitation or removal, the resource could not be considered historic even if it was of the right age and part of an important context. It is staff's opinion that even though this garage was of historic age and was related to an important historic context, the fire the building experienced caused it to lose its key exterior materials dating from the district's period of significance. The garage would have been considered contributing or historic before the fire because it was built during the period of significance, it was related to a key historic context for the district, and it retained all or most of its historic materials to convey its significance. After the fire, however, much of its historic material was lost and it no longer retained enough material to convey its significance. As a result, post fire, the garage lost its contributing or historic status.
- In the "Building Site" section of the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, "Recommended" is "Removing non-significant buildings, additions, or site features which detract from the historic character of the site." In summary, if a building has lost its historic integrity, a certificate of appropriateness could be issued for its demolition.

New Garage (work initiated)

- While the application is generally complete, staff did note a small number of missing/incorrect details including:
 - Submitted drawings incorrectly depict the non-gabled (north and south) sides
 - The paint color for the walls and the color of the asphalt roofing has not been indicated
 - The soffit and fascia material has not been indicated
 - Complete dimensions of the garage have not been indicated/confirmed. (Applicant describes the "width" as 16'.)
 - The foundation material has not been indicated

Staff therefore reached out to the applicant via email on 6/26/2025 and requested that the above-listed information be submitted. Staff has yet to receive a response to their request as of the date of this report's completion.

- The following is an outline of staff's opinion of the new garage design's conformance to the district's Elements of Design:
 - "*Height.* The height of the single-family residential structures in the Rosedale Park Historic District range from one story to 2½ stories tall, the half-stories contained within the roof...Garages are generally one-story tall."

Staff analysis - The proposed garage reflects this element of design.

- *“Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets.* The spacing of the buildings is generally determined by the lot sizes and the setbacks from side lot lines. There is a general regularity in the widths of subdivision lots from one block to another, and a shared rhythm and cadence along the streetscapes. Generally, all residences or parts thereof, including cornices, balconies, pergolas and porches, are not nearer than three feet to the side lot line, or as defined by specific subdivision or deed restrictions.”
Staff analysis - Staff finds this proposal and garage placement consistent with the existing rhythm of driveways between primary structures with garages at the end of the drives (set back behind the houses).
- *“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...Garages, where they are contemporary with the residential dwelling, often correspond in materials.”
Staff analysis - This garage seeks to be compatible with the house and neighborhood by using the same roof and siding materials as were on the original garage on this lot. The proposed vinyl trim, however, would not be compatible with this element of design.
- *“Relationship of colors.* Colors used on garages should relate to the colors of the main dwelling.” The garage that existed on this site before the fire had wood siding painted brown, which related to the house’s brown trim and brownish bricks.
Staff analysis - The color for the siding on the proposed garage has not been communicated; staff believes that brown on the new structure would relate to the colors of the main dwelling.
- *“Relationship of roof shapes.* A variety of roof shapes exists, relating to the style of the dwellings. Common on English Revival buildings are steeply sloped pitched or hipped roofs with complex arrangements of secondary roof shapes, including steeply sloped gables, clipped gables, and shed roofs. These roofs are commonly interrupted by gabled, shed, and multi-sided dormers, and substantial chimneys which are sometimes clustered...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.”
Staff analysis - The steep, gabled roof proposed on the garage seems to staff to closely resemble the roof that had been on the former garage. That roof appears to closely resemble the pitch of the roof on the small (nested) projecting gable on the front of the house, so, to staff, the proposed garage’s roof pitch and shape seems to be similar to what had been in place and compatible with the historic house.
- *“Relationship of open space to structures.* ... Wider lots in Rosedale Park permitted side drives with garages at the rear of the lots...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...About half of the original garages in the district have been removed and/or replaced.”
Staff analysis - This proposed garage would be simple with a single door, consistent with this element of design.
- *“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 analysis - Staff is not sure of the exact measurements of the proposed garage, so the lot coverage percentage is unknown. The garage, however, at 16’ wide with one overhead door, appears modest from the street.

- It is staff's opinion that the proposed new garage is generally appropriate as its simple, gable-front design, the wood siding and asphalt roof, and modest scale all work together to weight this application toward compatibility with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Standard 9) and adherence to Rosedale Park's Elements of Design, as discussed previously.
- However, as noted above, there are some unanswered questions about the project that need to be answered before staff can say the project definitively meets the Standards and the Elements of Design. The unanswered questions include the following:
 - **How will the non-gabled (north and south) sides look?** If the project proposes a simple and modest building and 13' remains the maximum height at peak, staff would say that the design meets both the Standards for Rehabilitation and the Elements of Design.
 - Staff believes that the use of vinyl trim is not compatible with the Standards or the Elements of Design because it is not compatible with the appearance of the historic materials on this property or in the nearby neighborhood. Wood or a cementitious material (with a smooth finish) would present a more appropriate appearance, in staff's opinion.
 - **What color will the wood siding be painted?** Whatever color the applicant has selected, it must relate to the historic house, as brown did before the fire.
 - **Which color will the asphalt roof be?** Again, it will need to relate to the historic house to adhere to the Elements of Design.
 - **What is the material for the soffits? Fascia boards? Will they be covered with another material?** Painted wood (and/or possibly aluminum) would be the most appropriate material to use for this purpose because wood is a common material in the district and it would be compatible with the historic materials on this house and nearby buildings.
 - **Garage size and scale:** It is understood from the application and materials that the garage will be 16' wide; **the length is needed.** As long as the footprint and height of the proposed new garage are close to those of the old garage (14' x 20'), the Standards for Rehabilitation and the Elements of Design will both be satisfied because a modest scale and size for a garage is compatible with the historic house and the neighborhood.
 - **What is the style of the overhead garage door?:** Staff understands the garage door will be a Clopay Classic Premium Steel overhead door in Long Panel and Almond. Dependent on any windows in the new overhead door, it is possible that the proposed door would be simple and modest and would comply with both the Elements of Design and the Standards.
 - **What is the garage's foundation?** The materials used on the foundation, if they will be visible above ground, need to be compatible with historic materials on the historic house and in the neighborhood in order to comply with both the Standards and the Elements of Design.

ISSUES

- It is staff's opinion that the new garage design generally meets the Standards for Rehabilitation and the Elements of Design for the district. However, staff also finds that the open questions listed above must be answered in order to conclude that all aspects of the proposed work will meet the Standards for Rehabilitation and the district's Elements of Design.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation #1 of 1: Demolish garage and erect new garage

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 conditions that:

- The applicant shall submit final dimensioned drawings of the garage which outline paint color(s) and materials to staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of the permit

- Vinyl shall not be used on the new construction and all trim shall be made of wood or a cementitious material (with a smooth finish)
- The garage's walls, asphalt roofing, soffits, fascia, and exterior doors shall be finished with colors that are compatible with those found at the property's historic house.