

STAFF REPORT: 03/25/2025 REGULAR MEETING

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00011

ADDRESS: 2010-2040 MICHIGAN AVE.

HISTORIC DISTRICT: CORKTOWN

APPLICANT/ARCHITECT: KENNETH MOODY/KM CONSULTING

PROPERTY OWNER: 2000 MICHIGAN AVE LLC

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 02/17/2025

DATES OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 02/26/2025, 02/28/2025

PREPARED BY: D. RIEDEN

SCOPE: CONSTRUCT PARKING LOT AND TRASH ENCLOSURE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The project site is a fenced vacant lot surfaced in gravel/asphalt that consists of 5 adjacent parcels along the northside of 2010-2040 Michigan Avenue near the Vermont Street corner. An alley borders the west and north sides of this asphalt-gravel area with a brick-clad commercial building on the east edge of this lot. A 4' chain link fence runs around the south and west property lines of the collective lots with a metal gate approximately midblock on Michigan Avenue. A portable metal shed on wood pallets is in the northwest corner of the lot.



Site Photo 1, by Staff Feb. 28, 2025: (Facing north) Michigan Ave., showing existing parking lot.



Site Photo 2, by Staff Feb. 28, 2025: (Facing northeast) showing entrance gate and proposed locations for trash enclosure (existing trash container location next to building) and new entrance location.



Site Photo 3, by Staff Feb. 26, 2025: (Facing west) showing metal shed on wood pallet.



Aerial of Parcels #08000546, 08000545, 08000544, 08000543, and 08000542.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Corktown Historic District was established in 1984.
- The National Register Report states that Corktown's period of significance is 1840-1930 (*p.30 of National Register Report*).
- Staff reviewed Sanborn maps dating from 1884 to 1951 and found that while the east and west parcels of the site had buildings nearly occupying the extent of their parcels, 2-3 central parcels were nearly vacant during Corktown's period of significance. (*See figures 4-6.*)
- Although parking activity has occurred on this property based on Planning and Development Department (PDD) and Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department (BSEED), it is staff's understanding that the legal use of parking has not been established for these parcels. These lots appear to require a change of use.
- Staff has recommended against approval of surface parking lots in historic districts, except when they directly support new construction that supports historic context. The impact of a property's change of use on the historic district shall satisfy the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, in this case, especially Standard 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."

This prominent location in a historic district has central parcels which have had a long history of vacancy or open space through Corktown's period of significance and at the time of designation. It is staff's opinion that this specific location has been historically vacant and a parking lot is not a demonstrably inappropriate use until market forces allow for higher density development; a parking lot can be reverted to an appropriate building site when more favorable market forces are present.

- The Corktown Elements of Design offer the following insight regarding this proposal (Sec. 21-2-142):
 - (5) *Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets:* "Rhythm has been interrupted by vacant lots due to demolition of buildings almost throughout the district."

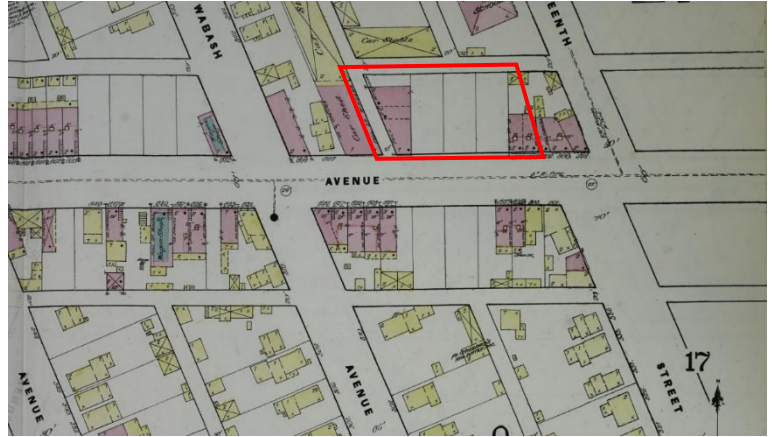


Figure 4, 1884 Sanborn, Vol 1., 27: Red box shows parcels at 2010-2040 Michigan with brick commercial buildings at the east and west edges of the site.

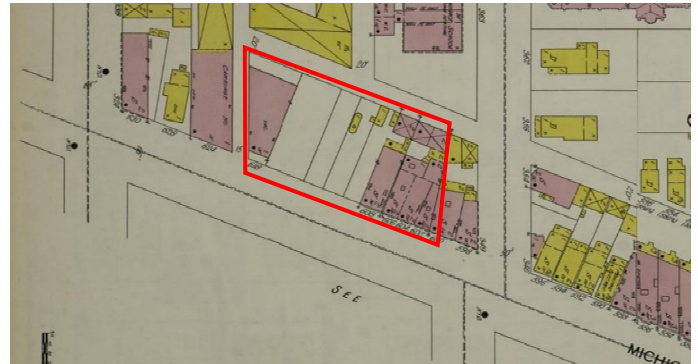


Figure 5, 1897 Sanborn, Vol 2., 32: Red box shows parcels at 2010-2040 Michigan with additional brick commercial buildings at the east and west edges of the site. Less substantial structures are present in the vacant central parcels.

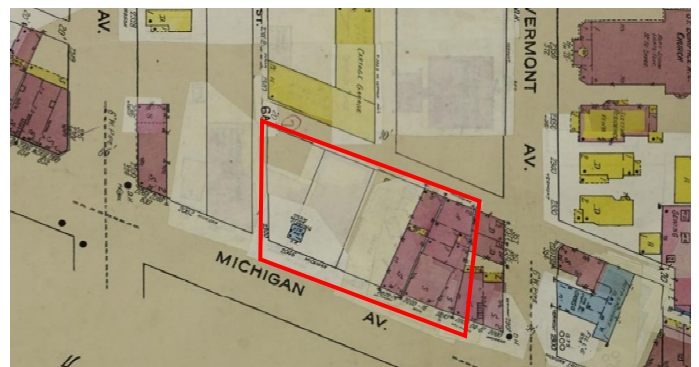


Figure 6, 1949-1951 Sanborn, Vol 2., 40: Red box shows parcel at 2010-2040 Michigan with brick commercial buildings at the east edge infilling with more construction and west edge building is no longer present. The small, blue-colored structure in the center lot is labeled, "Steam motor cleaning" and "HTR RM".

- (7) *Relationships of materials*: "...The small commercial buildings, the industrial buildings, the fire station, and most of the institutional buildings in the district are brick."
- (12) *Walls of continuity*: "The major wall of continuity is created by the buildings, with their fairly uniform setbacks within blocks. Mature and recently planted trees along the tree lawns create a secondary wall of continuity."
- (13) *Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments*: "...Hedges are occasionally planted along the side lot lines in the front yards and sometimes along the front lot line; this treatment usually occurs on corner lots when it exists... Alleys in the district are paved in concrete. Vacant lots are either paved-over or graveled as parking lots or are unkept..."
- The proposed 6' high trash enclosure with brick cladding with the associate 6' wood fence is appropriate in staff's opinion because the scale and placement are recessed from the public sidewalk and offers a screen that is of height and materiality which recesses in the landscape and complements the adjacent building. The work will not destroy historic materials that characterize the nearby historic properties and is generally compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features of its historic surrounds. Also, the work can be removed in the future in a manner which will not impair the essential form and integrity of the nearby historic properties. The proposed trash enclosure therefore meets the Standards and the district's Elements of Design.
- The proposed prefabricated booth, which is made primarily of steel and glass, is removable. It is staff's opinion that this item, which is small in scale and modest in design and material for its simplicity and placement setback from the plane from adjacent buildings is not demonstrably inappropriate. The work will not destroy historic materials that characterize the nearby historic properties and is generally compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features of its historic surrounds. Also, the work can be removed in the future in a manner which will not impair the essential form and integrity of the nearby historic properties. The proposed booth therefore meets the Standards and district's Elements of Design.
- The proposed landscape contributes, in staff's opinion, to the *walls of continuity* and *relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments*, along the commercial strip that has been otherwise vacant and is appropriate.
- Staff received clarification regarding the following items that were not clear in the initial application (*See A1.2 in the application*):
 - The treatment for the fence at the trash enclosure will be stained "special blend" per the attached documents.
 - Details regarding the proposed new 4' metal fence shown on the site plan to replace the chain link fence along the west property line.
 - The pavers leading to the trash enclosure are concrete, color gray.
 - Clarification of the plant list, which initially showed a mislabeled species (P1). This shrub is a "golden globe" variety of arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*).

ISSUES

- None.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation 1 of 1, Certificate of Appropriateness

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Corktown Historic District's Elements of Design.