

Historic District Commission actions and staff recommendations concerning parking lots 2019 to present, including commercial* projects only, and excluding revisions to previously approved designs prior to 2019. *Commercial, per IBC, includes 3 or more residential units.

Per the request of several individual Commissioners, staff has researched the recent history of Commission decisions concerning surface parking lots, and provides the following for information only.

**269 Winder (March 2020) – COA
Brush Park HD**

New construction multi-story apartment building with accompanying surface parking lot.

**441 West Willis (March 2020) – COA
Willis-Selden Local HD**

New construction 3-story multi-family building with accompanying surface parking (9 spaces), built on site of existing pre-designation surface parking lot.

**1401 Michigan (May 2020) – Notice to Proceed (Godfrey Hotel Project)
Corktown HD**

Included a block-size surface parking lot at the location of a pre-designation lot, separate from the building site.

From staff report:

*Though most if not all of the proposed surface parking was established and operating when the district was designated, staff finds that such use is not *historically* appropriate for a historic district established upon the basis of a dense nineteenth and early twentieth century residential district, and questions the appropriateness of official sanction by HDC to perpetuate such use under a COA. The designation report, and many other sources, specifically notes the “toll” that urban renewal clearance has taken on Corktown, and Element #5, Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets, notes that the district’s rhythm has been “interrupted by vacant lots due to demolition of buildings.” It is staff’s position that the validation of large open parking lots in a historic district such as Corktown should not be approved via COA.*

**2915 John R, 69 & 95 Edmund Place (The Carlton) – COA
Brush Park HD**

Included repair/resurfacing of existing parking lots at 69 & 95 Edmund Place. Did not include 115 Edmund Place, the corner lot for which a lot was proposed later.

**290 Edmund Place (December 2020) – COA
Brush Park HD**

Large multi-family building with 17 surface parking spaces adjacent to alley.

**Cass Henry Apartment Buildings, Site improvements (December 2020) – COA
Cass-Henry HD**

As part of the review and approval of the rehabilitation of every historic multi-family apartment building in the historic district (encompassing all of a city block), the Commission approved the resurfacing/landscaping of an existing pre-designation lot between two large multi-family apartment buildings, as well as the creation of a new surface parking lot. The existing lot between the residential buildings was approved with “a wide landscape buffer to shield the occupants of 489 Henry (Berwin) and 459 Henry (Claridge) from noise and headlight glare,” as proposed by the applicant. Additionally, the

applicant proposed, and the Commission approved, the removal of the existing (streetside) curb cut entrance to limit access from the alley side only.

Lincoln & Trumbull Redevelopment (February 2021) – COA

Woodbridge Farm HD

As part of a large redevelopment of the former Scripps mansion site, the Commission approved an interior surface parking mostly surrounded by new townhomes and landscaping.

4133 Woodward/67 W. Willis (February 2021) – COA

Willis-Selden Local HD

Included a new paved lot replacing vacant lot at 67 West Willis as part of rehabilitation of historic buildings along Woodward.

From staff report:

The building at 49 W. Willis is now used for commercial purposes and the nearby adjacent surrounds are commercial in nature. It is staff's opinion that the addition of new asphalt at 67 W. Willis is generally not incompatible with the area's historic character.

1444-48 Brooklyn, 1259 Labrosse, 1309 Labrosse (March 2021) – COA

Corktown HD

This application originally included establishment of new pavement and parking at 1309 Labrosse, a vacant residential parcel tightly positioned between historic buildings, and new curb cuts for parking at 1259 and 1309 Labrosse. Before the meeting, the applicant withdrew from Commission consideration the scope of work for the surface parking lot at 1309 Labrosse, and the curb cuts, after receiving the staff recommendation for denial. From the staff report:

It is staff's opinion that the proposed curb cuts to Labrosse, at both west and east sites, are inconsistent with the historic use and character of the property and its environment. Similarly, the paving of a historically residential lot for parking/alley use is inconsistent with the historic use and character of the property at 1309 Labrosse.

1039 Marlborough and 1040 Chalmers (March 2021) – COA/Advisory

Jefferson-Chalmers Historic Business District

This application included an advisory opinion (beneficial) concerning the construction of a 17-space surface parking lot immediately adjacent to (but outside of) the historic district, to serve 1031 Marlborough inside the HD, a contributing historic building rehabilitated to serve as affordable housing.

1628-1650 Bagley (June 2021) - COA

Corktown HD

This application for new construction multi-family apartment buildings and townhomes included an interior surface parking lot.

8029 Coe, 1500-1532 Van Dyke (October 2021) – NTP

West Village HD

This application for a large multi-family apartment building and townhouse complex (AKA "Coe II") included a surface parking lot interior to the development, shielded from view by the streetwall buildings and accessible via the alley. Issued a conditional Notice to Proceed (NTP) for substantial community benefit, as two historic houses were proposed for demolition. Conditions were found to be satisfied by the Commission at the March 2022 meeting.

86-92 East Forest (March 2022) - COA**Sugar Hill/John R Music and Arts HD**

This application included the establishment of a parking lot at 86 East Forest, adjacent to and coincident with the proposed rehabilitation of the contributing historic church building at 92 East Forest. Staff research revealed that the adjacent parcel had a legal pre-designation use for parking, including a curb cut.

115 Edmund Place (June 2022) – DENIAL**Brush Park HD**

This application was to pave and make permanent an illegal parking use at a vacant corner lot. The Commission denied the application. On appeal, the SHPRB directed that a temporary parking lot be allowed, though it is not clear that the Board understood that the previous use was illegal. From the staff report:

A surface parking lot is a historically inappropriate use for this location and district, independent of the skillfulness of its landscaping or design. The curb cuts required for access to the lot will further degrade the historic context and character of the vicinity. As such staff does not recommend approval for a Certificate of Appropriateness per Section 21-2-73.

Staff also does not recommend a Notice-to-Proceed (Section 21-2-75) for inappropriate work, given the lack of evidence that adding nine parking spaces in this prominent location will provide the “substantial community benefit” or any other public purpose required under that section’s requirements.

3606-3618 Lincoln, 1352 Brainard (May 2023) - COA**Woodbridge Farm HD**

This application for four (4) two-story duplex buildings included 8 surface parking spots adjacent to the alley.

1524-1550 Bagley (AKA 1530 Bagley) (June 2023) – COA**Corktown HD**

This application for a three-story, 11-unit multi-family building included an 11-space surface parking lot at the rear, accessible via the alley and obscured by the streetwall building.

477 West Alexandrine (July 2023) – DENIAL**Willis-Selden Local HD**

This application for a surface parking lot and curb cut was denied by the Commission. This applicant is currently in front of the Commission at the April 2024 Meeting with a revised design now including a small streetwall building. From the July 2023 staff report:

A surface parking lot is a historically inappropriate development for this location, independent of the skillfulness of its landscaping or other design elements. The curb cuts required for access to the lot will further degrade the historic context and character of the vicinity. As such staff does not recommend approval for a Certificate of Appropriateness, signaling appropriate work, per Section 21-2-73.

Staff also does not recommend a Notice-to-Proceed (Section 21-2-75) as an approval for inappropriate work, given the lack of evidence that adding parking spaces in this prominent location will provide the “substantial community benefit” or any other public purpose required under that section’s requirements.

20119 Wisconsin/8730 Chippewa (October 2023) – COA**William E. Higginbotham School HD**

This application included full rehabilitation of the historic Higginbotham School building, a priority aligned with the administration’s adaptive reuse efforts, as well as the construction of new three-story buildings on the same parcel, for a large multi-family and community complex. A seven (7) spot parking lot was proposed at a primary elevation, adjacent to the school’s historic auditorium, and included accessible parking. From the staff report:

Staff notes also the addition of a small parking lot at the Chippewa side, nominally a “front” elevation as discussed above, to accommodate community and public use of the auditorium block, and to provide accessible parking. The lot is woven into a landscape which commendably resists the incompatible use of a perimeter fence while accommodating a beneficial adaptive reuse. Staff assesses that this parking lot, directly supporting and integral with the historic rehabilitation of a building with multiple “fronts”, should be found appropriate under the NPS standard of cumulative effect, which states: Each property exhibits a unique set of conditions; thus, the evaluation of any single aspect of the proposed work can only be made in the context of those conditions and all the other work that constitutes the project. In some cases, a single aspect of a project may not be consistent with recommendations found in the Guidelines, yet its impact on the character of the property as a whole is small enough that the overall project meets the Standards.

**14901, 14917, and 14927 East Jefferson (AKA The Schaap Center) (November 2023) – NTP
Jefferson-Chalmers Historic Business District**

This complex and high profile project, bridging the Detroit/Grosse Pointe Park boundary at the far eastern end of the historic district, included a proposal for surface parking lots at a prominent corner location at one of Detroit’s gateways. The project was agreed to (via an MOA) by the Mayor and City Council without prior review or approval from the Historic District Commission. After several years of discussions, including a lawsuit, the city recommended, and the Commission approved, a NTP for the surface parking lots which had been revised to include a small public seating area (“plaza”) at the intersection of Alter and East Jefferson, subject to the following condition:

The plaza be enlarged to add amenities to support the plaza as a gathering place, be designed to connect the plaza and the Schaap Center, and include a memorial marker to the cultural significance of the lost building...

In the staff report prior to the Commission review, we summarized for the first time our consistent staff guidance around surface parking lots in historic districts, as reflected in the Commission’s decisions over the last five years, as such:

In the recent past, the Commission has approved surface parking lots in the city’s historic districts only under the following conditions:

- 1. The lot is located adjacent to, and directly supports, the proposed adaptive reuse or rehabilitation of a contributing historic building, and thus qualifies for a COA under the National Park Service guidelines concerning cumulative effect (noting that smaller portions of projects may be inappropriate, if the overall effect of the larger project is appropriate in the context of the specific conditions of the property)*
- 2. The lot is part of a new development project, providing required parking per City code, located in the historic district and approved for a NTP.*
- 3. The lot is a pre-existing, legally established (permitted) use that predates the historic district, or was approved by the Commission at an earlier date.*
- 4. The lot is a temporary condition.*

**1364-1368 Labrosse (December 2023) – COA
Corktown HD**

This application for a five-unit townhome style multi-family development included five surface parking lots at the alley.

477 West Alexandrine (March 2024)

Willis-Selden Local HD

Currently under review by the Commission.