

STAFF REPORT: 8/10/2022 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO

APPLICATION NUMBER: 22-7946

ADDRESS: 1427 EDISON

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT: NATASHA MCCLURE

PROPERTY OWNER: NATASHA MCCLURE

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: JUNE 16, 2022

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JULY 22, 2022

SCOPE: INSTALL PORCELAIN TILES AT FRONT PORCH

EXISTING CONDITIONS

1427 Edison is a two-and-a-half story, dark red-brown, Colonial Revival house built in 1916. It faces north onto its street in the Boston-Edison Historic District. The house is comparable to the other houses in the district in age and scale. Its full-width front porch with poured concrete deck is a prominent feature.



July 2022 photo by staff.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to cover the current poured concrete porch surface with 12" x 24" slate-colored porcelain tile in an offset pattern. The outer edge is proposed to be unfinished. The tile surface is proposed for the deck only and is not to include the steps.

According to the applicant, the "porch has several cracks and unremovable dried glue from previous covering" and has "bad patch jobs around the edges" and the proposed installation will remedy this situation by creating a "smoother" and "more level" surface.



Front Porch of subject property. June 2022 photo by applicant.



Proposed porcelain tiles. Photo provided by applicant.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston Edison Historic District was established by resolution of the City Council in 1974. No Final Report was prepared for this district. The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-106) mention porches in subsections on overall massing and on architectural detail, but do not discuss surface treatment. A photograph taken at the time the district was established depicts a concrete porch with much the same appearance as today, though only the central bay is visible—the east bay and west end (left and right, respectively, in the photo below) are obscured by shrubbery. A metal railing visible in the 1974 photo has since been removed.



1974 photo by the Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board.

- From a site visit, staff notes that the slope of the terrain combined with the height of the porch makes it difficult to clearly see the porch surface from the public right-of-way. For description, staff relies on photographs provided by this applicant and a prior applicant.
- Google Street View from the early 2000s depicts the porch covered in what appears to be a reddish carpet; the railing is still present.
- The current condition of the porch is the result of repair work done in 2017, during which the underlying porch kneewall, a brick pier at the northeast corner, the easternmost brick porch support, and the easternmost wing wall were replaced (the railing was removed as well). A brick header course presently running along the front of the porch deck is likely to have been added at this time. Although a Certificate of Appropriateness was issued for this repair work, the COA did not mention the header course, and it is unclear why this was added without approval. This header course likely replaces a stone coping similar to that which appears (based on photos) to be employed at the east and west sides of the porch. Such a coping serves an aesthetic function, by emphasizing the horizontality of the porch, and a practical one, by directing water runoff away from the brick masonry beneath, and staff would consider the removal of such a coping to be inappropriate.
- Staff surveyed the thirty-seven houses on both sides of the subject block of Edison, and found that thirty-three feature uncovered concrete porch decks. One house has a porch covered in carpet. Three houses have porches finished with inlaid terra-cotta-colored quarry tile applications in a grid pattern.



Subject property in 2011. Photo from Google Street View.



Porch in 2017. Photo from prior Historic District Commission application.



Inlay tilework at 1467 (left) and 1457 (right) Edison. July 2022 photos by staff.

ISSUES

- As the large majority of houses surveyed (see above) feature poured concrete porch decks, staff suggests that a poured concrete porch deck is characteristic of the houses in the Boston-Edison Historic District. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation (Standard #2) state that “alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.”
- Exterior cement-based grout is not fully reversible without damage to the substrate. Standard #10 states “new additions ... 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.”

RECOMMENDATION

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

Staff recommends that the Commission issue a Denial of the proposed work as it does not 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.*
- 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.*