

STAFF REPORT: 9/13/2023 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

ADDRESS: 1405 CHICAGO BOULEVARD

APPLICATION NO: 2023-8519

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT/OWNER: FRANCISCO JAVIER PARICO

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 8/31/2023 & 9/6/2023

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 8/20/2023

SCOPE: REPLACE WINDOWS, FENCE, LANDSCAPING (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The property at 1405 Chicago Boulevard. is a two-story, single-family home that was erected ca. 1920. Although the property has a Chicago Boulevard address, the front façade faces east on Byron Street. The building features a front-gabled main mass with an intersecting hipped roof wing at the south side. A full-width, shed roof dormer and smaller hipped-roof dormers top the roof. Exterior walls are clad with stucco which has been painted grey. Windows are double-hung, casement, and fixed vinyl units which were installed without Historic District Commission approval. A 6'-0" tall wood fence encloses the building's side yard.





1405 Chicago Blvd., current appearance. Staff photos taken on 8/31/2023

PROPOSAL

Per the current submittal, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval to retain a number of exterior work items which have been completed in the recent past without HDC approval. Specific work items included in the current scope in the following:

- Replace historic wood windows with new vinyl units
- Remove trees and shrubs at front and side yards
- Erect a new wood, 6'-0" tall wood fence at side yard
- Replace the existing concrete driveway with a new concrete driveway

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The following is a timeline re: the unapproved replacement of the original wood windows with new vinyl units:
 - By 2011, the Detroit Landbank Authority (DLBA) had gained ownership of the property. Sometime between 2011 and 2013, the DLBA removed the original wood windows and stored them in the basement at a nearby property
 - The DLBA sold the property in 2014 (to Jeffrey Tibbs). The new property owner re-installed the stored original wood windows by August of 2015
 - In December 2016, staff issued a COA to Mr. Tibbs the for the repair of re-installed original wood windows and the installation of new wood windows to match the original where no units existed
 - In June 2017, HDC staff was notified that Mr. Tibbs had installed new vinyl windows at the home
 - The home has been sold at least twice since the unapproved vinyl window installation

- A former owner painted the home grey without HDC approval. Staff issued an approval of the project/the current paint color (to Derrick Miller) after the fact in 2021
- In 2022, staff was made aware that all trees and shrubs had been removed from the subject parcel. Also, a new fence had been erected at the side yard and the driveway had been replaced. None of the work items had been approved by the HDC
- The current owners/applicants purchased the home on 2/14/2023. Note that all unapproved work/the work included in the current scope was undertaken by past owners

ISSUES

- As noted above, a former owner replaced the original driveway with a new driveway. See the below photos which indicate that the footprints of both driveways are similar. Also, and the materiality (concrete) and location of both driveways are the same. Staff has no issue with this scope item and recommends its approval.



Google Streetview, 2019



Google Streetview, 2022

- As noted above, the existing fencing was erected in 2022 without HDC approval. It is a dog-eared style, 6'-0" high wood fence that is painted white. The fence is located at the southern and western perimeter of the parcel and encloses the property's south side/front yard, along Byron Street. The fencing located at the along Byron Street was installed adjacent to the sidewalk, pushing forward of/to the east of the home's front façade. While the placement does not conform to the guidelines, staff does note that a chain link fence was once extant at that location (see below). Also, two other fences within the block are similarly located because all other yards in the bear vicinity are rear yards. Also, please note that the fence guidelines are not requirements. Rather, they outline the conditions under which staff can issue an administrative approval. The Commission can approve fence proposals which do not conform to the guidelines if they determine that the proposal meets the Standards and conform to the Elements of Design for the district. It is staff's opinion that the work is appropriate and recommends it's approval.





Additional fences located at the sidewalk, within the same block on Byron. Google Streetview 2022

- See the below photos and images which indicate that most of the landscaping from the side and rear yards was removed in 2023. Also, see designation slide from 1980 which indicates that shrubs were present within the north side yard (along Chicago Blvd) and the shade trees which were in the south side yard (along Byron) were also present)



These mature shade trees removed at side yard along Byron. Also all of the shrubs were removed. Google Streetview, 2019



Side yard along Byron, taken immediately after landscape removal. Google Streetview, 2022.

Compare to above photo



These shrubs removed in side yard along Chicago Blvd. Google Streetview, 2019



Property's appearance of side yard, along Chicago post landscape removal. Google Streetview, 2022



Current appearance, photo taken 8/31/2023



Appearance in 1980. Note presence of shrubs



Appearance in 1980. Note presence of shade trees

- As demonstrated in the above photos, the two shade trees in the southern side yard (along Byron) and the shrubs in the northern side yard (along Chicago) that were recently removed

without HDC approval were present in 1980. The HDC staff landscape architect reviewed the designation slides and found that the trees and shrubs were likely historic age. Staff does support the remove of the one shade tree which was close to the front/east façade because it's root system would likely damage the house. However, it is staff's opinion that the recent removal of the shade tree that was removed from the southeast corner of the parcel, the removal of the line of shrubs along the western edge of the property (at the side yard along Chicago Blvd.), and the removal of the shrub at the northeastern corner of the property (at the side yard along Chicago Blvd) was inappropriate to the property's historic character. Staff recommends that these elements be replaced with like landscaping and a new shade tree to support the district's historically-significant tree canopy.

- As previously noted, the current vinyl window units were installed by a previous property owner in 2017 without HDC approval. See the below photos of the original windows and the current vinyl units.



North side, 2016 conditions



North side, current conditions

Note muntins between the glass and boxy aluminum coilstock casing and mullions at current windows. Lite configuration matches with the originals with the exception of the windows in the 2nd story bay. Operation appears to match the original windows



Front façade, 2016 conditions



Note muntins between the glass and boxy aluminum coilstock casing and mullions at current windows. Lite configuration matches with the originals with the exception of the arched window in the gable end. Operation appears to match the original windows



Current conditions

- A review of the images of the home windows from 2016 indicate that the original windows were distinctive character defining features of the home. They also did not appear to be deteriorated beyond repair. It is not clear to staff why the former owner reinstalled the windows in 2016, only to remove them in 2017. Also, please note that SOI Standard # 6 requires that new elements “match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials” if an historic element is deteriorated beyond repair to an extent that requires it’s replacement. It I staff opinion that the new vinyl windows are not an adequate match for the historic windows that were removed without HDC approval for the following reasons:
 - The current vinyl units include muntins between the glass which is not an adequate replication for the former true divide lite windows as the current muntins portray a flat appearance
 - The current vinyl windows and wrapped brickmould offer a plasticity and flat/thick appearance that does not adequately match the profile/dimensionality and appearance of the original historic wood windows and associated trim/brickmould.
 - Consumer grade vinyl windows (such as the current vinyl units) weather poorly, deteriorate rapidly, and exhibit poor detailing and detracting color/sheen. Also, the framing material, glazing, and seals (which keeps the argon gas intact between the insulated glass) of vinyl windows breaks down more quickly in ultraviolet light than wood or steel-framed windows.
 - Furthermore, vinyl windows lack the tensile strength/rigidity of wood windows/the wood windows which were replaced without approval at the property. Therefore, they can expand and contract more greatly than wood sash. This can result in discoloration and warping of the vinyl frames, as well as condensation between the glass layers.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission denial the current proposal to retain the existing vinyl window units.

RECOMMENDATION

#1). Section 21-2-78. Determination of the Historic District Commission – DENIAL

It is staff’s opinion that the replacement of the original distinctive character-defining wood windows with the current vinyl units does not meet the SOI Standards for the following reasons:

- The original wood windows did not appear to be deteriorated beyond repair. Therefore their removal destroyed historic materials and features that characterized the property.
- The current vinyl units include muntins between the glass which is not an adequate replication for the former true divide lite windows as the current muntins portray a flat appearance
- The current vinyl windows and wrapped brickmould offer a plasticity and flat/thick appearance that does not adequately match the profile/dimensionality and appearance of the original historic wood windows and associated trim/brickmould.
- Consumer grade vinyl windows (such as the current vinyl units) weather poorly, deteriorate rapidly, and exhibit poor detailing and detracting color/sheen. Also, the framing material, glazing, and seals (which keeps the argon gas intact between the insulated glass) of vinyl windows breaks down more quickly in ultraviolet light than wood or steel-framed windows.
- Vinyl windows lack the tensile strength/rigidity of wood windows/the wood windows which were replaced without approval at the property. Therefore, they typically expand and contract more greatly than wood sash. This can result in discoloration and warping of the vinyl frames, as well as condensation between the glass layers.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a denial of this work item because it does not conform to the district's elements of design, nor does it meet the following SOI 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.

#2). Section 21-2-78. Determination of the Historic District Commission – COA

Staff recommends that the Commission issue a COA for the project's remaining scope items, to include the new fence and driveway as well as the removal of landscaping, because they meet the SOI's Standards for Rehabilitation and the district's elements of design. However, staff does recommend that this COA is issued with the following conditions:

- A new shade tree shall be planted in the side/south yard to replace the shade tree that was removed from the southeast corner of the parcel. Also new shrubs shall be planted along the western edge of the property (at the side yard along Chicago Blvd.), and at the northeastern corner of the property (at the side yard along Chicago Blvd) to replace the landscaping that was removed without HDC approval. The applicant shall submit a landscape plan to HDC staff for review and approval prior to initiating the work.