

STAFF REPORT: NOVEMBER 12, 2025 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: B. SALIE

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00655

/ G. LANDSBERG

ADDRESS: 1613 LEVERETTE STREET

HISTORIC DISTRICT: CORKTOWN

APPLICANT: BLAKE I. HATTERMANN/B. HATTERMANN ARCHITECTURE

PROPERTY OWNER: BRIAN DUCOFFE & SARAH GREENWOOD

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 10/23/2025

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 09/24/2025

SCOPE: DEMOLISH GARAGE, ERECT CARRIAGE HOUSE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1910, 1613 Leverette sits on a 0.099 acre lot in the Corktown historic district, between 10th Street and Rosa Parks Boulevard. The two-and-a-half story, Victorian style house is characterized by its red brick veneer and steeply pitched roof. The parcel also includes a one-story, hipped roof garage which was erected in 1925. The garage's exterior walls are clad with vinyl siding.



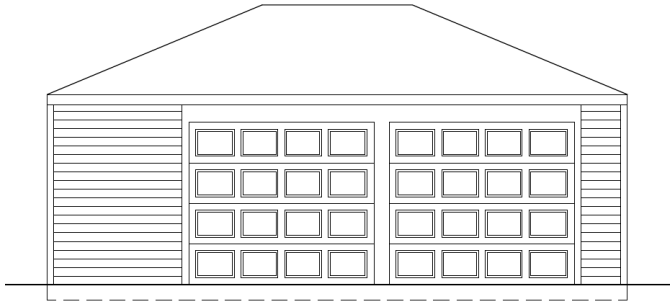
Photo taken by staff on 09/24/2025



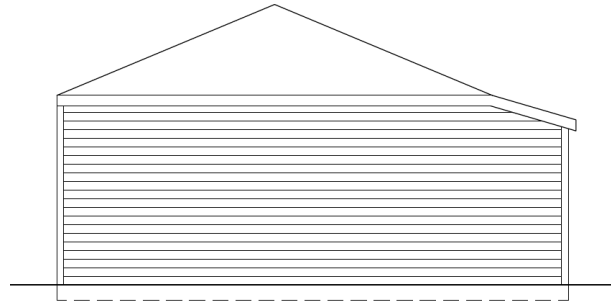
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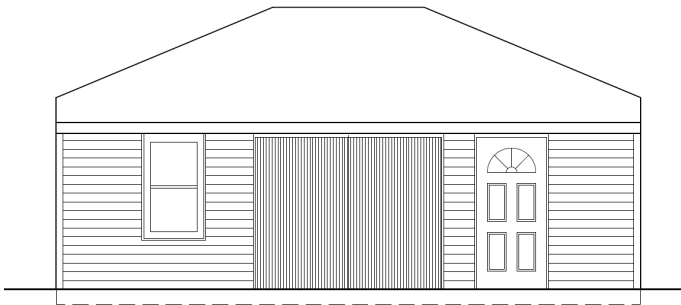
Google Earth Aerial View, 1613 Leverette



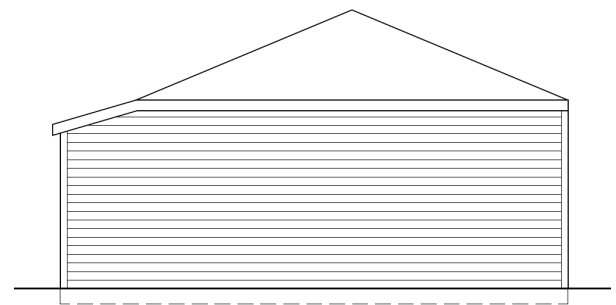
Existing *South* Elevation



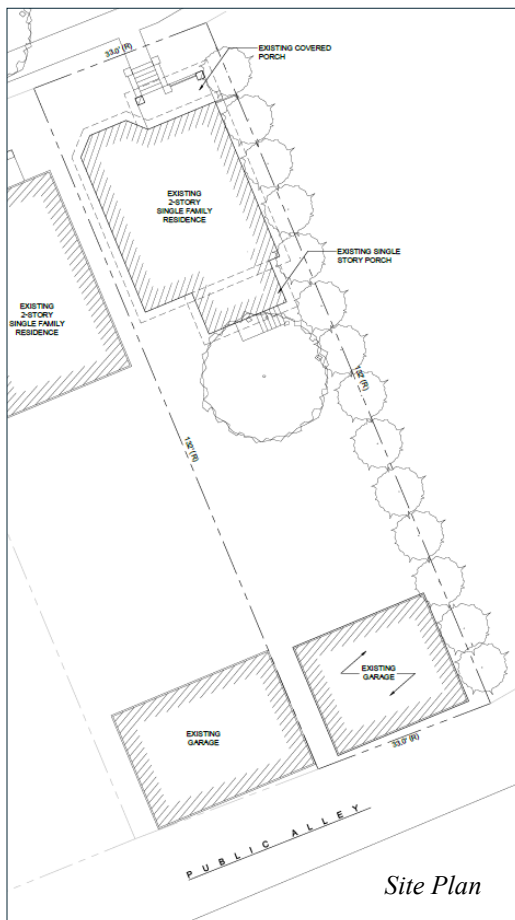
Existing *East* Elevation



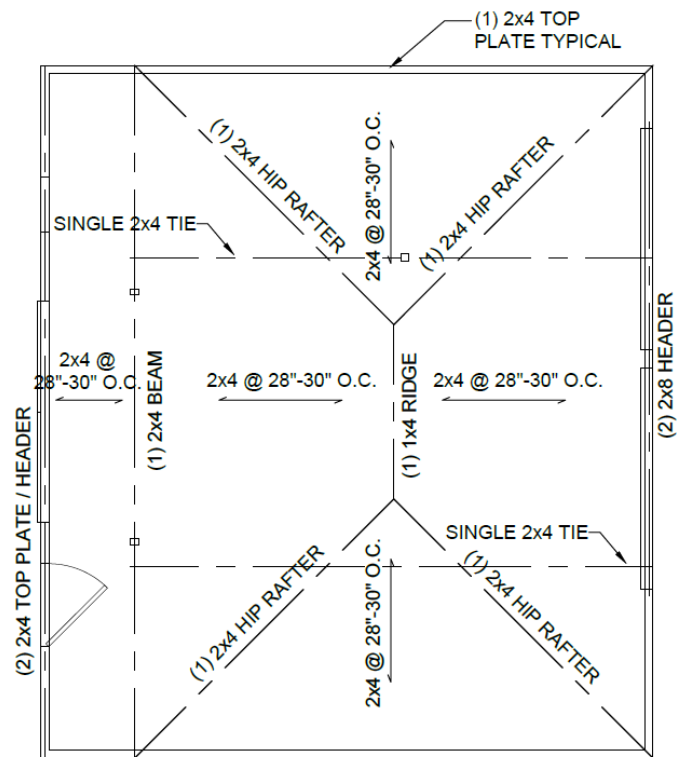
Existing *North* Elevation



Existing *West* Elevation



Site Plan



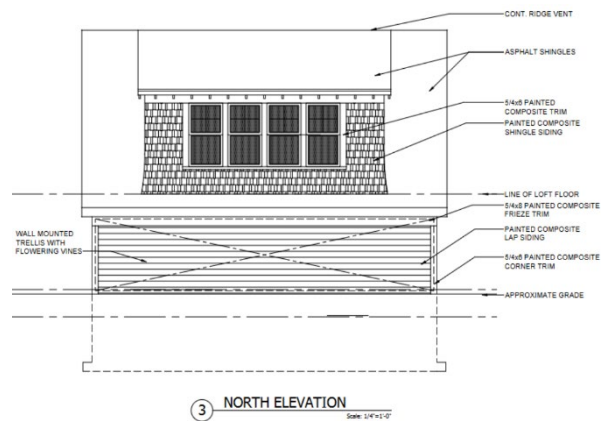
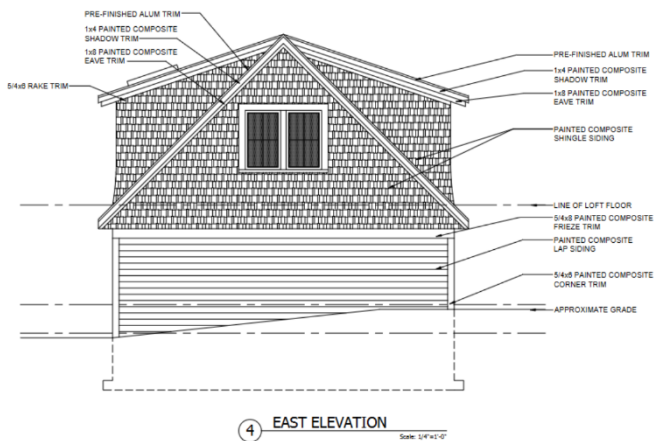
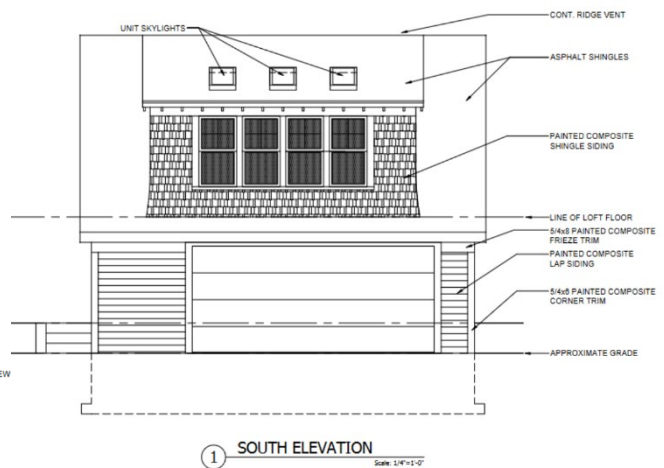
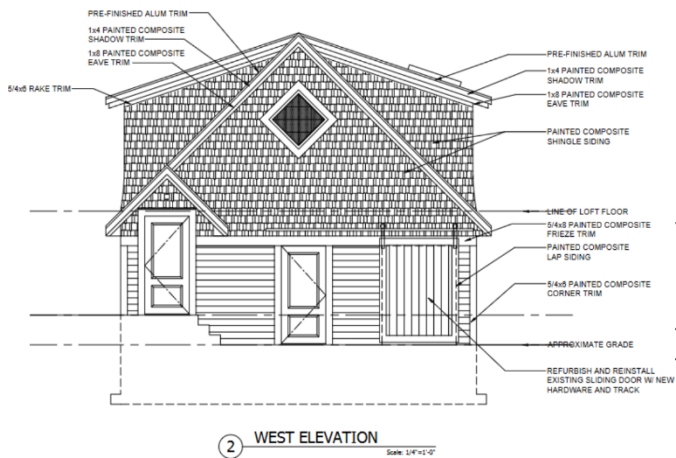
Existing *Framing* Plan

Existing Garage, new drawings provided by applicant

PROPOSAL

The Scope of Work is as follows:

1. Demolish existing historic garage
 - a. Replace concrete alleyway
2. Erect two-story carriage house
 - a. Color scheme to blend with the existing house
 - b. Exterior walls to be clad with composite lapped and shingle siding
 - c. Windows to be double hung, aluminum-clad wood units



Elevation drawings for proposed carriage house, submitted by applicant.



Library of Congress: Sanborn Maps 1921-1950 Volume 1 Page 29
The subject garage, indicated by the red arrow, is part of an apparent paste-up (lighter paper) on top of the original 1921 Sanborn showing that all four frame garages at adjacent lots were constructed simultaneously in the short amount of time between Sanborn updates. Per the building card below, this was exactly 100 years ago.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS & RESEARCH

- Corktown was designated as a historic district in 1984.
- This application came before the Commission last month in the October 2025 Meeting, but was denied due to the fact that there was not sufficient evidence to prove the historic garage was deteriorated beyond repair. Therefore, the Commission could not approve the demolition of the existing garage, and consequently denied the construction of the proposed carriage house. The current application includes a new structural analysis, detailing the condition of the existing garage in order to prove to the Commission that the garage is beyond feasible repair.
- The Sanborn Map and Building cards show that the existing garage is of historic age. The garage was erected in 1925 during the district's period of significance, which is identified as 1830-1940 in the district's National Register of Historic Places nomination.



1613		18	
Leverette			
HOUSE NO.	64561	STREET	5-15-25
PERMIT NO.	Garage	DATE	
USE	Frame		
CONS.			
REMARKS		O. K.	

ABOVE: Building Cards

RIGHT: 1613 Leverette Designation Photo

- The garage has undergone many changes since the time it was erected in 1925. This includes the modification of the overhead garage doors and windows, its exterior walls have been clad with vinyl siding, and a asphalt shingle roof has been added.



1613 Leverette garage, current appearance. Side facing the rear of the house, not visible from the alley. Photo provided by the applicant.

- The building still retains its overall form, including the wood framework and historic sliding doors.

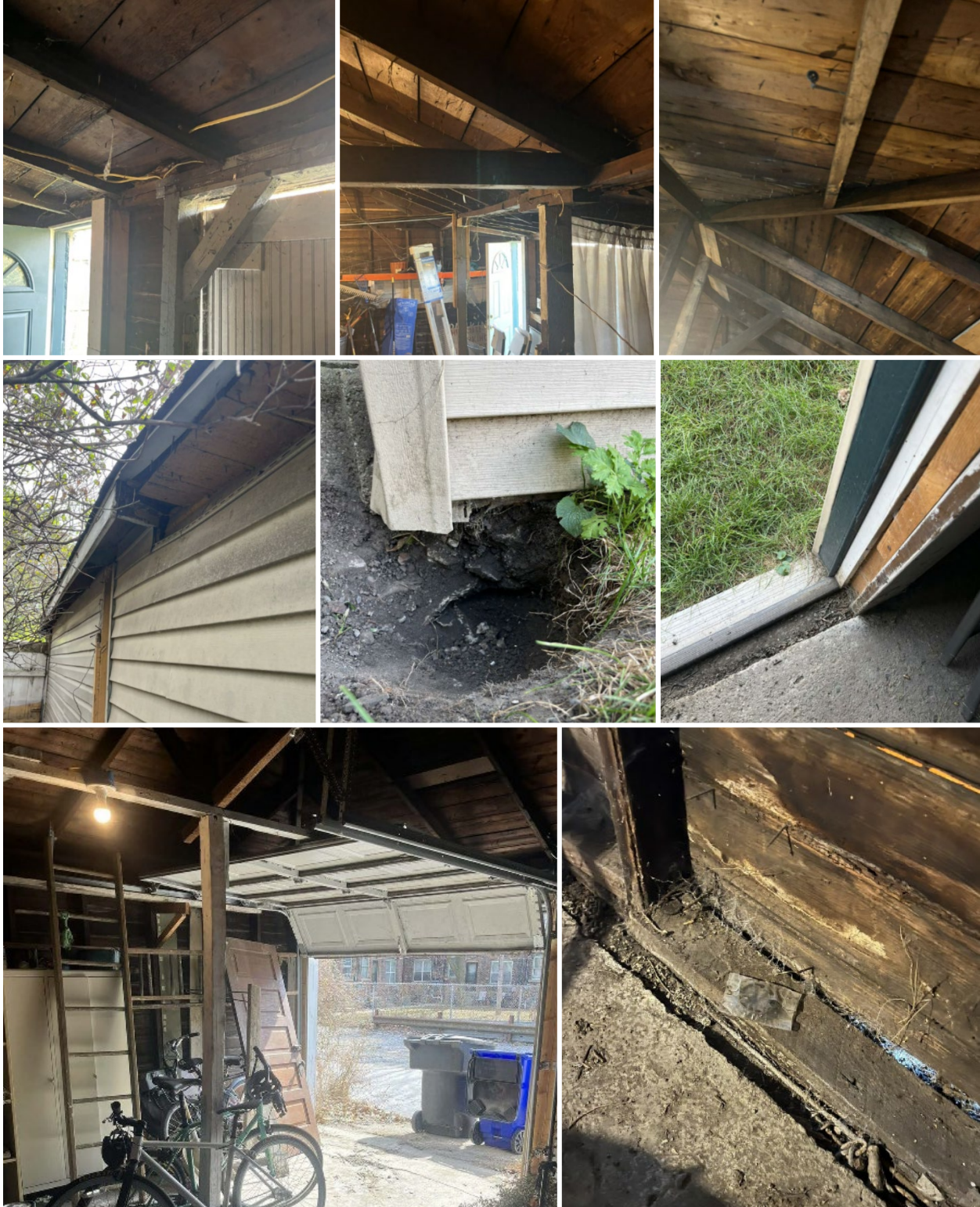


- The existing garage follows the style and aesthetic of other existing garages throughout the neighborhood. It matches the style of historic-age Corktown garages in terms of scale, form, and footprint.
- Images taken from Google Street View show a pattern of typical garages in the Corktown Historic District. The district often follows a style of colorful sheathing materials.



- The neighboring garage, located at 1621 Leverette, is a prime example of a typical Corktown garage style.

- Per the district's *Elements of Design*#: 7, 8, & 9
 - (7) *Relationships of materials. The great majority of buildings in the district are wood frame structures originally clad in clapboard with wooden skirting or brick foundations. Some have more recently been sheathed in aluminum, vinyl or asphalt siding, and original skirting has often been replaced with metal skirting or concrete block foundations. Window sash and functional and decorative trim are in wood. Wood is frequently the only material below the eaves of a building, except for the window glass. There are some brick residential buildings in the district, the majority of these being duplexes and multi-unit dwellings. The small commercial buildings, the industrial buildings, the fire station, and most of the institutional buildings in the district are brick. Roofing material is primarily asphalt shingles, although a few wood shingle roofs and one slate roof exist in the district.*
 - While many of the original sheathing materials have been replaced with newer, non-historic materials (more affordable garage doors, vinyl siding, asphalt shingle roofing, and doors), the original form remains and should be retained where possible.
 - (8) *Relationship of textures. The most common relationship of textures in the district is that of clapboard to the smooth surface of wood trim. Aluminum or vinyl siding of the same width as the original clapboard siding that does not alter the relationship of the siding to the functional trim and architectural detail of the building can sometimes contribute to textural relationships. Porches are usually in wood, although some have brick piers. Steps are either in wood, which was the original material, or concrete. Where wooden shingles, carvings, or other decorative wooden details exist, they add significantly to the textural interest of the building. Asphalt shingles or rolled asphalt roofs generally have little textural interest, while wood shingles have considerable interest. Detailed brickwork on brick buildings contributes to textural interest when it exists.*
 - (9) *Relationships of colors. Paint colors in the district generally relate to style. Earlier buildings usually display muted colors, such as earth tones and shades of yellow, while Italianate and Queen Anne-style buildings sometimes display richer and darker colors, such as browns, golds, grays, and blues. Common trim colors include shades of cream, yellow, gray, brown, green, and white. Window sashes are frequently painted white, deep red, brown, and gray. Asphalt siding is either red or brown brick color. Wood shingle roofs are a weathered cedar tone, while most asphalt shingled roofs are either in light colors, such as sand, light gray, light brown or light green, or darker colors, such as dark gray, black, or dark green.*
 - The district is notable for its color choice of wood or vinyl siding. These are often bold and bright contrasting colors.
- It is therefore Staff's opinion that the garage contributes to the property and historic district.



Photos provided by applicant, shows interior condition of the existing garage

- The applicant has provided an "Existing Analysis Report" in response to the Commission's Denial, issued at the October 2025 meeting, i.e., "The proposed new carriage house will result in the demolition of the existing garage, without demonstrating that the existing structure is beyond repair."

HDC staff architects have reviewed the report and provide the analysis below for the Commission's consideration.

- Staff first notes, per Notice-to-Proceed guidance issued by the State Historic Preservation Office, that local Commissions rely on "a thorough, unbiased structural assessment report prepared by a licensed engineer. Reports should be prepared by engineers experienced in historic preservation as historic building systems are often quite different from their modern counterparts." The author of this report is Blake I. Hattermann (also the applicant), a Michigan licensed architect. Architects are qualified, along with structural engineers, to conduct structural analysis in structures like this one. Mr. Hatterman has not provided his specific credentials in historic preservation, though this area of practice is listed on his website.
- A principal reason to rely on assessments from licensed professionals experienced in historic preservation is recognizing that older buildings are not subject to modern code requirements and can legally remain in service for their current use based on their original structural or architectural systems, absent evidence of decay, deterioration, or catastrophic events (e.g., fire, pest, or water damage) that have compromised the historic systems so as to make the building unsafe. **The focus is on current level of decay, not the design of the original structure.** Historic buildings, in particular, have additional code exemptions and safeguards open to the AHJ (authority having jurisdiction), outlined in Chapter 12 of the Michigan Rehabilitation Code for Existing Buildings, which is the applicable code here.
- The submitted report bases some of its analysis by comparing the as-built, early 20th century garage structure to modern code requirements applicable to new construction or changes of use. These include modern code design values for deflection, rafter span/spacing, rafter depth, roof loading, etc. Staff architects agree that a garage would not and should not be built today with these deficiencies, and that the subject structure does not meet the current Michigan Building (or Residential) Codes, or current best practices in construction. However, the historic structure's adherence to current code requirements and building practices is irrelevant unless (as stated above), a distinct and/or newly evolved dangerous condition exists that puts safe continuation of its current use in question. It is obvious that if all old structures deficient or at variance with construction standards in effect in 2025 were condemned, many thousands of "code-deficient" buildings in the city's historic districts would be wiped out in short order. Almost every historic building fails to meet modern code requirements in one way or another. Importantly, there are also ways to remediate older buildings to make them safer, sometimes even "bringing them up to code" while maintaining their historic integrity. This is a central challenge of historic preservation work, again noting the need for experienced practitioners.
- The submitted report describes the substantial rebuilding that would have to occur to reframe walls for lateral resistance, increased roof strength, and other deficiencies between the original c. 1925 design and the code now in place a century later. Only some of this work is necessary for the structure to continue its current use. As such, while staff architects stipulate that many modern code requirements are not met by the garage structure, we cannot credit such *original design deficiencies* towards meeting the Commission's high standard, per the National Park Service Guidelines, that the structure must be reasonably beyond repair.
- **However, there are other deficiencies described in the report, credited to decay, abuse, or deferred maintenance, rather than the frailty of the original design.** These include the following:
 - **Exterior Walls:** The architect assesses the condition of the exterior walls as poor. Sill plates did not appear to be anchored to the foundation (though this can be remedied), but

approximately half of the sill plates are rotting and deteriorated. Additionally, sill plates were up-heaving in one corner. Most critically, in staff architect's opinion, the west wall is 8" out of plumb and leaning toward the south. The other three walls are between 2-4" out of plumb. At least one wall would need to be completely rebuilt. It is doubtful that the current racked structure could reasonably endure a partial rebuild.

- **Roof:** The architect also assesses the condition of the roof as poor. Creditable deficiencies include the overloading of the roof's lightly built original structure, which has suffered substantial deflection and failure in the roof structure to the point that additional support is clearly necessary and present in the form of a temporary column. Though this could have been caught earlier and reinforced, the opportunity for such a remedy has clearly passed and the roof needs to be rebuilt.
- **Foundation:** Differential settlement of original slab, no evidence of footings. Deficiencies observed include cracking, separation, and spalling.
- The architect additionally notes the interdependency of the roof, wall, and foundation systems, which complicates any good faith repair effort.
- Based on the above observed deficiencies, and without accepting arguments that historic structures must be held to modern code standards, staff architects assess that the garage is beyond reasonable repair, as repair would in effect require a complete rebuild, eliminating most of the building's historic integrity, or else require an unreasonably complex and surgical historic preservation treatment exceeding the structure's apparent economic, architectural, and historic value.
- It is staff's opinion that **the proposed garage design generally appears to be compatible within the existing context**. Its use of the horizontal lapped composite siding on the first level blends well with the neighboring alleyway garages. The added height matches reasonably with the context of the historic house and the property's nearby historic surrounds.

ISSUES

- None

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Recommendation 1 of 1 - Section 21-2-78. Determination of the Historic District Commission – COA - Demolish garage, erect carriage house

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Cortktown Historic District's Elements of Design.