

STAFF REPORT: MAY 11, 2022 MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

ADDRESS: 12710-12716 DEXTER

HISTORIC DISTRICT: RUSSELL WOODS-SULLIVAN

OWNER: CITY OF DETROIT/PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SPONSORING CITY AGENCY/AUTHORITY: DETROIT BUILDING AUTHORITY (DBA)

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 3/2/2022

DATE OF STAFF VISIT: 5/3/2022

TODAY'S ACTION IS AN ADVISORY OPINION ONLY AND CANNOT APPROVE/DENY THE PROJECT, NOR CONSIDER A BUILDING PERMIT FOR ANY ALTERATION, CONSTRUCTION OR DEMOLITION. AN ADVISORY OPINION RENDERED BY THE COMMISSION DOES NOT BIND THE COMMISSION TO ANY FUTURE DECISION. SHOULD A PERMIT APPLICATION BE RECEIVED, THE COMMISSION WILL SCHEDULE, ADVERTISE, AND HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING PRIOR TO ANY DECISION OR ACTION FOR IN-DISTRICT PROPERTIES.

SCOPE OF WORK: SALE OF CITY-OWNED PROPERTY (ADVISORY OPINION PER SECTION 21-2-5**)**

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The parcels proposed for sale are located within the boundaries of the Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District and include a ca. 1935, two-story commercial building (12710 Dexter) and the adjacent, vacant lot (12716 Dexter). The existing building is clad with brick and is topped with a hipped roof. Windows are steel casement, steel double-hung units and glass block. Curved glass block is located at the building's primary entrance. The building, which originally housed domestic and commercial uses, is currently vacant.



12710 and 12716 Dexter, current appearance



Dexter Car Wash and Vacuum

12710-12761 Dexter (outlined in red)

PROPOSAL

Because the parcels proposed for sale are owned by a City agency/authority and are located within the boundaries of a local historic district, at this time the Commission is acting only per Section 21-2-5 of the 2019 Detroit City Code to provide an advisory opinion concerning the potential “demonstrable effect” on the Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District, which opinion will be forwarded to the Mayor and City Council for their consideration in their own review/approval of such discretionary city actions. No permit application (i.e., Certificate of Appropriateness) is under consideration at this time. Should a permit application for additions, demolition, or new construction for in-district properties be received and docketed, such application will be scheduled, advertised, heard, and considered at a future Commission meeting as a public hearing, per Sections 21-2-73, 21-2-75, 21-2-77, and 21-2-78 of the 2019 Detroit City Code. Only at that time would a final action occur. Decision or opinions entered today by the Commission do not bind the Commission in their later consideration of a permit application.

Per the submitted materials, the potential owners of the subject parcels own the property/the Dexter Car Wash and Vacuum which is to the direct north of 12710-12716 Dexter. They hope to rehabilitate the building for use as office for their business as well as a “...space for collaborating with other potential business partners and like-minded business people.” Specifically, per the submittal, upon purchase of the property, the potential owners propose to undertake the following exterior work items:

- Repair windows
- Replace windows
- replace existing concrete walkway
- Add landscaping (shrubs, flowers, and turf)
- Remove trees
- Replace the existing asphalt shingle roof
- Install exterior light fixtures

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- As previously noted, the current submission is not an application for work at the property. Rather, the submission outlines a general/conceptual proposal of work which might be undertaken should they acquire ownership of the building. The sponsoring city authority, the DBA, is therefore seeking the Commission's comment re: if the sale of the property and a rehabilitation of the building might have a beneficial or adverse effect on the Historic District.
- The potential property owners must submit a complete application to the Historic District Commission and receive an approval from the Historic District Commission for any/all exterior work proposed at the property prior to the commencement of the work. This includes any exterior building rehabilitation activities, landscaping, new additions, parking lot establishment, etc.
- The potential property owners have stated that they wish to replace some of the windows at the building upon their purchase of the property. Most of the windows at the property are original/historic age and are character defining. Therefore, per the Standards, any deteriorated windows must be retained and repaired. If the property owner can adequately demonstrate that any of the windows are deteriorated beyond repair, the owners must replace the windows with units that **match the existing in detailing, profile, dimension, operation and materiality**. It is staff's opinion that the window repair/replacement proposal which does not meet the Standards would have a negative effect on the building and the property's adjacent historic environs.

ISSUES/COMMISSION ACTION

The Commission is asked to provide comment under Section 21-2-5 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, as outlined below. Section 21-2-5, Effects of projects on districts The Commission is requested to make a finding concerning the "demonstrable effects of the proposed project and report same to the Mayor and City Council." The intent of this section is to provide guidance to city government prior to committing to a particular course of action, under the following requirement: A City-financed, licensed, permitted, authorized or contracted physical development project shall be considered to have a demonstrable effect on a designated or proposed historic district when any condition of the project creates a change, beneficial or adverse, in the quality of the historical, architectural, archeological, engineering, social or cultural significance that qualified the property for designation as an historic district or that may qualify the property for designation as an historic district. Generally, adverse effects occur under conditions which include:

- (1) Destruction or alteration of all or part of a resource;
 - (2) Isolation from or alteration of the surrounding environment of a resource;
 - (3) Introduction of visual, audible, or atmospheric elements that are out of character with the resource and its setting;
 - (4) Transfer or sale of a City-owned resource without adequate conditions or restrictions regarding preservation, maintenance, or use; and
 - (5) Neglect of a resource resulting in its deterioration or destruction
- Per the above, adverse conditions to historic properties could occur if a City-owned property is sold "without adequate conditions or restrictions regarding preservation, maintenance, or use." It is unclear to staff if the sales agreement for the property will include a requirement that the potential property owner adequately maintain the property and that all/any exterior work must be reviewed and approved by the Historic District Commission prior to undertaking the work.

