

**STAFF REPORT:** 03/13/2024 REGULAR MEETING

**PREPARED BY:** D. RIEDEN

**APPLICATION NUMBER:** HDC2024-00054

**ADDRESS:** 1665 W BOSTON

**HISTORIC DISTRICT:** BOSTON-EDISON

**APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER:** JUAN ARIAS-HERNANDEZ

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION:** 02/19/2024

**DATES OF STAFF SITE VISITS:** 02/23/2024

**SCOPE:** DEMOLISH GARAGE, INSTALL FENCING, REPAIR HOUSE

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Built in 1936, the property at 1665 W Boston, is a 2 ½ story residence facing north. The dwelling displays Tudor Revival detailing to include tri-colored brick and stone exterior cladding, front gables with overhanging eaves and broad chimney with brick and limestone detailing on the west side of the asphalt shingled roof. Original leaded or stained-glass casements with stone sills and quoining adorn the front façade and stone-cladded bay. Stone surrounds and accentuates the arched front door and side picture glass window. The raised front porch is asymmetrically placed, modestly outlined with a black iron railing. Brick wingwalls from the porch embrace the porch steps to the slightly curvilinear concrete walkway from the house to through the open front lawn to the sidewalk. Plantings of yews and some overgrown junipers surround the front foundation of the house. Along the east property line, a concrete driveway leads to a virtually collapsed garage at the rear property line. A neighbor's metal picket fence runs along this east border, while a wood privacy fence runs along the rear property line at the alley.



*Site Photo 1, by Staff February 23, 2024: (North) front elevation.*



*Designation Image, 1974: (North) front elevation.*

This property has the following former HDC approvals:

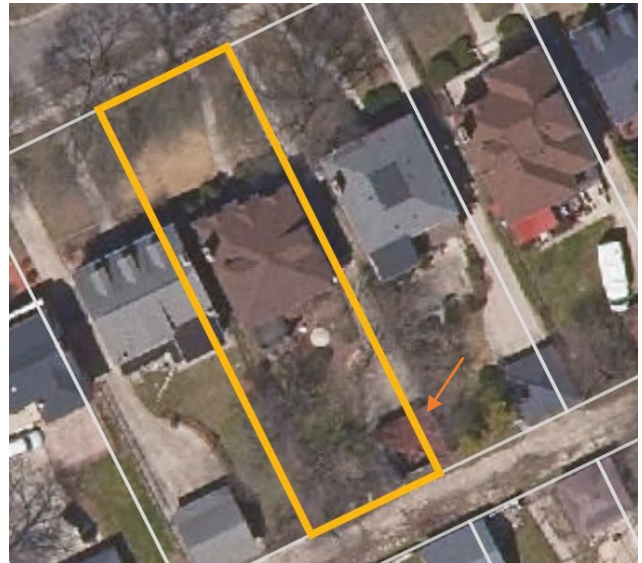
- 2007 COA Replace asphalt roof for house and garage
- 2017 COA Install new fence/gate
- 2011 COA Replace flat roof on rear addition and replace railing to match.
- There are no listed violations on this property.

## PROPOSAL

The applicant proposed the following work:

### DEMOLISH GARAGE & SITE WORK

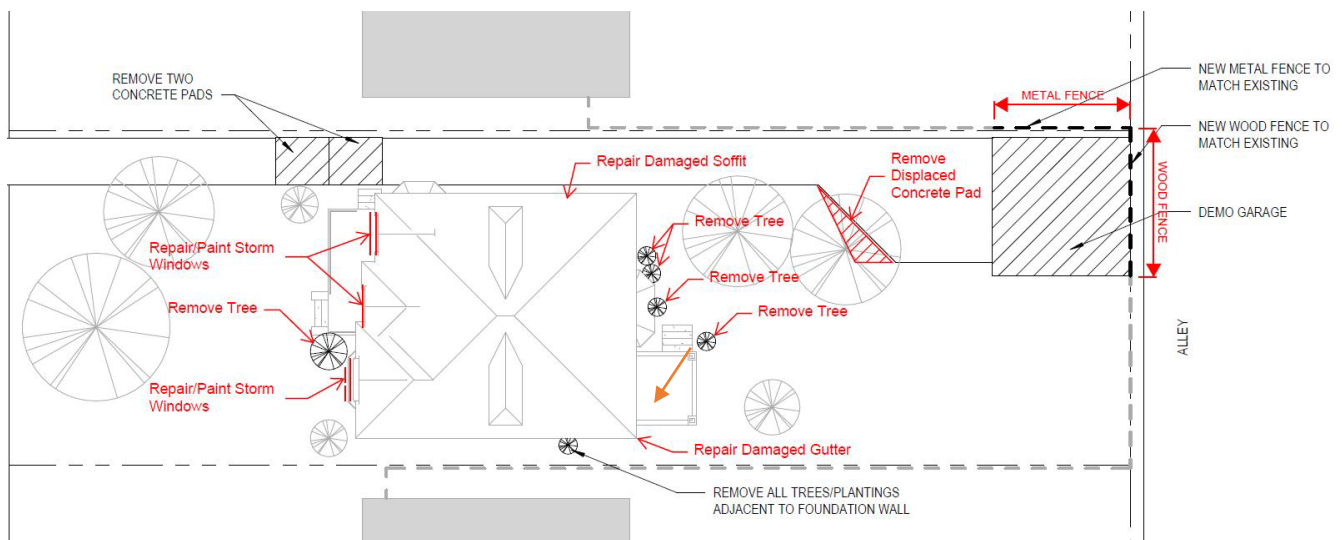
- Demolition of the rear garage. No replacement is planned in this application. Remove materials. Leave existing concrete slab in place.
- Install 6' height black steel fence to match neighbor's fence on east property line.
- Install 6' height wood privacy fence along rear property line to match existing wood fence along alley. Painted SW 7520 Dark Brown.
- Remove trees and shrubs at the foundation of the house as indicated in the site plan to prevent damage to the house.
- Remove concrete pad near tree root at driveway as indicated in the site plan.
- Replace 2 concrete pads in the driveway as shown in the site plan with concrete to match existing concrete. Concrete color added to match existing color of concrete.



*Aerial 1 of Parcel # 08003061 by Detroit Parcel Viewer, showing the garage location (arrow).*

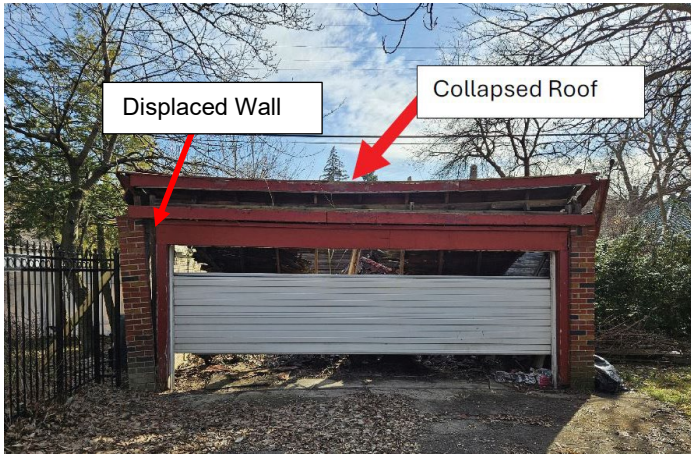
### HOUSE REPAIRS

- Repair missing portion of gutter and storm gutter elbow with matching material and color. Add downspout extensions at grade to direct water away from the foundation.
- Repair damaged wood soffits with wood. Paint to match trim.
- Repair 6 damaged wood storm windows and wood trim. Repair holes or missing wood pieces with matching wood material. Paint wood to match existing trim color A:9 Moderate Reddish Brown (MS:7.5 R3/6).
- Repair one (1) damaged casement, metal frame window unit.



*Figure 1 by Applicant showing all proposed scope of work locations.*





Site Photo 2, by applicant October 2023: (facing south) north elevation of garage, showing collapsed roof and displaced wall.



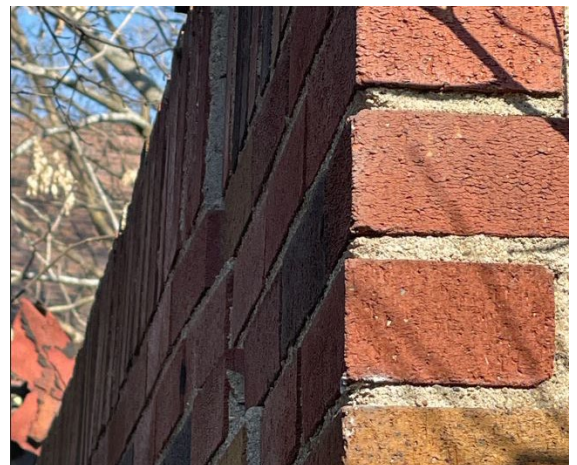
Site Photo 3, by Staff February 23, 2024: (facing east) west wall of garage, showing brick displacement and cracking along the wall.

### STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston-Edison Historic District was established in 1974.
- Staff observed from the original building permit cards that the garage was built at the same time as the house in 1936.
- The applicant provided photos to show the condition of the garage. The applicant also allowed staff to visit the site and observe the conditions. The roof has caved into the garage. There are structural cracks and displacement of the brick masonry on all sides of the surrounding walls. It is staff’s opinion that the structure has suffered severe damage and is beyond feasible repair, showing signs that the exterior walls are in state of collapse.
- While the garage was a contributing structure to the property and the historic district, at some point, it lost integrity necessary to convey its historic significance, because of its ruinous condition. Given the marginal contributing status of the garage, staff finds it is reasonable to approve demolition rather than require a complex and expensive repair. Demolition of a contributing structure that has lost its historic integrity due to catastrophic damage would meet the Standards. (See also attached document *National Park Service Best Practices Review “Evaluating Garages and Outbuildings in Historic Districts”*.)
- Staff has the opinion that the proposed steel fence along the east property line and the wood fence along the rear property line are appropriate as they provide continuity to existing conditions and follow the HDC guidelines.
- Staff observed that most trees and shrubs along the foundations of the house that are proposed for removal are “volunteer” plantings, meaning that most of them were not planted but grew from neglect weeding practices. Staff observes that removal of these trees and shrubs is recommended to preserve the foundation of the house. The single evergreen in the front of the house that is proposed for removal is a juniper that has lost much of its



Site photo 4, by Staff February 23, 2024: (facing south) interior of garage showing collapsed roof.



Site photo 5, by Staff February 23, 2024: (facing north) showing brick displacement along west wall.

midrange branches. Staff has no issue with its removal as it has no detriment to the historic landscape or historic structure.

- The maple tree at in back yard has a root system that is pushing up the concrete near the driveway. The proposal to remove this concrete at its base is appropriate and would improve the longevity of this shade tree. The other proposed work for the driveway would match existing conditions. Staff received confirmation from the applicant that the color and finish of the concrete shall match the existing concrete.
- All remaining proposed work is appropriate, in staff's opinion, as they are maintenance and repair of historic materials and use appropriate materials and finishes.

## **ISSUES**

- It is staff's opinion that the garage's structure is severely compromised, and the building has lost its historic integrity. Given these conditions, staff finds it reasonable to approve demolition.
- Staff have no issues with the proposed remaining work in this application.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

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

#### Recommendation: Demolish Garage, Install Fencing, Repair House

It is the staff's opinion that the demolition of the garage and the remaining proposed work are appropriate. Staff therefore recommend the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed and completed because it meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Boston-Edison Historic District Elements of Design.