

**STAFF REPORT 07-14-2021 MEETING**

**PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG**

**APPLICATION NUMBER: 21-7158**

**ADDRESS: 2060 WABASH**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT: CORKTOWN**

**APPLICANT/OWNER/DESIGNER: BECKY NIX (bioLINIA, LLC)**

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 06-15-2021**

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 06-30-2021**

**SCOPE: ERECT 2-STORY ACCESSORY BUILDING/GARAGE**

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The project site is at the rear of a recently built (2019) home approved by the Commission in 2017 for infill on what was a vacant lot. The parcel is on the east side of Wabash between Dalzelle and Marantette. The existing building is of contemporary design, with a deeply overhanging eave at the street elevation that extends from gable to grade, and clad with dark gray shiplap wood siding. The roof is steeply gabled and finished with metal, and is interrupted past the midpoint for skylights, which separates the overall massing into two distinct sections. Dark-trimmed windows, asymmetrically and sparingly arranged, complete the modern expression. The rear of the parcel is currently finished with gravel for parking of up to four vehicles, accessible from the alley.



*View of existing conditions at rear (alley) of 2060 Wabash, view towards the west, showing location of proposed accessory building. Staff photo, June 30, 2021.*



*Wabash (street-facing) view of recent new construction house on site. Staff photo, June 30, 2021.*



*View of alley looking north, project site to left. Staff photo, June 30, 2021.*

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Per the submitted drawings and narrative, the applicant is proposing to erect a new 2-story garage/accessory building, in a contemporary design, as such:

The proposed garage, approximately 25' wide by 27' deep in footprint, will use the same materials on the existing home, featuring shiplap wood horizontal siding (painted same as house) and large format black Jeldwen Siteline (aluminum-clad wood) windows. The nearly-flat shed roof will be finished with a white TPO membrane, with a small parapet edge coped with metal. Minimally-visible solar panels will be installed thereon. A 16' segment of privacy wall constructed of CMU block and planted with Virginia Creeper Ivy and erected in the vicinity of the building's entry door, completes the proposed work.

A vehicle-sized garage door, flanked by wall sconce lighting, will be on the alley-oriented (rear/east) elevation. Access to a second floor 1-bedroom dwelling unit will be via an entry door sheltered by an angular roof overhang consistent with the overhang on the existing home's side entry, framed and finished in siding matching the rest of the work. Another sconce light fixture, matching those at the garage door, is proposed for this location. A third entry door into the garage is proposed for the house-facing (west) elevation, with a fourth matching light fixture.

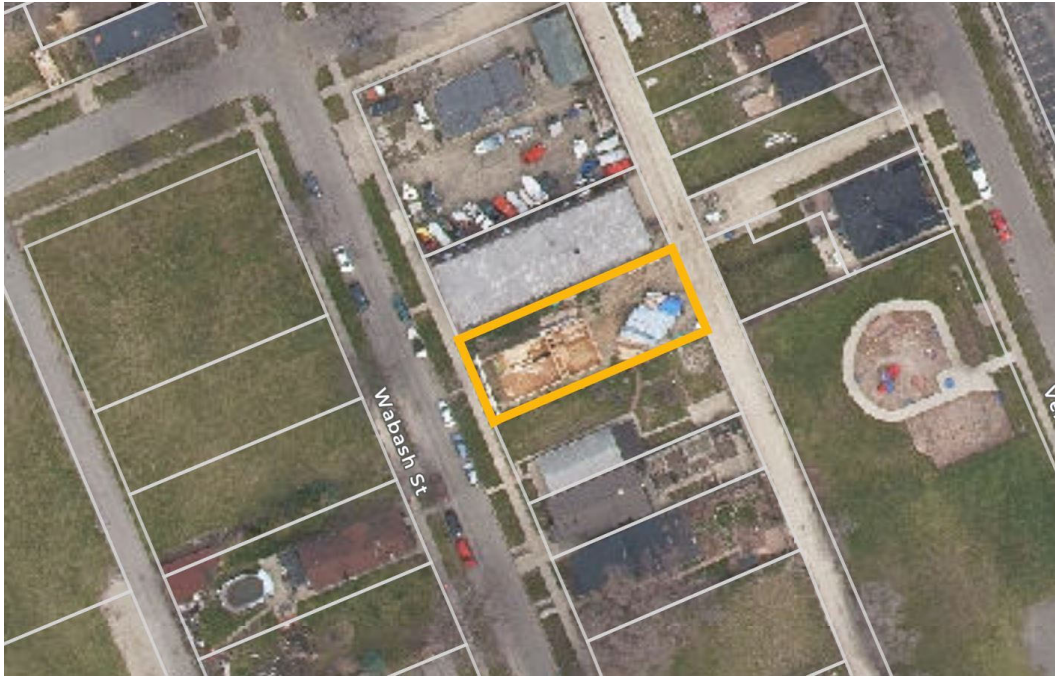
The overall expression of the proposed building is a minimally-detailed modernist building meant to complement and extend the vocabulary of the previously-built house.



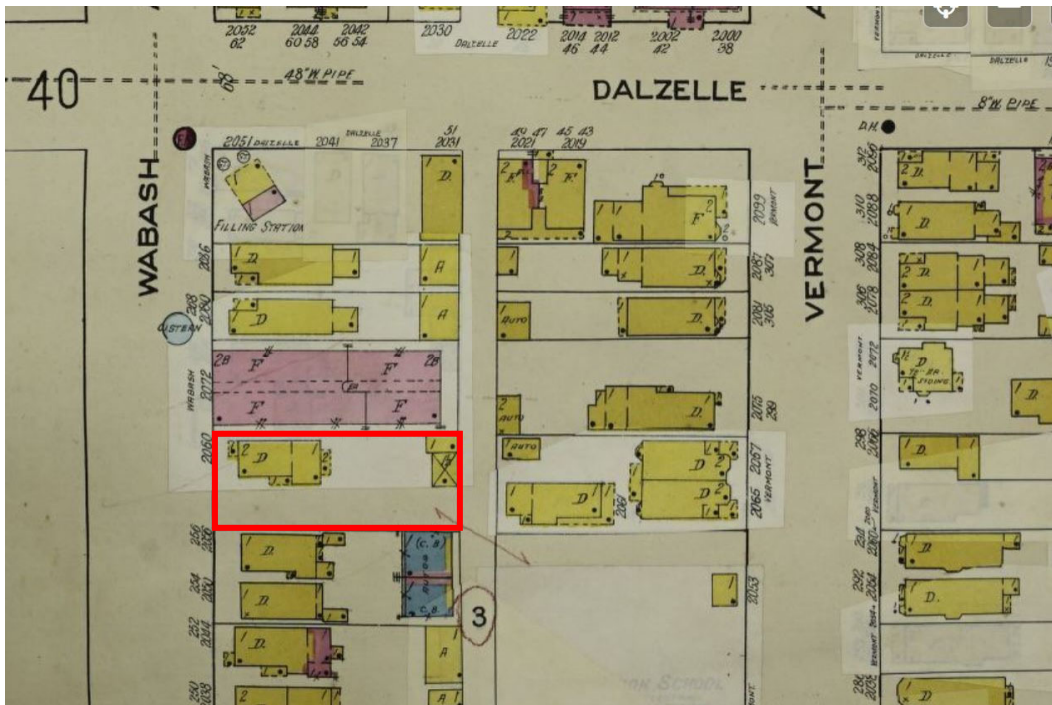
*Rendering of proposed garage/carrriage house (right) on-site, from applicant's submission. Note the CMU wall is not shown here.*

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Corktown Historic District was established in 1984.
- A single-story garage was approved as part of the house project's approval in 2017. Staff has included the earlier staff report and submission as approved by this body on the project website, for reference.



Subject parcel outlined in yellow, per Detroit Parcel Viewer. Note existing home is under construction in this aerial view.



1950 Sanborn map of same vicinity. Subject parcel outlined in red. Note the still extant 2072 Wabash flats, immediately adjacent to the north (large pink building) of the applicant site, which apparently exceeds 90% lot coverage.

- As a guide to new construction, the [Elements of Design](#) for this district offers the following (excerpted) relevant points. As always, it is important to note that Elements of Design can vary with respect to the period, style, size, use, or age of the structure. Garages, as accessory buildings, are not typically given as much attention in the Elements as the primary buildings on site, so some Elements are not relevant.

- **Element 1, Height:** Most residential buildings in the district range from one (1) story to two and one half (2½) stories tall
  - **Element 2, Proportion of buildings' front facades:** Proportion varies in the district, depending on the age, style and type of building
  - **Element 3, Proportion of openings within the facades:** Window openings are usually taller than wide, but there are also square openings and transom window openings which are wider than tall. Window openings are almost always subdivided...
  - **Element 4, Rhythm of solids to voids in front facades:** ...post-1880s Queen Anne style buildings exhibit a greater freedom, with their bay windows and combinations of windows in gables...
  - **Element 7, Relationship of materials:** The great majority of buildings in the district are wood frame structures originally clad in clapboard with wooden skirting or brick foundations...Wood is frequently the only material below the eaves of a building, except for the window glass.
  - **Element 8, Relationship of textures:** The most common relationship of textures in the district is that of clapboard to the smooth surface of wood trim.
  - **Element 9, Relationship of colors:** Paint colors in the district generally relate to style
  - **Element 10, Relationship of architectural details:** These generally relate to style...In general, Corktown is rich in its diversity and quality of architectural styles and detail.
  - **Element 11, Relationship of roof shapes:** Pitched roofs with frontal gables predominate in the district...commercial buildings generally have flat roofs. Rear additions to houses, such as kitchens, frequently have shed roofs.
  - **Element 13, Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments:** Many rear garages with alley entrances exist.
  - **Element 14, Relationship of open space to structures:** Open space in the form of front yards to buildings is generally very shallow
  - **Element 15, Scale of facades and façade elements:** The majority of buildings in the district are small in scale...Façade elements...are moderate in scale. Details within these elements are generally small in scale.
  - **Element 17, Rhythm of building setbacks:** Setbacks vary from area to area...although they are usually consistent within blocks. In general, buildings have very shallow front yards...Buildings on the north-south streets and corners are very close to the front lot lines.
  - **Element 18, Relationship of lot coverage:** Lot coverage ranges from zero percent to 100 percent, the average residential coverage being approximately forty (40) percent.
  - **Element 20, Orientation, vistas, overviews:** Garages are oriented toward the alleys...the general overview is that of small-scale mixed-use neighborhood...
  - **Element 21, Symmetric or asymmetric appearance:** Most buildings in the district are asymmetrical in appearance, but result in balanced compositions.
  - **Element 22, General environmental character:** 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 proposed dominant materials, including the shiplap siding as a modern analog to historic siding, are conceptually grounded in the materials and expressions used on historic buildings in the district, and are directly compatible with the primary building on site, already approved by this Commission.

## ISSUES

- It is staff's opinion that the proposed new construction retains the historic character of the property and district, is aligned with the district's Elements of Design, and protects and preserves the integrity of the property and the surrounding district. The project also restores density appropriate to the historic context.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

The proposed new construction is compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features of its environment, and does not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The design includes several features to add complexity and visual interest consistent with its historic context, and is compliant with the district's Elements of Design.

Staff therefore recommends that the proposal should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Corktown Historic District's Elements of Design.