

STAFF REPORT 03-10-2021 MEETING

PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG

APPLICATION NUMBER: 21-

ADDRESS: 1444-1448 BROOKLYN, 1259 LABROSSE, 1309 LABROSSE

HISTORIC DISTRICT: CORKTOWN

APPLICANT: JOHN P. BIGGAR/INTEGRITY BUILDING GROUP

DATE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION: 02-12-2021

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 02-03-2021

SCOPE: REHABILITATE EXISTING PARKING LOT, ESTABLISH NEW PARKING LOT TO INCLUDE ADDITION OF CURB CUTS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

This application concerns proposed site improvements in two separate areas flanking Brooklyn Street in the vicinity of the Kaul Glove Company building, but in an otherwise residential context.

The west site, 1309 Labrosse, is a former residential lot immediately west of and adjacent to 1451 Brooklyn (reviewed at the February 10th meeting) and the Kaul Glove building. A former single-family dwelling on the site was demolished at an unknown time, but likely before the district was established. Current conditions are a lawn which appears to be maintained (mowed) from street south to the alley. There appears to be no established use of a parking lot on the site, and there are no curb cuts allowing vehicular access to the lawn.



View of vacant lot at 1309 Labrosse (roughly between trees), looking towards the southeast. The orange truck is parked at the approximate location of the proposed curb cut. Staff photo, February 26, 2021.

The east site (1444-1448 Brooklyn and 1259 Labrosse) is currently a parking lot situated at the northwest corner of Brooklyn Street and the east-west alley running parallel to Labrosse. Entrance to the parking lot is currently from Brooklyn and/or the alley. The site includes three separate parcels. All are currently surfaced with deteriorated pavement and appear to have been in use as a parking lot for an extended period of time. A chain link fence currently encloses the property. The area on Labrosse proposed for a curb cut is occupied by a sidewalk and tree lawn (berm), as shown in the image below, immediately adjacent to a school expansion this Commission approved in 2018.



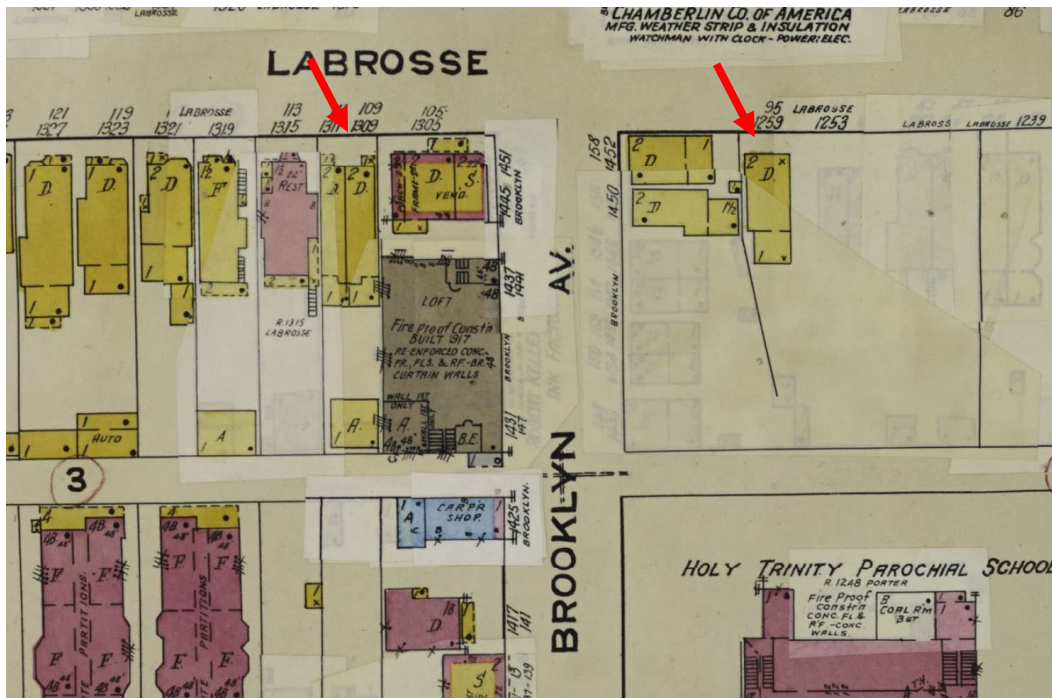
View of 1256 Labrosse (chain link fence) showing location of proposed curb cut. Staff photo, February 26, 2021.



View of 1444-1448 Brooklyn (existing parking lot). Staff photo, February 26, 2021



Parcel view of vicinity, with subject parcels outlined in red. The parcel outlined in yellow, 1245 Labrosse, is now occupied by an addition to the adjacent school, approved by the Commission in 2018. Green arrows indicate photo locations of the previous three images.



Sanborn map of vicinity, circa 1950. Note wood-framed dwellings present on 1309 and 1259 parcels (arrows).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

As per the submitted site drawing, the proposed work includes:

1444-1448 Brooklyn, 1259 Labrosse

- Resurfacing and restriping for twenty-one (21) parking spots
- Row of deciduous understory street trees (Cleveland Pear) along Brooklyn
- Planter bed with evergreen shrubs and daylilies
- Decorative 6'-high metal fence around parking lot perimeter
- Entry/exit sliding gate to alley
- New curb cut to Labrosse approximately 20 feet in width, to be 8" thick concrete and built to City of Detroit DPW commercial driveway standards
- (Possible?) removal of existing mature street trees to accommodate curb cut – drawings not clear

1309 Labrosse

- Grading and paving of site from Labrosse to rear alley
- Striping of five (5) parking spots arranged linearly along east line of parcel
- Dumpster enclosure at alley end of parcel, concrete block construction

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- No existing curb cuts along Labrosse on the block east of Brooklyn
- There are at least two (2) curb cuts for residential garages along Labrosse on the block west of Brooklyn
- Per the Sanborn map, the historic use of the properties at both 1259 and 1309 Labrosse was residential. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, in Standard Number 1, specifically give reviewers the ability to consider appropriate use in a historic context.
- The Corktown Historic District *Elements of Design*, Element 13 (*Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments*), states that "Concrete side driveways, where they exist, interrupt the succession of front yards and are not the original treatment of the property." Element 22 (General environmental character, further notes that "*The Corktown Historic District, with its narrow lots, shallow front yards, and small-scaled buildings, has a low-density, urban, mixed use character of a pre-automobile city.*"
- The curb cut at 1259 Labrosse is immediately adjacent to the sidewalk serving the adjacent school/community space. There are two street trees at either side of the proposed curb cut location, which are not described on the site plan. The tree to the west is a mature specimen.
- Absent the curb cut, the remaining improvements/rehabilitation at 1444-1448 Brooklyn/1259 Labrosse are staff approvable.

ISSUES

- 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
- The proposed Cleveland Pear street trees are now considered an invasive species, and have been overplanted in municipalities. Staff recommends another choice.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-73, Certificate of Appropriateness (1444-1448 Brooklyn, 1259 Labrosse)

It is staff's opinion that the proposal at 1444-1448 Brooklyn/1259 Labrosse should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Staff recommends that the Commission approve a COA for the proposed application, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Corktown Historic District's Elements of Design, with the conditions that:

- The curb cut through to Labrosse from 1259 Labrosse be eliminated from the design
- New street trees to be an appropriate non-invasive species acceptable to historic landscape staff

Section 21-2-73, Certificate of Appropriateness (1309 Labrosse)

It is staff's opinion that the proposal at 1309 Labrosse, including both the paving of the parcel and the curb cut to Labrosse, is inappropriate with respect to the historic character and use of this property and its environment. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the proposed work because it does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, especially Standards:

- (1) A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
- (2) The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
- (9) New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

And the Corktown Historic District Element of Design, specifically:

- #13, Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments.*
- #22, General environmental character.*