

STAFF REPORT: APRIL 12, 2023 MEETING

PREPARED BY: A. DYE

APPLICATION NUMBER: 23-8285

ADDRESS: 1444 EDISON

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT: SHERYL MURPHY, TYKEY PM

PROPERTY OWNER: MICHAEL SHELP

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: MARCH 20, 2023

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: MARCH 28, 2023

SCOPE: INSTALL VINYL WINDOWS, ENTRY AND STORM DOORS, GARAGE DOORS, INSTALL VINYL SIDING ON GARAGE (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL), INSTALL GLASS BLOCK/BRICK-IN BASEMENT WINDOWS – *4/12/2023 – staff report revised to include new entry door and installed vinyl windows at side elevations and front elevation dormers*

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Erected in 1917, the 2-1/2 story house is faced with variegated dark reddish brown and black brick. The verticality of the structure is emphasized by the raised basement and the two-story bay and box bay windows that appear to extend beyond the roofline due to the aligned gable and recessed shed dormers. Aluminum siding covers the dormer walls. Soldier courses at the tops and bottoms of the window openings continuously circle the four sides of the structure, with stone sills installed at the front elevation. Historic window sash remains in the basement window openings, at the second floor of the rear elevation, as well as a leaded glass window on the west side elevation within the small stucco extension. The remaining openings are filled with vinyl replacement units of varying operation, size, and glass configuration.

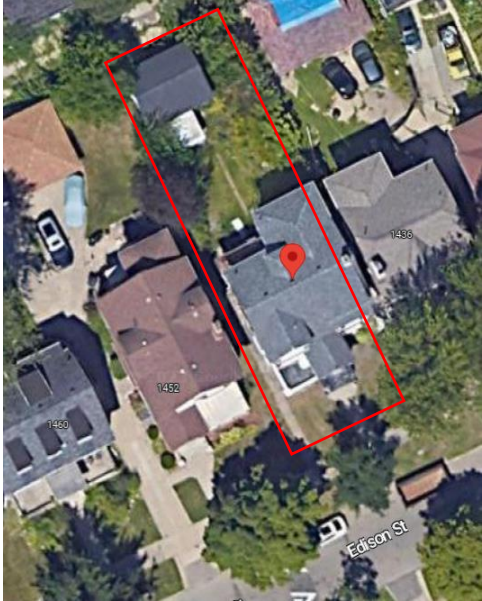
The centrally placed front entrance is accentuated by a gabled roof that is supported by brick columns. Decorative beams and triangular knee braces are located under the wide, flat rake boards at each gable. An open porch extends to the west of the front entrance, and is enclosed with low height brick walls. Ventilation openings, consisting of three vertical openings supported by thick stone headers and narrow sills, are centrally placed on each porch wall. Horizontal and vertical soldier courses and corner cast stone pieces frame each ventilation opening, and a protruding scupper further accentuates the front-facing wall.



Staff photo, March 28, 2023.

A detached 2-car garage is located at the northwest corner of the rear yard. The single-story wood-framed structure has an automotive entrance facing the alley. The smaller opening has an overhead door, and remnants of hinges remain on the outer frame of the tall opening, giving evidence to the likelihood that it had had an out-swing door. The applicant recently confirmed that the historic door for the larger opening is inside the garage; it is their intention to restore and reinstall this door.

A narrow concrete walk extends from the rear of the house to the garage and is visible in the aerial photo.



Google aerial image



Garage from alley. Staff photo, 04-04-2023

PROPOSAL – During the staff’s April 4th site visit, it was identified that some of the work has already been completed, either by the applicant or the previous owner(*).

Front Elevation

Brick-in front elevation basement window opening next to front porch, install vents for HVAC.

Repair masonry at top of front window over open porch – tuck-point only.

New entry door

***Installed vinyl windows at dormers (single/double-hung unit, slider unit)**

Paint porch ceiling antique red

Repaint black trim and masonry details white (currently non-approved black)

Sides and Rear Elevations

Install glass block in basement window openings, one rear opening to include dryer vent.

***Vinyl windows at first and second floors**

Rear elevation

Install JELD-WEN vinyl single-hung windows in kitchen, white.

***Replace entry doors and install security doors**

Repair back porch ceiling - install new wood beadboard to match existing, paint to match.

Garage

***Install white 4-inch lap vinyl siding, wood grain surface, Ply Gem**

***Install new pedestrian door**

***Install new overhead door**

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston-Edison Historic District was established in 1974.
- Due to the mismatching vinyl windows at the front elevation, staff researched the history of the house. Starting with the designation photo, mismatching windows were already present at the first floor. The symmetrical design of the front elevation suggests the first floor windows would have originally been identical, in design and operation, to the windows present at the second floor; the one-over-one double-hung and large plate glass windows suggest replacement window sash. Note the unique muntin pattern in the upper sash of the double-hung windows at the second floor, as well as the arched window above the front entrance. As the first floor windows were in place at time of designation, those window units would not be considered a violation.



Designation photo, 1974, HDAB

- In 2000, HDC staff noticed that windows at the front elevation were removed without Commission approval.
- The violation letter and inspection request (*below*) didn't specify which window openings were affected, and the supporting photograph posted on the violation inspection request isn't clear due to awnings obscuring the window openings. The historic windows within the dormers are visibly present, however.
- Staff wasn't able to locate records for BSEED inspections from 2000, so there is no confirmation of what city action occurred after the memo was issued.

CITY OF DETROIT
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

65 CADILLAC SQ., SUITE 1300
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226
PHONE 313-224-6536
FAX 313-224-1310

April 20, 2000

1444 Edison
Detroit, MI 48202

RE: Property at 1444 Edison; Boston Edison Historic District, Detroit

Dear _____

According to the City of Detroit's records, you are the owner of 1444 Edison. The property is located in the Boston Edison Historic District. While I was doing fieldwork I observed that exterior changes have been made to the building without approval of the Historic District Commission. The change includes replacing original windows with vinyl windows.

In order to be in compliance with the ordinance you must immediately submit an application for building permit along with the supporting documents listed in the brochure I am enclosing. If I receive the application and documents by May 26, 2000, I will place the application on the agenda of the next regular meeting of the Commission scheduled for June 14, 2000.

If I do not receive an application from you by **July 3, 2000**, I will request that the Buildings and Safety Engineering Department inspect the property and issue a violation for the work completed without a permit.

It is a violation of Section 25-2-18 of the Detroit City Code to perform any work to the exterior of a property without the approval of the Detroit Historic District Commission. Persons violating the ordinance may be required to pay a \$500 fine and/or be ordered to restore the property to its original condition.

If you are no longer the owner of the property, have a building permit for the work, or have questions, please call me at 313-224-8907.

Sincerely,
Danielle Hall
Danielle Hall
Staff
Historic District Commission

CITY OF DETROIT
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

65 CADILLAC SQ., SUITE 1300
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226
PHONE 313-224-6536
FAX 313-224-1310

REQUEST FOR INSPECTION OF A VIOLATION

DATE: October 20, 2000

TO: Ms. Geni M. Giannotti, Director
Buildings and Safety Engineering Department
Room 434 City-County Building
Detroit, Michigan 48226

FROM: Patricia R. Linklater, Chair *Patricia R. Linklater*
Detroit Historic District Commission
65 Cadillac Square, Suite 2000
Detroit, Michigan 48226

It has come to Commission staff's attention that the following property has had exterior changes without commission approval, and possibly without a building permit. Please inspect the property, issue a violation notice if appropriate, and report your findings to our staff person, Kristine Kidorf, so that she may inform the commission. If you have any questions she may be contacted at 224-6536. Thank you for your assistance.

ADDRESS: 1444 Edison
DISTRICT: Boston Edison Historic District
PROPERTY
OWNER: Jack Harden, 1444 Edison, Detroit 48206
WORK
DONE: Installation of vinyl replacement windows without a permit.

PLEASE SEND A COPY OF THE VIOLATION NOTICE TO THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION. THANK YOU!

copy: S. Johnson, B&SE
D. Mazurek, Law Dept.
J. Ashford, Law Dept.
A. Bodley, Law Dept.

Photo taken 3/28/00, by D. Hall

- The 2009 Google image shows the first floor clear glass units have been replaced with between-the-glass muntin-patterned sash; the operation of the double-hung windows changed to casements. The historic windows at the second floor are gone; one-over-one double-hung units fill the openings. Therefore, between 2000 and 2009 all of the first and second floor windows were replaced (some, or all, of which were included in the 2000 violation). These windows are not included in this application.



Google street view, July 2009

- In October 2020, HDC staff was notified of work occurring without Commission approval, namely the painting black of decorative elements (specifically, the corner stones on the porch walls and first floor window headers, the tops at the porch's cheek walls and decorative trim on the masonry columns, the concrete stairs, and the eaves of the attic gables). The original window sash in the dormers were still present.



Staff photo, October 15, 2020.

- In 2021, staff was notified that windows were being removed (*circled below*). Violation notices were sent to the owner (November 2020 for the painting; June and November 2021 for the painting and windows), but no response was received; these remain active violations. At the time of the staff report, this scope of work has not been added to the application.



Staff photo, June 25, 2021



West Elevation

The close-up photo, above, shows unfinished work at the window openings. Wood framing at the second floor and insulation at the third floor are visible due to the original brick mould being removed and new brickmould (or coil stock as shown in the far-right window at the second floor) hasn't been installed.

One historic window sash remains intact, the leaded glass unit in the stucco covered extension.



Staff photo, March 28, 2023



- During 2023 site visits for this application, Staff has confirmed that historic window units remain in place at the basement openings on each elevation, and at the second story on the rear elevation, and east side elevation at the first floor. Similar to the front elevation second and third floors, staff didn't find record of Commission approval for the existing vinyl windows at the first floor at the rear elevation, which encompasses the 16-over-16 sash as well as the adjacent one-over-one unit.

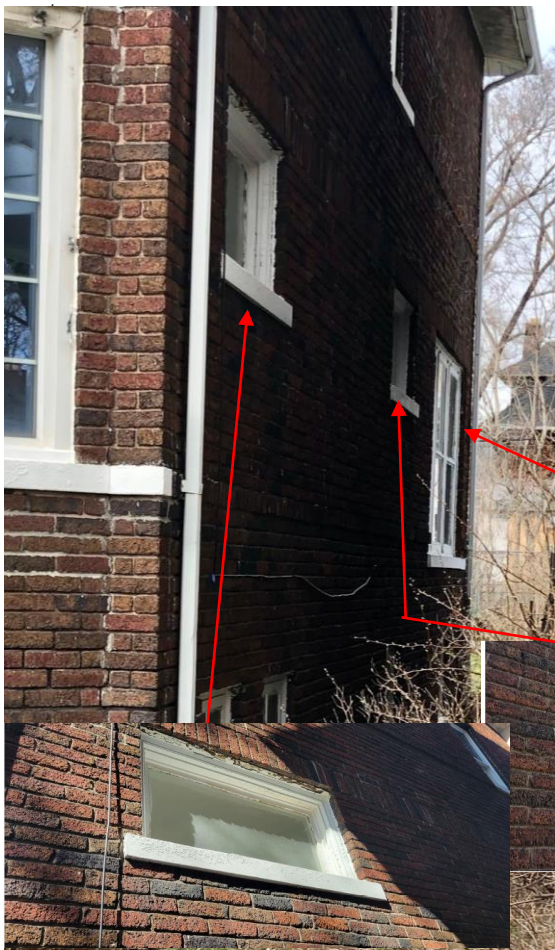


Staff photo, April 4, 2023

West Elevation
 Historic sash at second floor
 Vinyl replacement windows at first floor



East Elevation
 Historic window units remain at the first floor which include two single opening, fixed windows and a mulled triple double-hung window opening near the rear elevation.
 Vinyl replacement windows are at the second and third/attic floors.



- The historic fixed/awning units at the first floor are minimally visible from the front of the property, while the windows at the second and third floor are only visible when standing at the side lot line, directly next to the neighboring house; only the sills are highly visible.
- The historic units at the first floor near the rear of the house, while not visible from the public right-of-way are distinctive character-defining features of the house due to their placement and relationship with the other mullioned window openings at the rear of the house (first and second floor) which offers a porch-like design (and possibly sleeping porch at the second floor) within masonry walls.



Applicant photos.

ISSUES

Front Elevation Basement Window

- The front-facing basement window with vertical mullion echoes the verticality and size of the porch’s decorative ventilation openings.

There is a symmetry to the four levels of openings at the front of the house which would be altered by the removal of the basement window. The installation of vents on a primary façade would be an additional visual intrusion.

Staff questions the possibility of bricking in one of the basement windows on the east elevation. The side windows are very close to the applicant’s proposed location, but the east wall openings are partially obscured from public view due to the close adjacency of the neighboring house. As this wall is likely always in shadow, the visual impact of the vents could be lessened further.



- A photo of new brick was submitted, which staff assumes was selected for the bricking-in of the basement window. Color-wise, some of the darker bricks appear to be close to the color of existing bricks, but the light colored bricks are too bright and too orange. If only used to brick-in one window opening, it might be possible to find enough darker bricks within this collection to offer a suitable match as the enclosure is small. In addition to the low visibility of an east elevation basement opening, the new brick should be recessed from the outer walls, so the window opening remains clearly visible. A recessed placement would further obscure these items from public view. The dimensions of the existing and proposed brick were not submitted, so staff can't offer additional comment on appropriateness of the new bricks beyond the color.



Brick Repair at Front Elevation

- The applicant submitted the below photo of the general area where the repair will take place. The applicant confirmed in an email that only tuck-pointing will occur.
- A written scope of work that specifies the mortar composition and mortar joint is still required. Should any new bricks be needed in this area, the purchased bricks discussed above are not appropriate for use at this primary façade location.



All photos on this page are from the applicant.

Installation of Vinyl Windows at Rear Elevation

- The applicant is requesting to replace two wood windows at the rear of the house with vinyl framed single-hung units. Staff doesn't consider this window opening a character-defining feature, so replacement of the existing window sash will not remove distinctive features. However, the operation and general appearance of the new windows should remain historically appropriate. Single-hung windows have an upper sash that is welded to the outer frame which would change the dimensionality of the windows and opening. Wood sash double-hung units are more likely to match the existing windows in operation and sash dimensions, as well as exterior finish colors. Most white vinyl windows, including the selected JELD-WEN unit, are brilliant white and are not compatible with historic color palettes.



Installation of Front Entry Door

- The current front door appears to be a historic wood paneled door with small glass panels at eye level; it is painted white. The current door appears to match the door in place at time of designation. No information or photographs documenting the physical condition of the existing door was submitted. The proposed door is a steel and composite frame unit with walnut finish.



1974 designation photo



Staff photo, March 28, 2023



Proposed replacement door

Garage

- The garage picture submitted with the initial application shows wide clapboard aluminum siding that closely matched the siding present at the front elevation gables. The photo is not very clear, but staff believes a different siding, probably shake shingles, was installed within the gable ends. The historic windows have an uneven muntin pattern, as seen on the upper sash of the historic windows that remain on the rear elevation of the house. It is staff's opinion that the garage, as displayed in the "before" photo, had an architectural compatibility with the house through the use of similar materials and architectural components (i.e., the windows).



Applicant photos. Photos at left and below show current garage conditions.



- Staff inquired on whether wood siding was revealed when the aluminum siding was removed. The applicant told staff no; however, staff isn't sure why the vinyl siding (and the aluminum before that) sits forward from the window and door trim. The 4-inch vinyl clapboard siding (*above left*) was installed on the entire side wall surfaces and created a monolithic and contemporary appearance at these elevations.

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

Recommendation One – Denial – Vinyl siding, vinyl windows, front entry door, red finish at porch ceiling

The installation of vinyl siding, vinyl windows, **steel entry door and painted red porch ceiling**, are not compatible with the architectural style and age of the garage and house. The installed synthetic siding does not adequately reproduce a historic wall surface, and the proposed replacement window does not match the historic sash in operation, dimensionality, and color. **A physical assessment and detailed photos confirming the current condition of the front door was not submitted, and the steel/composite replacement door does not mimic the dimensions, pattern and materiality of the existing door. The brick red paint color selected for the porch roof is not an appropriate color at this location as the wood ceiling should be painted to match the existing wood trim (off-white).** It is staff's opinion the installation of the vinyl siding and proposed vinyl windows alter features and spaces that characterize the property, and therefore recommends the Commission issue a denial for the work as proposed because it does not meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Elements of Design for the district, specifically Standards:

- 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.*
- 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.*
- 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.*

Recommendation Two – Certificate of Appropriateness – Installation of glass block, rear entry doors and storm doors, front entry door, overhead door and pedestrian door at garage, bricking-in of one basement window opening and masonry repair at front elevation

It is staff's opinion the remaining work will not alter the features and spaces that characterize the property. 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 Elements of Design for the district.

Staff recommends the Certificate of Appropriateness be issued with the following conditions:

- *An east elevation basement window will be selected for the HVAC vent installation. The brick and vents will be recessed one inch from the exterior house wall. Dimensions of the existing and new brick will be submitted to staff, along with a photo of the selected brick sitting next to the wall of the house for confirmation of color match.*
- *A bulleted scope of work for the masonry repair will be submitted for staff review and will list the defined boundary for the work and mortar specifications (matching the strength, composition, color, and profile of the historic mortar). Should it be determined that some replacement brick is needed, new brick samples will be submitted for staff review to confirm the size, pattern, color, and surface texture will closely match the historic brick.*