

OOMBRA ARCHITECTS

HDC : BRUSH PARK ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

Reference: 2827 John R Street

Date: September 14, 2022

(1) Height. *Height varies in the district from one (1) to eleven (11) stories. In the area between Woodward and Brush, the original development was almost exclusively two and one-half (2 1/2) story houses. Later changes included the construction of apartment buildings among the houses, the majority of which are three (3) stories in height. The tallest building, the former Detroit Hotel, is located on Woodward Avenue in the commercial strip. All other buildings more than four (4) stories in height are located between Woodward and John R., and generally on or immediately adjacent to buildings on those streets. East of Brush, the original development ranged from one (1) to two and one-half (2 1/2) stories. Later redevelopment includes apartment buildings not more than four (4) stories tall, most often located on Brush. In the case of the nineteenth century houses located between Woodward and Brush, the two and one-half (2 1/2) story height implies more height in feet than usual, since ceiling heights in these houses are unusually high.*

RESPONSE

- On John R, an existing one-story building and carriage house sets the street edge. The compromised footprints will be built new in similar size, scale and footprint as the original. A new portion is setback from it and rises to sixty-two feet to the parapet.
- On Alfred Street, the stair turret steps down an additional fourteen feet towards the historic JL Hudson Home. The townhouse mixed-use building steps down an additional nine feet towards the JL Hudson Home. Townhouse building is thirty-eight feet tall to roof high point.
- On Alley, the rebuilt Carriage House coincides with the property line and is the furthest projection. The new portion rises out of the Carriage House's long-ago demolished roof and is sixty-two feet tall. The mixed-use building's circulation core rises to seventy-feet and is set two feet six inches back from the property line. The parking structure portion steps down towards the JL Hudson Home for a parapet height of forty-four feet and six inches.
- Along the historic JL Hudson Home, the leading edge of the townhouses building roof mass is thirty-eight feet and is lower than aforementioned JL House. At thirty-eight feet from Alfred, the building steps up ten feet in height. That portion steps down three feet about sixty-feet from the Alley.

(2) Proportion of building's front facade. *Buildings in the district are usually taller than wide; horizontal proportions exist only in incompatible later buildings, except for row house buildings.*

RESPONSE

- On John R, 2827's front façade is longer than it is wide. However, this horizontal read is softened

by vertical exposed columns at twenty-eight feet on center. Creating further 'depth' is a secondary reading of tall windows and window mullions.

- On Alfred Street, 2827 Headhouse complies at fifty-four feet wide and sixty-two feet tall. Like the elevation on John R, tall windows and exposed columns convey verticality. The expressed stair turret and elevator core are vertical elements. Floor to ceiling windows on the townhouse building help express verticality, as well.
- On Alley, similar to the Lucien Moore Estate elevation, building elements are broken down into function. However, the reading is horizontal with a secondary reading of vertical through the expression of the circulation elements and tall window proportions.
- Along the historic JL Hudson Home, the townhouses have a vertical proportion with an additional masonry vertically proportioned mass next to it that is twenty-six feet four inches wide and thirty-seven feet tall. The remainder of the building mass consists of a vertical blackened wood screen.

(3) Proportion of openings within the facade. *Areas of void generally constitute between fifteen (15) percent and thirty-five (35) percent of the total facade area, excluding roof. Proportions of the openings themselves are generally taller than wide; in some cases, vertically proportioned units are combined to fill an opening wider than tall.*

RESPONSE

- On John R, the Carriage House masonry openings generally match the existing in scale and proportion and remain unchanged to within brick coursing dimensions. The rebuilt one-story structure will feel similar to the masonry openings in the removed 1920-40s low building. The new portion of the building above the ground floor will be generally open and transparent.
- On Alfred Street, the new portion of the building above the existing will be generally open and transparent. The windows on the townhouse building are vertically orientated.
- On Alley, the Carriage House masonry openings are referenced with detailing in the brick screen wall where existing openings are located. The parking structure exterior envelope is a vertically oriented blackened wood plank.
- Along Historic Home, the parking structure exterior envelope is a vertically oriented blackened wood plank. The windows closest to Alfred Street are of a taller proportion.

(4) Rhythm of solids to voids in front facade. *Victorian structures in the district often display great freedom in the placement of openings in the facades, although older examples are generally more regular in such placement than later examples. In later apartments, openings tend to be very regular.*

RESPONSE

- On John R, the rebuilt Carriage House masonry openings are located in the spirit of the existing and are inherently placed to respond to original program elements. The openings in the new one-story structure will be wider than tall, but divisions in the mullion pattern will enforce a vertical reading. The new portion of the building above the existing will be curtainwall with tall vertical glass panels as divided in taller than wide units.
- On Alfred Street, the masonry openings in the new one-story structure will remain regularly spaced. The new portion of the building above the existing will be generally open and transparent. The windows on the townhouse building are again composed for asymmetric reading in a vertical scaled window. The new portion of the building above the existing will be curtainwall in vertically scaled units.
- On Alley, the parking structure exterior envelope is regularly spaced vertically oriented wood plank screening.

- Along Historic Home, the parking structure exterior envelope is a vertically oriented blackened wood plank.

(5) Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets. *The area between Woodward and Brush appears to have been developed in a very regular spacing, with fifty (50) foot lots. This regularity has been disrupted by the demolition of many of the houses, and the vacant land resulting, as well as the occasional combination of lots for larger structures, particularly close to Woodward. East of Brush, smaller lots were used in subdividing, but many buildings stand on more land than one lot, and the parcel sizes are now quite irregular, as is the placement of buildings.*

RESPONSE

- On John R, existing street rhythm is maintained as a new portion of the building is a vertical expansion.
- On Alfred Street, the existing rhythm is maintained as noted above. The mixed-use townhouses parking structure maintains approximately forty-five foot space to the JL Hudson Estate similar to previous buildings onsite.
- On Alley, the rebuilt carriage house has a vertical new portion above (like John R) and mixed-use with same setback as Alfred Street.

(6) Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections. *Most buildings have or had a porch or entrance projection. The variety inherent in Victorian design precludes the establishment of any absolute rhythm, but such projections were often centered. On Woodward, the commercial nature of most buildings and the widening of Woodward has effectively eliminated such projections.*

RESPONSE

- On John R, entries occur only in the rebuilt Carriage House and remain in the original context of the building.
- On Alfred Street, where adjacent to the existing, historical JL Hudson home, the townhouse entries are set back from the street with porches set into the building above, creating depth and cover.
- On Alley, entry to the residential program is set back from the street edge.

(7) Relationship of materials. *By far the most prevalent material in the district is common brick; other forms of brick, stone and wood trim are common; wood is used as a structural material only east of Brush. Some later buildings have stucco wall surfaces. Originally, roofs were wood or slate with an occasional example of tile; asphalt replacement roofs are common.*

RESPONSE

- On John R, the rebuilt Carriage House will be red masonry in the spirit of the original building. The new one-story structure will be clad in vertically oriented blackened wood board and batten, completing the material wrap of three other elevations around to the John R side and allowing the historic red brick carriage house form to pop and be framed against the darker wood material.
- On Alfred Street, the new townhouses facade will be of masonry.
- On Alley, the rebuilt Carriage House brick will be in the spirit of the original.
- Along Historic Home, the townhouses will have a composed brick facade and zinc trim.

(8) Relationship of textures. *The most common relationship of textures in the district is the low-relief pattern of mortar joints in brick contrasted to the smoother or rougher surfaces of stone or wood trim. Slate, wood, or tile roofs contribute particular textural values where they exist, especially in the case of*

slates or shingles of other than rectangular shape.

RESPONSE

- On John R, Alfred Place and Alley the Carriage House brick with high relief and texture in the spirit of the original. This brick will contrast with the new glass, metal and wood adjacent and above.
- On Alfred Street, the buildings mix brick, metal, glass and wood for contrast.
- Along Historic Home, brick is mixed with a wood scrim and zinc metal.

(9) Relationship of colors. *Brick red predominates, both in the form of natural color brick and in the form of painted brick. Other natural brick and stone colors are also present. These relate to painted woodwork in various colors, and there is an occasional example of stained woodwork. Roofs of other than asphalt are in natural colors; older slate roofs are often laid in patterns with various colors of slate. Original color schemes for any given building may be determined by professional analysis of the paint layers on the building, and when so determined are always appropriate for that building.*

RESPONSE

- The new vertical building portion rises out of the rebuilt Carriage House with wood, zinc and glass, while the new one-story piece is a blackened wood to highlight and frame the red brick on the rebuilt carriage house.

(10) Relationship of architectural detail. *On the buildings of the Victorian period, elaborate detail in wood, stone, or sheet metal was common; areas treated include porches, window and door surrounds, cornices, dormers, and other areas. Later buildings are generally simpler, but include less elaborate detail in similar areas.*

RESPONSE

- The rebuilt Carriage House brick will be in the same color tone as the original. A special open screen detail will reference the old building but in a contemporary and new way that continues the story of the beautiful carriage house structure. The new portions of the building will be built to stand in a contemporary style, but with deep recess to exaggerate depth, light and shadows and a complimentary material palette.

(11) Relationship of roof shapes. *Examples of many roof shapes, including pitched gable roofs, hip roofs, mansard roofs, and gambrel roofs are present. Different types are sometimes combined in a single structure, and tower roofs, cupolas, lanterns, belvederes, monitors, conical roofs are used on various Victorian houses. Flat roof areas in the center of hip or mansard roofs are frequent. Later apartment and commercial buildings generally have flat roofs not visible from the ground. The generally tall roofs add height to the houses of the Victorian period.*

RESPONSE

- The existing gables on the carriage house will be rebuilt in a complimentary brick color to generally match the historic forms. The new buildings' flat roof will stand in contrast to the pitched gables.
- On Alfred, the curved stair tower references the turret on the historic home across the street and balconies break up the facade to reference the scale and depth of historic mansards in the neighborhood.

(12) Walls of continuity. *Between Woodward and Brush, the houses originally honored common setbacks which provided for front lawns. Some of the later apartments have not been set back to the same line as*

the houses amongst which they were built, thus disturbing the original line of continuity. On Woodward, the commercial development is typically at the sidewalk, creating a wall of continuity; this is not entirely continuous due to parking lots and some buildings set well back. On John R. and Brush, and east of Brush, buildings are typically placed at or near the sidewalk with little or no front yard. Where buildings are continuous, a wall of continuity is created.

RESPONSE

- On John R, entries occur in the rebuilt Carriage House in the original context of the existing building.
- On Alfred Street, where adjacent to the existing, historical JL Hudson home, the townhouse entries are set back from the street.
- On Alley, entry to the residential program is set back from the street edge.

(13) Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments. *The major landscape feature of the district is the vacant land, which creates a feeling that buildings are missing in the district. Some houses have more than the standard fifty (50) foot lot, and have wide side yards. Individual houses have front lawns often subdivided by walks leading to the entrance; lawns are exceedingly shallow or non-existent in the area between Beaubien Street and Brush Street. Side drives are rare, access to garages or coach houses being from the alleys. The closing of Watson and Edmund Place between John R. and Brush has created landscaped malls uncharacteristic to the district. Some walks of stone slabs have survived; others have been replaced in concrete. Sidewalks are characteristically close to the curb.*

RESPONSE

- The Carriage House footprint is maintained and the new one-story structure will sit on the old footprint, although extended 11 feet to the south with a new framework structure creating an urban corner for outdoor dining with a backdrop to the Historic Ransom Gillis House. The mixed-use building is set forty-five feet from the JL Hudson House.

(14) Relationship of open space to structures. *There is a large quantity of open space in the area, due to demolition of buildings. The character of this open space is haphazard as it relates to buildings, and indicates the unplanned nature of demolitions due to decline. The feeling created is that buildings are missing and should be present. On Watson and Edmund between John R. and Brush, the streets have been removed and replaced with landscaped malls. The traditional relationship of houses to street has thus become a relationship between houses and landscaped strip open space.*

RESPONSE

- On John R Street, our new building is above an existing footprint, so the open space is maintained. We extend the one-story 11 feet to the south with an open framework structure to frame the urban edge, while maintaining an open area for outdoor dining. The open framework allows the Ransom Gillis house to maintain its prominent visibility at the intersection of Alfred and John R. This open space maintains the quality of the neighborhood where historic homes can be seen from afar, while giving an active program to the open space so that it does not feel as though a building is missing.
- On Alfred Street, a larger setback is necessary as the townhomes extend down a residential street and relate to the existing historic homes on the block. This setback allows the feeling of open space between the street and the homes to be cohesive with the neighborhood. The 45 feet between the townhomes and the existing JL Hudson House is also of the magnitude of dimension found in the neighborhood with regard to spacing between homes.

(15) Scale of facades and facade elements. *In the large houses between John R. and Brush, the scale tends to be large, and the facade elements scaled and disposed to emphasize the large size of the houses. Towers, setbacks, porches and the like divide facades into large elements. On Woodward, the scale ranges from very large, and emphasized by many small window openings, as in the former Detroit Hotel, and very large, made up of large architectural elements, such as the churches, down to quite small, with large windows emphasizing the small size, as in some commercial fronts. East of Brush, the scale is smaller and the detail less elaborate, creating a more intimate setting with the buildings closer to the street. Later apartments are large in scale with simple but large elements near the ground and repetitive window openings above, frequently capped by a substantial cornice.*

RESPONSE

- On John R, the residential facade is divided into large elements expressive of the bounds of each unit within the building. The facade is divided and ordered by the exposed mass timber wood columns which come to the ground within the restaurant. Upward acting glass doors replace glass block in the existing facade. The new one story structure will maintain the scale of the existing along the street edge.
- On Alfred Street, the scale of the facade is smaller than the other homes on the street. Large vertical subtractions in its mass give it a rhythm that relates to the vertical elements of the facades of the existing homes. The height of the facade of the townhomes is also below the height of other buildings on the street, but of a similar height to allow for continuity on the street. The stair at the Eastern edge of the elevation provides a vertical element that is a modern interpretation on the turret.
- On Alley, the natural wood and green screen materials turn the corner from the JL Hudson home onto the alley to bring a more pleasant materiality to one of the oldest brick alleys of Brush Park.
- Along Historic Home (79 Alfred Street), the facade is faced with brick, wood and zinc. The zinc captures the side of the Western townhome in a material consistent with the adjacent JL Hudson home. The natural materials that make up this facade allow the building to blend in with the lush, heavily planted side yard of the existing JL Hudson home. The browns, reds and greens maintain the natural feel that is already present on the JL Hudson property.

(16) Directional expression of front facades. *A substantial majority of the buildings in the district have front facades vertically expressed. Exceptions are some commercial buildings on Woodward, row houses on John R. or Brush, and some duplexes or row houses east of Brush.*

RESPONSE

- On John R the building has an overall horizontal orientation that is balanced by vertical elements such as expressed columns and curtain wall mullions.
- On Alfred Street, the homes, although a continuous structure, are divided into vertically oriented forms by large vertical voids in the elevation which allow for occupiable roof terraces. The voided terraces provide a familiar residential rhythm to the street.
- Along Historic Home, The length of the horizontal facade is broken into vertically oriented stretches of different natural materials. The wood screen elements are also vertically oriented to balance out the overall horizontal orientation of the facade.
- On the Alley, the facade is treated very similarly to the Western facade along the historic home. Vertically oriented screening elements give direction to the facade. The new portion of the building above the rebuilt carriage house also gives an upward sense to the street level environment as the light and glass rising out of the existing structure draws the eye upward.

(17) Rhythm of building setbacks. *Buildings on the north-south streets generally have little or no setback,*

while older houses on the east-west streets between Woodward and Brush have some setback, which varies from street to street, though generally consistent in any one block. Later apartments and commercial structures in that area often ignore the previously established setback. Between Brush and Beaubien, setback is generally very limited, only a few feet, if any, lawn space being provided between sidewalk and building.

RESPONSE

- On John R, the building is not set back from the street, consistent with other buildings along the John R Street corridor. The second level setback provides relief for the new building from the ground-level existing buildings. This set-back helps to highlight the existing structure and allows for a softened interface between old and new.
- On Alfred Street, the townhomes are set back from the street to provide a landscaped area in front of each, relating to the front yards of homes along Alfred. Entrances are set back further yet to provide a porch that is within the character of typical residential entrances along Alfred as well. These set-back porches are an important characteristic of the residential structures on Alfred.
- On the Alley, the building is not set back from the street, consistent with the adjacent carriage house structure.
- Along the JL Hudson home, the face of the wood, brick and zinc is set about fifty-four feet from the Eastern face of the existing home. The front porch of the Western-most townhome opens up to the heavily planted side yard of the existing home, providing increased site lines to and from the existing JL Hudson home.

(18) Relationship of lot coverage. *Older single family houses between Woodward and Brush generally occupy about twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) percent of the building lot, not including coach houses or garages. Later apartments and commercial buildings often fill a much higher percentage of the lot, sometimes approaching or reaching complete lot coverage. Between Brush and Beaubien, lot coverage for residential structures is generally about forty (40) percent, with commercial and later apartment buildings again occupying larger percentage of their lots.*

RESPONSE

- The addition will rise out of the rebuilt Carriage House and new one-story buildings' walls and by extension is similar to the existing lot coverage. The new mixed-use addition maintains a forty-five foot space between it and the JL Hudson home giving similar breadth and air indigenous to the original neighborhood coverage west of Brush Street.

(19) Degree of complexity with the facades. *The older houses in the district are generally characterized by a high degree of complexity within the facades, with bay windows, towers, porches, window and door hoods, elaborate cornices, and other devices used to decorate the buildings. Newer houses in the northern end of the district and older houses in the southern end tend to be somewhat simpler than high Victorian structures between them; later apartments and commercial buildings tend to more classical decorative elements of a simpler kind.*

RESPONSE

- On John R, the rebuilt Carriage House masonry openings are generally in the existing locations, statically arranged and remain unchanged. The compositionally static masonry openings in the new one story structure will be more vertical than the existing openings. The new portion of the building above the existing will be generally opening and transparent. The existing brickwork will be referenced with detailing in the rebuilt carriage house to emphasize the historic nature of the carriage house.

- The new portion of the building above the ground floor will be generally opening and transparent. The windows on the townhouse building are vertically orientated with a composed placement. Windows are set back from the facade with deep balconies formed into the geometry of the building, creating depth, shadow and inherent complexity in the facade.
- On Alley, the location of the Carriage House masonry openings are expressed in the new brick screen wall where they originally existed. The parking structure exterior envelope is a vertically oriented blackened wood plank. Its intention is to be spare and unadorned, giving respect to and not competing with the Carriage House.
- Along Historic Home, the parking structure exterior envelope is a vertically oriented blackened wood plank. The windows closest to Alfred Street are of a taller proportion. This facade acts as a simple backdrop to the JL Hudson Home.

(20) **Orientation, vistas, overviews.** Houses are generally oriented to the east-west streets, while apartments and commercial structures are more often oriented to the north-south streets. The construction of the Fisher Freeway has created an artificial public view of the rear yards on Winder between Woodward and Brush. The vacant land in the area, largely the result of demolition, creates long-distance views and views of individual buildings from unusual angles which are foreign to the character of the neighborhood as an intensely developed urban area. Garages and coach houses are located in the rear of residential properties, and are generally oriented to the alley.

RESPONSE

- On John R, the apartments are held up above the existing brick structure and are oriented along John R, as is typical of apartment buildings on this street.
- On Alfred Street, the new parking structure is fully masked by the townhomes, maintaining the residential character of the street, but also maintaining the existing organization of parking in the neighborhood (home in front and garage behind - as the elements of design notes, “garages and coach houses are located in the rear of residential properties.”) The same can be said for the elevation on John R. The residential units facing John R Street mask a large majority of the garage behind. The outdoor dining terrace at the intersection of John R and Alfred allows for expansive views of the Ransom Gillis home from quite some distance down the block. The program of the outdoor terrace at the foot of the beautifully restored Ransom Gillis fulfills a great opportunity for display and celebration of one of the existing gems of Brush Park.
- On Alley, the existing location of the rebuilt carriage house is maintained as a critical part of the alley streetscape. The new parking structure further down the alley is set off from and aligned with the existing carriage house. Vehicle exit from the parking structure is primarily directed onto the alley as to mitigate queuing and traffic on other, more major streets around the site.
- Along Historic Home, the spacing between it and the new building, being similar to the spacing of the other buildings on the street, allows for pedestrian views of a developed urban area without a continuous street wall. The Alfred Street townhomes fill the void of a seemingly missing home.

(21) **Symmetric or asymmetric appearance.** In the Victorian structures, examples of both symmetric and asymmetric design occur; symmetry is more characteristic of the earlier houses, while the high Victorian examples are more likely to assemble elements in a romantic, asymmetric composition. Later houses to the north are more often symmetrical, especially when derived from classical precedent. Asymmetrical but balanced compositions are common. Later apartments are generally symmetrical.

RESPONSE

- On John R, the bulk massing is meant to float above a glass reveal, providing a grounded base,

setback middle and balanced top. This is done as an overall symmetrical form, with asymmetrical moves used in the banding between residential units to provide contemporary juxtaposition to the existing masonry shell of the carriage house below.

- On Alfred Street, picking up on queues from the neighboring historic homes (JL Hudson Home, Elisha Taylor Home), window patterning and openings along the townhomes are placed within a 4' grid, but shifted to provide visual interest in thoughtful compositions. Pronounced trim elements become an extension of the residential program, outlining the extents of the homes beyond. Asymmetrical openings become outdoor green terraces along the street.
- On Alley, window patterning is placed symmetrically within asymmetric building forms, giving visual interest to the facade.
- Along Historic Home, formal moves are restrained, with simple asymmetric screens providing a soft backdrop to the formally interesting victorian moves on the historic JL Hudson Home. The top floor sets back to allow for a contemporary "mansard" reading between the leading edge of the townhomes against the highpoint of the screen beyond.

(22)General environmental character. The environmental character is of an old urban neighborhood which has undergone, and is undergoing, considerable change. The original development, reflected in the Victorian period houses, has been altered by the provision of more intensive residential development in the early twentieth century, the change in character of Woodward from residential to commercial at about the same time and a long period of decline.

RESPONSE

- The proposed buildings are characteristic of the "considerable change" going on in Brush Park. By concealing required parking space behind retail and residential space that will bring life to the streets, the neighborhood is given the opportunity to evolve from a largely vacant expanse with a few historic gems into a vibrant urban neighborhood with a dense population of folks who can enjoy the history that surrounds them.
- The proposed buildings also formalize a way in which the new in Brush Park can make the old more prominent. The open dining garden in front of the Ransom Gillis home provides a vibrant setting for neighbors and visitors to take in the historic character of the neighborhood. The Alfred Street townhomes fill the obvious residential void that exists currently and will provide the missing link in the chain of residential structures from the first home off of Woodward to the new homes of the City Modern Development. The restaurant and lofts of 2827 are delicately inserted into the rebuilt carriage house and memorialize a piece of the historical narrative that is unique to Brush Park.
- "The environmental character is of an old urban neighborhood which has undergone, and is undergoing, considerable change." Of all the considerations, this, perhaps more than any other has driven the design of the proposed buildings. It is that quality of maintaining historic character in the presence of considerable change that will help Brush Park realize its bright future.