

STAFF REPORT: JULY 10, 2024, REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00301

ADDRESS: 708 LONGFELLOW

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT: YURI LOPES

OWNER: EMMA BORNGESSER, BRUTTELL ROOFING, INC.

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: MAY 31, 2024

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JULY 1, 2024

SCOPE: REPLACE TILE ROOF ON GARAGE WITH ASPHALT ROOF



July 2021 photo by staff. The garage, at the right side of the above image, is minimally visible from the front of the property but clearly visible from the alley (see photos next page).

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1911, the property at 708 Longfellow is a two-and-one-half story house facing south onto the street. Its Arts and Crafts style is largely defined by its massing and materials: the house is clad in stucco, features a wide, shed-roof porch, a broad, bay window, and a complex hip roof with front and side gables.

The garage, subject of this application, is also clad in stucco, with prominent side parapets and a steeply pitched, green glazed tile roof. The roof on the house formerly employed the same material; this was replaced with asphalt shingles in 1982. The property appears to be otherwise unaltered from its historic appearance.



August 1982 photo by staff.



North (alley-facing) views of the garage. July 2024 photos by staff.

PROPOSAL

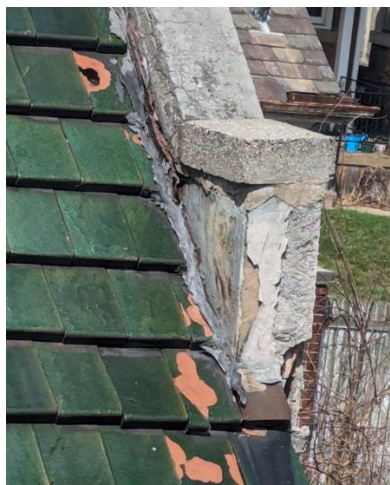
The proposal is to replace the tile roof on the garage. The proposed new material is Certaineed Landmark asphalt architectural shingles in Moire Black. The proposed work includes related items, such as flashing and ridge vents, as described in the application materials.



Left: Existing tile roofing; photo from applicant. Right: Proposed replacement product; image from product website.

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:
 - “Roofing includes slate, tile, and asphalt shingles.”
 - “Tile, slate, or wood shingle roofs have particular textural values where they exist.”
 - “Roofs are in natural colors (tile and slate colors, natural and stained wood colors), and asphalt shingles are predominantly within this same dark color range.”
- A tile roof is almost invariably a character-defining feature of a building, as is the case with the garage and, formerly, the house on this property. The interlocking, closed shingle design and green, glazed-terra cotta material used on this property are particularly distinctive. The tile roof is almost certainly original.
- The house formerly had the same roofing as is presently seen on the garage. It was replaced in accordance with a September 9, 1982, Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic District Commission.



Application photos showing damaged areas of roofing. Please see application materials for additional photos.

- The submitted application states “the existing tile roof on this garage is old, and very worn. They are in very poor condition, and the homeowner has sent photos of the interior, which is leaking with large holes.”
- The applicant has submitted photos showing missing and cracked roof tiles, damage to flashing, and interior water damage.
- An August 16, 1982, Historic District Commission staff report makes several observations regarding the house (it does not discuss the garage, though the conditions were presumably similar, and the garage has since had several decades to deteriorate further):
 - “There are broken and badly tarred tiles visible from the ground on the house roof ... the degree of deterioration of the original material is so extensive that restoring the tile roof appears to be beyond the scope of the ‘Rehabilitation’ treatment level.”¹
 - “The interlocking cove shingle tile ... was made by the Detroit Tile and Roofing Co. This tile is no longer manufactured.”
 - A contractor “experienced and qualified in the repair of tile roofs” had provided an estimate of \$40,000 (in 1982) for in-kind replacement.
- *Preservation Briefs 30: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Clay Tile Roofs* (National Park Service, 1993) guides that “In most cases, unless matching replacements can be obtained, if more than about 30 percent of the roofing tiles are lost, broken, or irreparably damaged, it may be necessary to replace all of the historic tiles with new matching tiles.” Staff observes that this is the case on the north (alley-facing) plane of the roof; it is not known if this is also true of the south (front-facing) plane of the roof.



North (alley-facing) plane of the roof. July 2024 photo by staff.

- Based on the guidance of *Preservation Briefs 30* and the observations from the 1982 staff report quoted above, staff is convinced that the north-facing plane of the roof is beyond repair, and the south-facing plane is likely beyond repair as well.
- The applicant provided a quote of \$55,000 to install a new tile roof.

ISSUES

- A photo of the front (south) face of the garage roof is not provided.

- Staff suggests that although the roof is likely beyond repair, in-kind replacement must be considered. Standard #6 (quoted in full below) directs that “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.” As noted above, a quote for replacement with a new tile roof has been provided.
- It possible that the Commission will consider the cost of a new tile roof to be in excess of the “reasonableness” standard provided by 36 CFR 67: “The Standards are to be applied ... in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.” Nonetheless, it is likely that there are other roofing products (e.g. metal, imitation tile, etc.) that may come closer to approximating the appearance of a tile roof without the cost of authentic tile. Such treatments may have the ability to preserve historic character more convincingly than the proposed asphalt shingles, which are a standard product with no particular character.
- Staff further suggests that black is not an appropriate roofing color for this building. As noted in the previous point, colors and textures should be matched when replacing distinctive features.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Staff concludes that the proposed reroofing of the garage with asphalt shingles does not meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the following reasons:

- The work would replace a distinctive feature with a new feature of a different material, of noticeably different texture and color; while the possibility of replacement with either a matching material, or a reasonably closer match, as directed by the Standards, has not been explored.

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

6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

¹ The “rehabilitation treatment level” referenced here reviews to a prior review standard used by the Historic District Commission prior to the adoption of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation in 2004:

Rehabilitation. Putting back in good condition. This would not require the removal of all nonoriginal materials, but would encourage the removal of nonoriginal materials which are incompatible with the defined elements of design for the particular structure and district. The design of new construction or alteration would not require a duplication of the original design and construction, but must be compatible with the existing structures and the district’s defined elements of design for the district (1984 Detroit City Code Sec. 25-2-2).