

STAFF REPORT 06-08-2022 MEETING
APPLICATION NUMBER: 22-7843
ADDRESS: 115 EDMUND PLACE
HISTORIC DISTRICT: BRUSH PARK
APPLICANT: DAVID RYZYI/MANNIK SMITH GROUP
OWNER OF RECORD: JOHN EDMUND STREET LLC
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 06-01-2022

PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG

SCOPE: ESTABLISH PARKING LOT

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The project site is at the corner of Edmund Place and John R, addressed as 115 Edmund Place. The site is currently unbuilt, with existing decorative fencing and some landscaping at the corner. Although cars were observed parking on the property, it is the understanding of HDC staff that a legal change of use for parking has not been established for this parcel.



View of 115 Edmund Place, looking northwest, Staff photo, June 1, 2022.



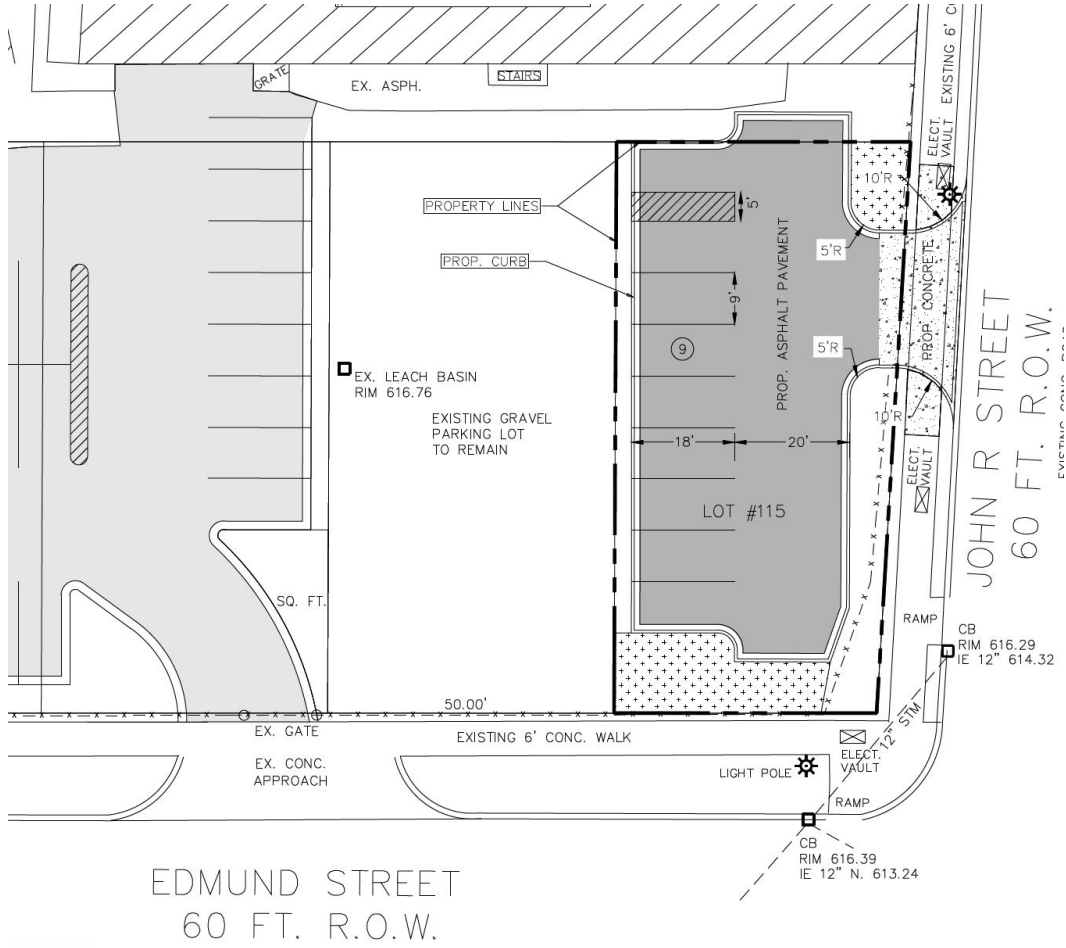
115 Edmund Place outlined in yellow, per Detroit Parcel Viewer.



View to the west. Suburban-style landscaping is at odds with the urban character here. Staff photo, June 1, 2022

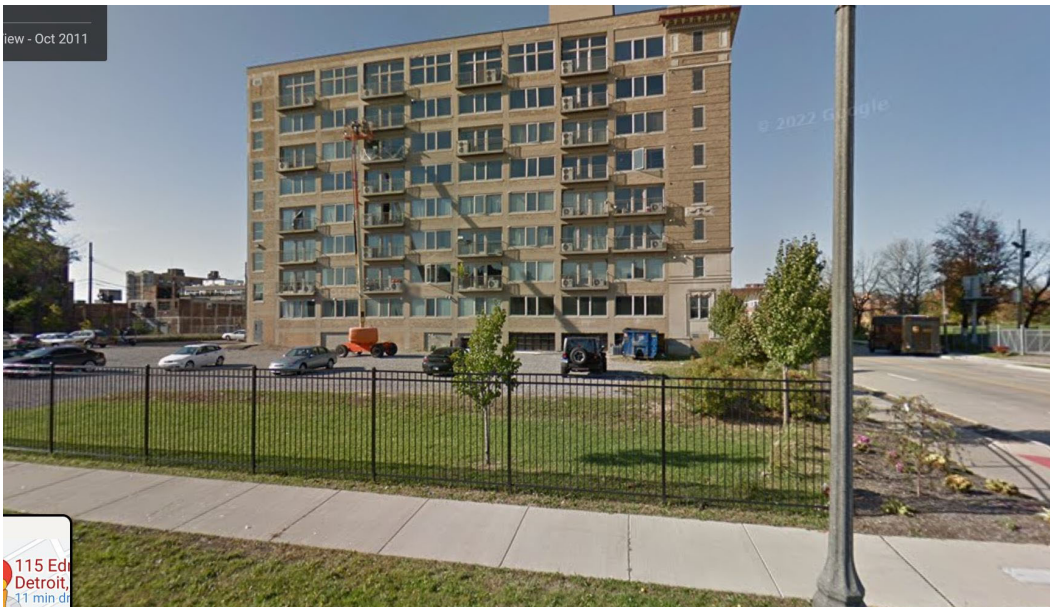
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Per the submitted drawings, documents, and scope of work, the applicant is proposing to **establish a parking lot** at this corner location. The permit application is both for the legalization of the use (change of use) and the work required to accommodate that use. Work includes paving, curbing, fencing, and a new curb cut to John R.



STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- Per Google Street View, the fence, landscaping, and parking lot use dates to at least October 2011. HDC staff could not locate approvals for this work, which occurred after the district was established in 1980.



View of property per Google Street View, October 2011. Note new fence, landscaping, and parked vehicles.

- The Commission, per the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, is expected to review the work impact of a property’s change of use on the historic character of a local historic district, as such:
 - (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.*
- Professional staff has consistently recommended against approval for surface parking lots in historic districts, except in limited cases where they directly support contextual and important new construction. A surface parking lot, much less almost an entire block of them, is architecturally and urbanistically inappropriate in the context of a nineteenth-century historic district.
- As a highly prominent corner location in a district that has seen much productive development, it is staff’s recommendation that the site remain vacant until a building that “holds the corner” can be developed. This is especially important in the historic Brush Park context, which has come a long way in restoring its urban character, pedestrian activity, and increased building density.

ISSUES

- 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.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Staff finds that the proposed establishment of a surface parking lot places the property in a new use that is incompatible with the defining characteristics of the district, alters features and spaces that characterize a property, and is incompatible with the historic integrity of the Brush Park Historic District. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the subject work, as it does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the defined elements of design for the historic district, specifically 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.*