

STAFF REPORT 07-13-22 MEETING

PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG

APPLICATION NUMBER: 22-7909

ADDRESS: 1901 CHICAGO

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT/OWNER: JANNA WALTENBAUGH/BRADLEY NASH

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 06-20-22

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 07-01-2022, 07-12-2022 (INTERIOR)

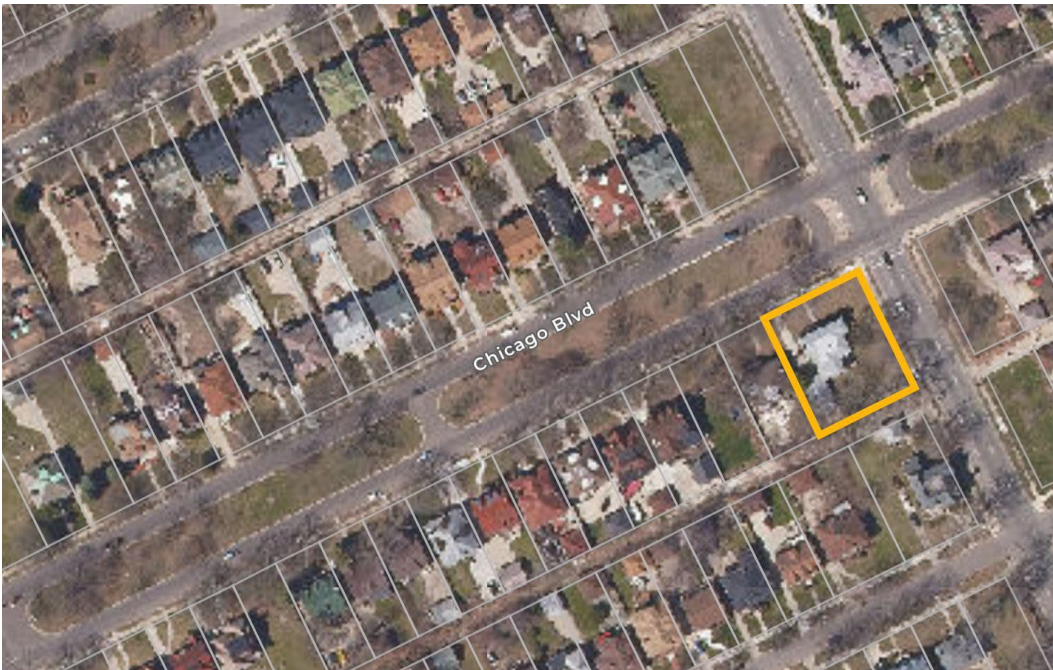
SCOPE: REPLACE WINDOWS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The subject site is a circa 1951 two-story, single-family home located on Chicago Boulevard, at the southwest corner of 12th Street (Rosa Parks). The Colonial Revival-style building, though post-war, is complementary and contributing to the historic district. The building's primary architectural expression is red brick divided by a double-height, engaged colonnade composed of pilasters that partition the front facade in an asymmetrical manner, highlighting the form and function of the interior rooms in a typically modern manner. A recessed entrance, with Colonial Revival elements and expansive glass sidelights/transom, welcomes visitors. Windows throughout are wood casements, themselves an amalgam of the mid-century trend toward casements, rendered in traditional materials. The casements are attached at the exterior with ornamental strap hinges. Some window openings are crowned with flat brick arches and stone keys. Where extant on primary elevations, wood shutters flank the casements.



View of 1901 Chicago, looking southeast, Staff photo, July 1, 2022.



1901 Chicago outlined in yellow, per Detroit Parcel Viewer.



View to the west of the east (12th Street) elevation. Staff photo, July 1, 2022



View to the northwest, showing rear of property from 12th Street sidewalk. Bay window apparent at patio. Staff photo, July 1, 2022



Interior detail view of typical sill conditions. Note missing operator, worn spline, and insulated glazing. Staff photo, July 12, 2022



View of window with operator crank intact. Staff photo, July 12, 2022



Typical view of ornamental closer at mullion, one of two per sash. Staff photo, July 12, 2022

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Per the submitted drawings, photos, documents, and scope of work, the applicant is proposing to **replace twenty-five (25) exterior casement windows; thirteen (13/all) at the front façade and twelve (12) at the rear**. The application additionally includes all the basement windows. An emergency egress window will also be installed at grade on the 12th Street (Rosa Parks) side.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston-Edison Historic District was established in 1973
- The house features Pella wood casement windows with what appears to be bronze or other non-ferrous metal hardware. The windows are glazed with thin double-glazed panes. A majority of the windows are missing the operators (turn cranks). At least one windows is missing the entire operator unit at the sill. Most sash locks are intact. At the exterior, ornamental hinges, typically three (3) to a side, are present. One original casement at the south (rear yard) dining room bay window is missing (1 of 6 at that location). In its place is an amateurish reproduction created out of plexiglass and low quality wood that has fallen to pieces. At another, second, location, a vinyl unit has been installed to accommodate a window A/C unit.
- After research and field investigation, staff determines with confidence that the Pella wood casement windows are original to this mid-century home:
 - Pella wood casement windows were heavily advertised to the trade and the public in the late 1940s/1950s
 - The quality of the windows, including the hardware, is consistent with the early post-war period
 - While the insulated glass *may* have been replaced more recently, staff has also found historical records noting the availability of insulated glass in mid-century Pella casements. The insulated glazing accounts for the flat and consistent sheen seen in the photographs of these windows, as opposed to the more variegated glazing found in multi-light pre-war windows.
- Staff notes that the replacement of these same windows was considered by the Commission in February/March of 2000 and issued a Denial. At that time, they were just approaching 50 years in age (i.e., historic age). Since that time, they have apparently been cleaned up and repainted. At the time, historic staff noted that Standard 6 required the repair, rather than replacement, of these distinctive character-defining features. Where elements are deteriorated beyond repair, they “shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials”. Should any of the wood casements be found to be beyond repair, it would be appropriate to replace them with matching wood units.

ISSUES

- The windows are of historic age (now more than 70 years old), in generally fair to good condition (with missing hardware) and apparently original to the property. Staff observed only limited and repairable deterioration of wood elements. In staff’s opinion the windows are distinctive character-defining features on an uncommon mid-century historic property, and at a highly visible corner location. As a mid-century home, the building is somewhat less ornamented than pre-war colonial precedents. For this reason the original windows have a strong role to play in establishing and perpetuating the property’s historic character.
- Because Standard 6 of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation requires the repair of distinctive character-defining features, when technically feasible, it is staff’s opinion that the windows should not be replaced. Staff assesses that repair is possible, though not necessarily as simple as mere replacement. Staff stipulates that typical window contractors, and current Pella factory representatives, may not be familiar with and do not undertake or supply parts for such repairs; however, vintage operators and mechanisms for Pella casement windows appear to be available from several sources online and it is not unreasonable to expect that a competent craftsman or mechanic could make the installations. While exact matching bronze handles may not be found, the splines and mechanisms will accept alternate models that will allow these historic windows to survive additional decades into the future.
- For the two locations with missing windows, staff recommends, per NPS guidelines, that a *compatible*

window be installed since the original units are no longer extant. This guideline allows for somewhat more flexibility in material/design than the *matching* requirement of Standard 6. However, the two new casements should still have true or simulated divided lights, and should be designed to incorporate as seamlessly as possible aside the existing historic units.

- The proposed replacement windows were initially submitted with between-the-glass grids specified. The applicant has subsequently clarified that simulated divided lights are possible with the chosen product, and is scheduled to submit a sample to staff for examination by the Commission.
- Staff has no issue with the basement windows. While it is staff's opinion that the addition of a basement egress window at an existing residential home is not required to comply with the *2015 Michigan Rehabilitation Code* (specifically, Chapter 12, *Historic Buildings*), the addition of such a facility in this location does not negatively impact the property's historic character.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation 1 of 2, Replacement of original wood casement windows, multiple locations

Staff finds that the proposed replacement of the original post-war wood casement windows alters features and spaces that characterize the property, destroys historic materials, fails to preserve distinctive features that characterize the property, and is incompatible with the historic integrity of the Boston-Edison 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:

(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, 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 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.

Recommendation 2 of 2, Installation of two (2) replacement windows where no existing historic windows remain, replacement of basement windows with glass block

Staff recommends that the proposal to install two (2) replacement windows where incompatible/non-historic window sash exist, and the replacement of the basement windows with glass block, be issued a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and conforms with the District's Elements of Design, subject to the condition that:

- The applicant work with staff to develop a final compatible design for the two replacement locations, to be a casement sash with simulated or true divided lights in a reasonably similar design to the neighboring original units.