

STAFF REPORT: MARCH 13, 2024, REGULAR MEETING
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00065
ADDRESS: 9230 DWIGHT
HISTORIC DISTRICT: BERRY SUBDIVISION
APPLICANT: BORA GULARI
OWNER: BORA GULARI
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: FEBRUARY 8, 2024
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: FEBRUARY 21, 2024

PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO
REVISED MARCH 13, 2024

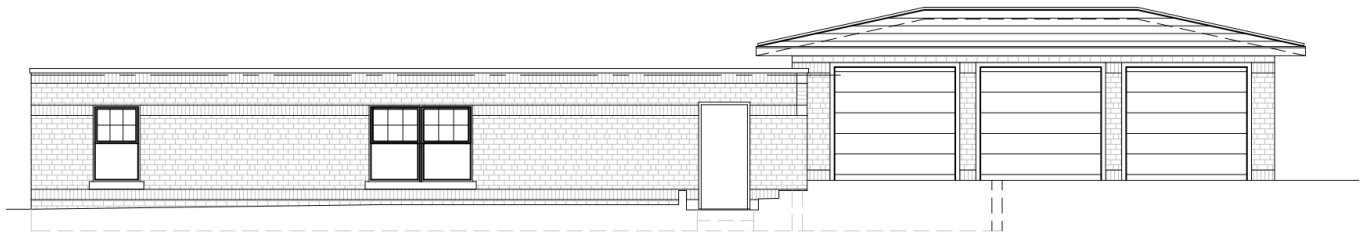
SCOPE: ALTER GARAGE/BOATHOUSE



The house at 9230 Dwight; February 2024 photo by staff.



The garage/boathouse at 9230 Dwight, north elevation; Photo by applicant. Note the intentional design consistency with the main house, including the roof tile.



East elevation of garage/boathouse; drawing from application documents.



Subject property viewed from Belle Isle; February 2024 photo by staff.



Aerial image with subject property outlined in red; source: regrid.com

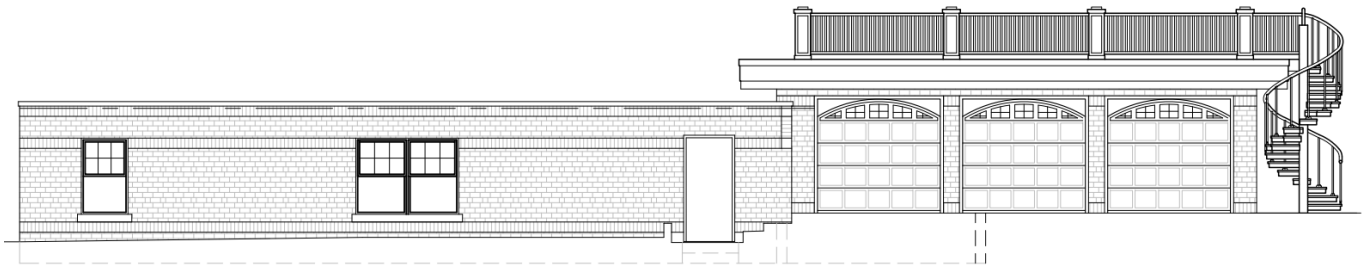
EXISTING CONDITIONS

9230 Dwight is a two-story, hip roof house, built in 1921 and facing north onto Dwight. Italian Renaissance features include Flemish-bond brickwork, tabbed stone details and stone panels, and a green, clay-tile roof. The tile roof on the house is presently undergoing repairs according to a Certificate of Appropriateness dated June 5, 2023. Behind the main house, a large rear yard includes a garage that appears to have been built concurrently with the house. The garage, though more subdued in expression, continues the style, materials, and massing of the main house. This includes a rectangular form, Flemish-bond brickwork, green tile hip roof, wood, six-over-one sash windows, and wood panel doors. The three-bay garage opens to the east.

The garage was expanded decades ago with a single-story, flat roof, boathouse addition to the south. The addition is relatively deep and consists of brick masonry. The project architect states that the addition dates from the 1980s; staff was unable to confirm the date with available records. Together, the building is referred to as the “garage/boathouse” throughout this report.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to alter the garage/boathouse by eliminating the hip roof and constructing a flat roof. The flat roof would be topped by a deck, accessed by a spiral staircase. The submitted elevation also depicts three new garage doors.



East elevation showing proposed work; drawing from application documents.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Berry Subdivision Historic District was established by City Council ordinance in 1978. The Final Report implies a period of significance of 1916 through 1929. The report does not provide analysis specific to 9230 Dwight but states “the row of houses on the river is particularly valuable, not only for their inherent architectural qualities, but also because they are the last riverfront houses in the city, and serve as a reminder of what once existed on Jefferson Avenue.”
- Staff also concludes that the garage/boathouse is a highly significant, contributing building, as it clearly expresses the significance quoted above and appears to be largely unaltered from its historic appearance.
- The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-110) for Berry Subdivision provide the following relevant observations:
 - “Wall materials, almost without exception, are brick, stone, and concrete (stucco). Stone trim is common; wood is almost universally used for window frames and other functional trim, and is used in many examples for all trim. Roofs are of slate, tile, asphalt shingle, or wood shingle

- (not shake). Where roofs of other than asphalt exist, their maintenance should be encouraged.”
 - “The most common relationship of textures in the district is that of the low-relief pattern of mortar joints in brick contrasted to the smooth surface of wood or stone trim. The use of stucco or concrete, with or without half-timbering, as a contrast to brick surfaces, is not unusual. The district contains a fair number of buildings in which a tile roof contributes a strong textural contrast to the composition.”
 - “Roofs are in natural colors (red, tile, slate colors, natural wood) and asphalt shingle should be kept within this range.”
 - “Pitched and hip roofs predominate. One or two examples of the gambrel-type roof exist. Complex arrangements of the pitched or hip types, with subsidiary roofs, are not unusual. Dormers are common. Flat roofs exist only on porches and sunrooms, and other minor elements.”
- The garage/boathouse is clearly visible from the Detroit River. It is not visible from public streets or sidewalks. It is visible from adjacent private property, from the city-owned Manoogian Mansion, and, from a great distance, from Belle Isle.
- The clay tile roof is a distinctive and character-defining feature, in that it dates from the period of significance and prominently expresses the architectural style and design intent of the building. Its importance is further enhanced in that it matches the house, linking the two buildings together to create a single composition. Finally, the character-defining nature of the clay tile is further emphasized by the Elements of Design quoted above.
- The applicant stated in a previous application 23-8325 (Certificate of Appropriateness dated June 5, 2023) that the clay tiles are commercially available. **The applicant provides the following response: (March 13, 2023 email to staff): “I did see some factual errors that I would like to correct. First is that the tiles for the roof are not available though initially I was led to believe this by a roofing contractor upon further investigation this is not the case and I have had two industry professionals also try as I was getting nowhere. I also want to point out that when we bought the house the roof of the garage did not have tile on the south face nor the west face. The decking on the west face was also compromised.”**
- The Elements of Design, as noted above, direct that the maintenance of a tile roof “should be encouraged.”
- The overall form and massing of a contributing building is also an important, character-defining feature that should not be altered.
- A deck and stairway are not necessarily incompatible with the historic property, depending on the design. Detroit’s historic districts include many decks and exterior stairways that have been issued a Certificate of Appropriateness by the Historic District Commission. Such features are often found to be appropriate if they do not damage or remove historic materials or features, if they are placed on less prominent or non-historic portions of the property, and if they are designed with compatible materials, colors, and textures.
- A supplemental narrative dated February 29, 2024, briefly mentions replacement of a metal railing at the south elevation of the garage/boathouse as well as window replacement. Since this work is not shown in the submitted photos and drawings and no specifications are provided, staff interprets this as a future phase and not subject of this application.

- The application does not provide enough information for staff to fully examine the proposed scope. Staff has asked the applicant for the following information:
 - Photos of all elevations showing existing conditions.
 - At a minimum, a north elevation drawing showing the proposed work.
 - Ideally, all four elevations and a roof plan showing the proposed work.
 - Specifications for proposed materials or products.

However, even without this information, staff is nonetheless able to conclude that the proposed work is inappropriate, for the reasons discussed under “Issues” and “Recommendation,” below.

The applicant provided additional photos on March 13, 2024.

ISSUES

- Many original tile roofs are still present in Detroit’s historic districts. These are extremely important to the character of a building and, once lost, are irreplaceable. Thus, the replacement of the roof on this building would only be appropriate if it were shown to be beyond repair. Although noticeable deterioration can be seen in the submitted photo, supporting evidence is needed to substantiate that the roof is truly beyond repair. The Commission typically requires information such as cost estimates and written statements from roofing contractors experienced with working in historic materials, as well as photos showing the extent of the deterioration. A rule of thumb provided by the National Park Service is that replacement of a clay tile roof is often acceptable if more than 30 percent of the tiles are broken.¹
- If the tile roof were confirmed to be beyond repair, this would still not warrant removal of the entire hip roof. Standard #6 (quoted in full below) requires that a replacement feature “match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials.”
- The proposed salvage of garage tile and its reuse on the house might be an appropriate approach in some cases. One would be if the garage roof were truly beyond repair, as noted above. Another would be if the tiles needed on the house were truly unavailable (not just expensive or difficult to find), as this would meet the guidance that the Standards “be applied ... in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.”² However, neither of these cases have been shown to apply here.
- The proposed flat roof and deck is contrary to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards direction on exterior alterations for several reasons.
 - Standard #9 requires that “new additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property.” The proposed work destroys the character-defining hip roof and clay tile.
 - Standard #9 requires that “new work ... shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features” of the building and the district. The proposed work would alter the hip roof massing of the building and introduce a flat roof which is out of character for the district.
 - Standard #10 requires that additions and new construction be reversible. The proposed work would eliminate a tile roof that is likely irreplaceable.
- Staff opinion is that a deck on the non-historic, boathouse portion of the building, if executed in compatible materials, would likely be appropriate. It would be reversible, would not destroy historic materials, and would be visually subordinate to the hip roof of the garage portion.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Staff concludes that the proposed work does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the following reasons:

- The proposed work eliminates a highly distinctive clay tile roof without showing that it is beyond repair. Even if it were beyond repair, the Standards would direct that it be replaced with a roof of similar design, color, and texture.
- The proposed work eliminates the hip roof massing that is a defining feature expressing the building's Italian Renaissance style and that creates an important visual relationship with the main house.
- The proposed work introduces a flat roof that conflicts with the Elements of Design and is visually incompatible with the building and the district.
- Not enough information is provided to confirm that the proposed work uses materials, colors, and textures that are compatible with the building and the district.

Therefore, staff recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the proposed work as it fails to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular:

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.*
5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, other visual qualities, and where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be documented by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*
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.*
10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

¹ <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-30-clay-tile-roofs.pdf>

² <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/secretarys-standards-rehabilitation.htm>