

STAFF REPORT: OCTOBER 11, 2023, REGULAR MEETING **PREPARED BY:** T. BOSCARINO
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC23-00029
ADDRESS: 2020 CHICAGO
HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON
APPLICANT: GEORGE SHIHADDEH
OWNER: GEORGE SHIHADDEH
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: AUGUST 24, 2023
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

SCOPE: ALTER VERGEBOARDS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Erected in 1923, the house at 2010 Chicago is on the north side of the street. The front facade is dominated by an asymmetrical gable with vergeboards that extends on one side to merge with the peaked roof of the front entry. Approached from a curved walkway, concrete front steps lead up to wide, flared columns that support the roof of a partially recessed front porch.

In 2018 or 2019, the façade was altered by covering original wood vergeboards (subject of this application) fascia, and soffits with vinyl, without approval of the Historic District Commission. The vinyl has since been removed and the underlying wood repaired.



September 2023 photo by staff.

PROPOSAL

The 2018 or 2019 work, described above, involved the truncation of decorative, pointed vergeboard ends in

four locations. This work, being already completed, is presently visible on the building. The applicant seeks approval from the Historic District Commission to retain this condition.



1974 photo by Historic Designation Advisory Board, notations added to highlight now-missing details.



Detail of current condition (typical of all four locations). Photo provided by applicant, cropped by staff to highlight pertinent area.

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 for Boston-Edison provide the following relevant observations:
 - “The most common relationship of textures in the district is that of a low-relief pattern of mortar joints in brick contrasted with the smooth surface of wood or stone trim.”
 - “Buildings of Medieval inspiration, notably Neo-Tudor, generally have painted woodwork ... of a dark brown or cream color.”
- The prior covering of vergeboards, fascia, and soffits with vinyl was not appropriate as it concealed (and likely damaged) a visually prominent, historic feature, contrary to Standard #2, which states that “alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.” The owner states that the vinyl has been removed and that the underlying wood vergeboards, fascia, and soffits have been repaired and largely restored to their prior condition. A staff site visit confirms this observation. Thus, the prior inappropriate work has been reversed.
- In emails with staff, the applicant expressed a desire not to restore the missing decorative ends, citing the expense of replacing them.
- The vergeboards, fascia, and soffits, previously white, have since been painted brown. The brown paint color is appropriate, as noted in the Elements of Design.

ISSUES

- The removal of decorative, pointed vergeboard ends was not appropriate as it eliminated a unique, distinctive, character-defining feature of the building. This is contrary to Standard #5, which states that “distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.”

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78: Determinations of Historic District Commission (Denial)

Staff concludes that the proposed work does not meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, for the following reason:

- The work eliminates a distinctive, character defining-feature (pointed vergeboard ends) of the property.

Therefore, staff recommends that the Commission issue a Denial as the proposed work fails to meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular:

5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*