

STAFF REPORT: 06/12/2024 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: D. RIEDEN

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00260

ADDRESS: 553 ARDEN PARK

HISTORIC DISTRICT: ARDEN PARK - EAST BOSTON

APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER: CLEOPUS ASHBURN JR

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 05/20/2024

DATES OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 05/02/2024, 05/28/2024

SCOPE: REPLACE REAR PORCH WITH DECK, PERGOLA, AND GAZEBO, INSTALL FENCE AND SECURITY CAMERAS (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1914, the property at 553 Arden Park is an Arts and Crafts bungalow. The low-pitched double gabled roof features two dormers on either side of a front facing gable roof. A brick chimney punctures through the roof from the east side of the house. The wide eaves of the front gable are supported by decorative brackets over stucco and timbering detailing and a ribbon of casement windows with a stone sill. The house is clad in brick which was painted prior to historic designation. The characteristic front porch of the Arts and Crafts style is unique in that the roofline for the porch also serves as a carport over the driveway which leads to the garage to the rear of the property. Broad brick-columns support this roof, and narrow wood post next to the entrance steps has simple panel and capital details. The entrance is a modest recessed door under this roof.

Property files indicate that there are no former Historic District Commission (HDC) approvals on this property. However, several alterations at the former location of the rear porch, which has been removed without approval, have occurred over time and are the subject of this proposal.



Site Photo 1, by Staff May 28, 2024: (South) front elevation.



Designation image, 1980: (South) front elevation.

PROPOSAL

The applicant, who purchased the property in 1970, is seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness for work that has been completed without HDC approval which includes removal of the rear porch, building of a rear deck, installation of a rear gazebo on the deck, installation of a new arbor with mosquito netting from the rear of the house over the deck, light posts on the deck, perimeter fencing with a gate at the driveway, and security cameras. Except for the arbor, which is under construction, all other items have been completed without approval, some of it decades ago.

The applicant states that the purpose of the rear deck was to provide not only additional porch space, but a solution to basement flooding issues. The arbor and gazebo are meant to provide shade, but in the case of the

arbor, to direct rainwater away from the cellar/ basement area below the deck. The fence, gate and cameras were installed for security purposes.

REAR PORCH REMOVAL (Work completed without approval)

- Removal of rear 4’x7’ flat roof and wood post.
- Cover rear porch deck with new deck material – see free standing deck below.

ERECT FREE-STANDING DECK (Work completed without approval)

- Erect free-standing wood deck (not supported by the house).
- Install removable decking to allow access to the ground level horizontal hatch door leading to the cellar/basement area below the deck.
- Install three (3) Lark Manor aluminum lamp posts, black, on deck as per submitted details and photos.

ERECT GAZEBO (Work completed without approval)

- Erect 10’ x 12’ area gazebo from Sam’s club kit. No footings, free standing on the deck.

ERECT ARBOR (Work completed without approval)

- Erect 13’ 14’ arbor attached to the north face of the house and supported by two 6”x 6” posts cemented 4’ in the ground. The angled height is 10’ attached to the house and 7’ attached to the posts.
- Install sixteen (16) 2”x8” rafters on 12” centers, supported with brackets attached to 2”x8” header bolted to the brick face of the house and by three (3) 2”x8”x14’ horizontal headers bolted together with brackets mounted to the top of the vertical posts.
- Install roofing material that consists of OSB 7/16 roof panels, felt roof deck protection, alum-roof edge, and shingles that match the existing house shingles.
- Paint the arbor to match the color of the gazebo and deck.
- Install mosquito netting at sides of arbor per submitted details.

INSTALL FENCE (Work completed without approval)

- Remove existing chain link fence and broken gate.
- Install 1” square steel tubing welded to 2’ x 2’ steel post, painted black.
- Install 1” square steel tubing channel iron fencing and decorative wrought iron gate with automatic opening feature, painted black and gold.

INSTALL SECURITY CAMERAS (Work completed without approval)

- Install 4 Lorex security cameras bolted to the car port support column and the wood frame of the car port.
- Install one security camera located below the backyard security light.
- Install 2 WYZE cameras as shown in the submitted photos.



Aerial 1 of Parcel # 03002670, by Detroit Parcel Viewer, showing location of former original rear porch (arrow).

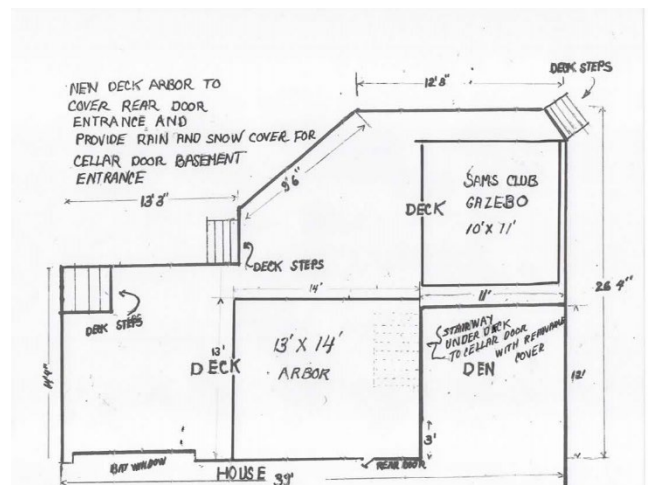


Fig 1, by Applicant: Proposed installation of the deck, gazebo and arbor.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Arden Park- East Boston Historic District was established in 1981. All exterior areas of designated properties, including the rear, are within the Commission’s jurisdiction.
- This property has no Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) found on file. This property has the following listed violations on this property, which were completed between approximately 1994 and 2024, all are being addressed in this application:
 - Demolition of rear porch.
 - Construction of rear deck with lightposts
 - Erection of gazebo on rear deck.
 - Construction of rear arbor/ shade structure.
 - Installation of metal fence and gate.
 - Installation of security cameras/lights on house.



Site photo 2, by Applicant, year unknown (approx. 1999-1994): (North) showing original rear porch before alteration.

- Pictured to the right (*site photo 3, Figures 2-3*), the rear extension was permitted for construction in 1924, as shown in city files, 10 years after the house was initially constructed, also shown in building permit cards and sanborn maps. Staff was not able to determine when the upper windows of this rear extension were filled in. The applicant has noted that this work was completed prior to his moving in the house in 1970, which is also before designation. This work is not in the application.
- It is staff’s opinion that the rear porch with the simple roof and post detailing that matched the front of the house’s post detailing was a distinctive character-defining feature. Staff recognizes that the porch may have been altered when the rear extension to the house was constructed by potentially eliminating a secondary post, as may have been evident in the 1915 Sanborn (*see figure 2*) and the timeline of construction described above. However, staff maintains that the rear porch remained



Site Photo 3, by Staff May 28, 2024: (Northeast) side and rear elevation, showing rear extension with enclosed windows at second floor. Also showing erected gazebo and deck (work completed without approval). Red dashed lines added for clarity.

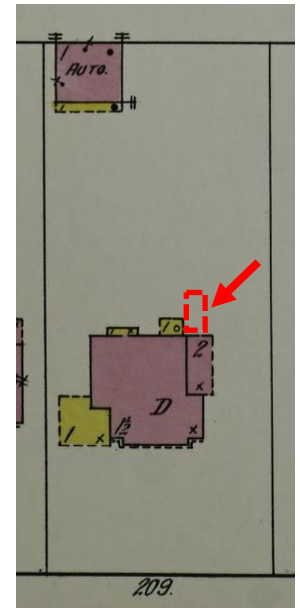


Figure 2, by 1915 Sanborn Vol 10, #47 showing footprint of house (arrow) prior to extension.

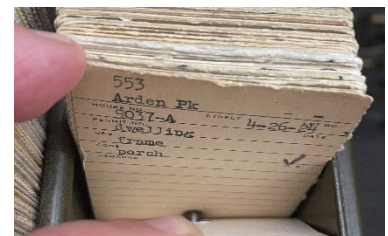


Figure 3, by Staff: building permit card showing date of rear extension, April 26, 1924.

predominantly intact and still historically identifiable as a rear porch and therefore a distinctive character-defining feature prior to its alteration. (See Site photo 2.)

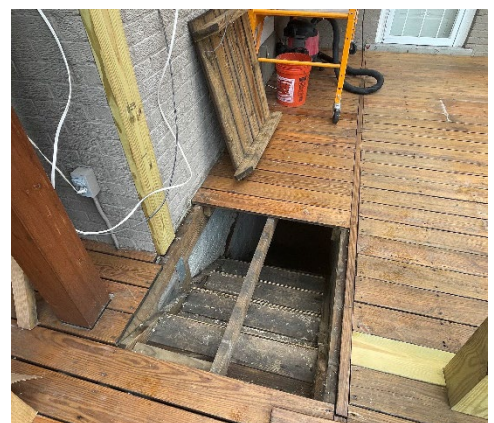
- It is staff's opinion that the removal of this porch and covering the original porch deck with a new deck, arbor and gazebo is inappropriate. The original porch's simple roofline, porch post detailing, which matched the post at the front of the house, are characteristic of the Arts and Crafts architecture of the property. The simplicity of the form, scale and the detailing of the post, and then the removal of all these elements, reduces the form and greatly alters the porch's distinctive, historic expression. (See photo 2 and 4)
- Staff received a description from the applicant that the purpose of the deck was offset storm drainage into the cellar below, which is located next to the rear porch (See site photos 2-3.) The applicant also provided narrative on the purpose of the proposed arbor for the same purpose; basement flooding and dampness has been an issue and the applicant is attempting to offset this condition.
- The applicant had built the deck initially 25-30 years ago, leaving the rear porch in place. In this 2006 aerial, it is staff's opinion that this initial deck installation with the original porch in place and without the gazebo, lampposts, and arbor may have been a potential appropriate proposal without further changes. (See Aerial 2)
- In addition to the removal of the distinctive character defining feature of the rear porch, the massing, design and overall style of the rear elevation of the house has been altered to one that no longer represents the Arts & Crafts style of architecture:
 - the angles and pitches of the gazebo and arbor roof lines conflict with those of the house,
 - the materiality of these new structures do not harmonize with the house's bracketed eaves,
 - construction detailing of the arbor and gazebo shows the elements being joined together (see site photo 6),
 - the introduction of the lampposts adds additional features that are not appropriate to the architecture nor appropriately placed on a wood deck structure. (See site photo 4)
- Staff has the opinion that the fence and gate are appropriate as they follow most of the HDC's (Historic District Commission's) guidelines. However, for better compatibility with the style, design, color of the historic building of this Arts and Crafts design, it is staff's opinion the gate's color should be a solid appropriate color in a dark tone. (See site photo 7)
- Most security cameras are appropriately placed and follow the HDC guidelines. However, staff recommends one location at the front of the house be considered for more precise relocation: the cameras mounted the front post are within view and not mounted up in the eaves as recommend by the HDC guidelines, making them inappropriately visible.



Aerial 2 of Parcel # 03002670. by Eagleview.com, showing 2006 view of rear elevation with new deck and original rear porch roof and post still in place.



Site Photo 4, by Applicant, May 2024: (North) rear elevation, showing deck, arbor and gazebo and contrasting rooflines with the house.



Site Photo 5, by Staff May 28, 2024: (North) rear elevation, showing rear deck with removable doors and staircase to cellar below.

ISSUES

- It is staff’s opinion that the replacement of the original rear porch with the newly constructed arbor, gazebo and deck with lamp posts, destroys distinctive, character-defining historic features and creates a new architectural expression that is not compatible with the historic features, scale, massing, and proportion of the historic architecture of this property. Therefore, this work item does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and does not conform to the district’s Elements of Design.
- While the fence and gate are appropriate, the black with gold contrast do not follow the HDC guidelines as they are not appropriate colors for the front gate and are not compatible with the Arts and Crafts style of the house.
- While most security cameras have been placed appropriately and follow HDC guidelines, staff recommends that the front porch column has security cameras that are located too visibly and should either be relocated or placed higher in the eave to be in compliance with the guidelines.



Site Photo 6 by Staff May 28, 2024: (North) rear elevation, showing elements of the arbor and gazebo construction tying the two structures together.



Site Photo 7 by Staff May 28, 2024: (West) side elevation, showing gate at driveway.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation 1: Replace Rear Porch with Deck, Pergola, And Gazebo, (Work Completed without Approval)

Staff finds that the replacement of the rear porch with the deck, pergola, and gazebo does not meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the following reasons:

- The demolition of the compatible roofline of the rear porch and its single square column post that replicates the detailing of the front porch column destroys distinctive, character-defining historic features that are characteristic of the Arts and Crafts architectural features of the house. Removal of all these elements, reduces the form and greatly alters the porch’s distinctive, historic expression.
- The angles and pitches of the gazebo and arbor roof lines conflict with those of the house.
- The materiality of these new structures does not harmonize with the house’s bracketed eaves.
- Inappropriate construction detailing, such as the fusing of the arbor and gazebo roofline or the scale of the arbor itself, is not compatible by introducing an inappropriate design.
- The introduction of the lampposts adds conjectural features that are not appropriate to the scale, or characteristic of the Arts and Crafts architecture of the house, nor appropriately placed on a wood deck structure



Site Photo 8 by Staff May 28, 2024: (South) front elevation, showing security cameras mounted on front post near front entrance.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the above work items, as it do not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standards:

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 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, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

Recommendation 2: Install Fence with Gate and Security Cameras (Work Completed without Approval)

It is staff's opinion that the installation of the fence, gate, and security cameras is appropriate. Staff therefore recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed because it meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the District's Elements of Design.

Staff recommends the COA be issued with following conditions, subject to staff review:

- The applicant paints the gate a solid appropriate color in a dark tone, approved by HDC staff.
- The applicant relocates the security cameras at the front porch post to an appropriate height or location.