

STAFF REPORT: JULY 10, 2024, REGULAR MEETING
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00331
ADDRESS: 1730 EDISON
HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON
APPLICANT/OWNER: ANDRE GILBERT
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: JUNE 12, 2024
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JUNE 24, 2024

PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO

SCOPE: REPLACE WOOD WINDOWS WITH ALUMINUM-CLAD WOOD WINDOWS



House with garage in background. April 2023 photo by staff.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1920, the house at 1730 Edison is a two-and-one-half story, red brick building facing south onto the street. Its style shows an Arts and Crafts influence, with a gable roof, exposed rafter ends, gable dormers, and a flat-roofed entry portico with triangular brackets. Prominent windows are nine-over-one, wood sash windows. In 2019, many repairs were made to the house according to a Certificate of Appropriateness, including rebuilt front porch kneewalls, a rebuilt rear porch, new roofing, and the repair or restoration of windows on a majority of the house.

The rear of the house features a two-story, sun porch extension. The sun porch is clad in aluminum siding and features ten, two-over-two, wood sash windows. The history of this element of the building and its windows is further discussed under “Staff Observations and Research,” below.



The rear of the subject property. Photos by applicant. Note that the applicant did not provide a photo of the west face of the sun porch.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to replace all ten windows on the rear sun porch.

The proposed replacements are Pella Lifestyle Series double hung, aluminum-clad wood windows. The proposed exterior color is white.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

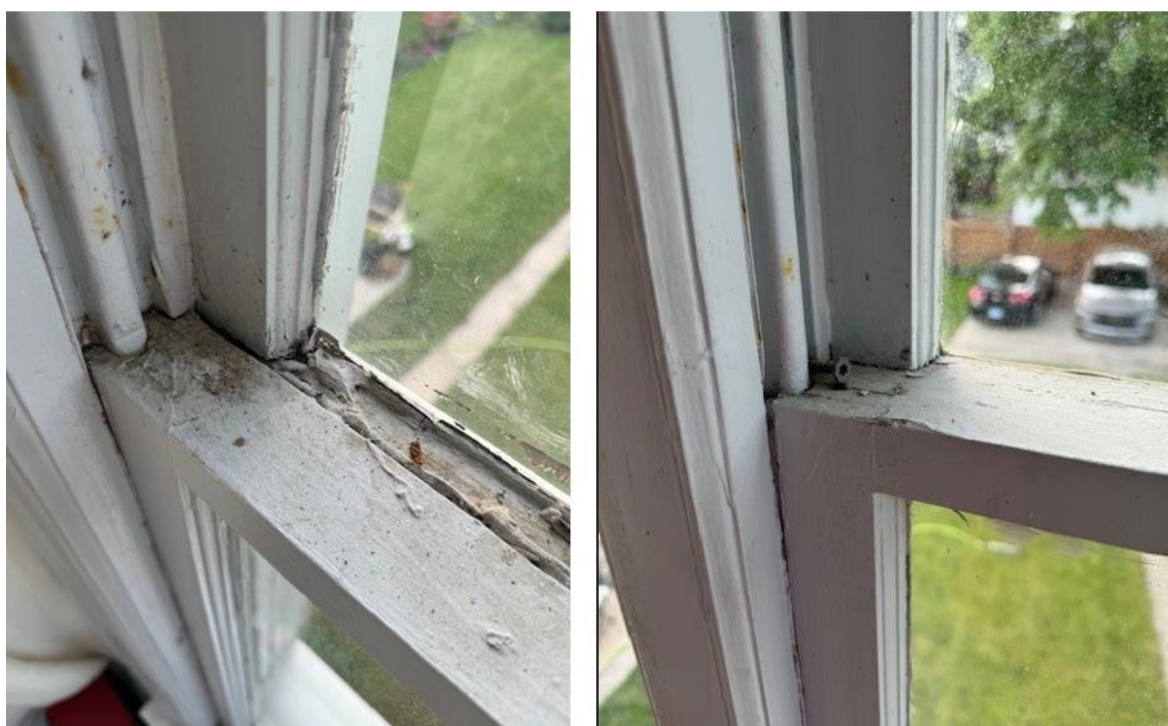
- The Boston-Edison Historic District was established by resolution of the City Council in 1974. No Final Report was prepared for this district. The National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form for Boston-Edison (1975) is inconclusive regarding the period of significance, arguably closing the period of significance in 1925 or 1930.
- The Elements of Design for the Boston-Edison Historic District (Sec. 21-2-106 of the City Code) mention windows as “always subdivided” and “usually [further] subdivided by muntins;” “the most common window type is double hung.” The Elements of Design also note that “wood is almost universally used for window frames.
- The Elements of Design note that “sun porches, with a very high proportion of window openings subdivided by mullions and muntins, are common” and “porches and permanently enclosed sun porches are often placed at the side and, sometimes, at the rear of the building.”
- Sun porches are often original to their buildings, and sometimes were added shortly after the building’s construction. Staff could not identify any Sanborn maps or public records to indicate the construction date for the sun porch on this property. Regardless, such sun porches were typically in place by the late 1920s; consequently, staff opinion is that this sun porch is a historic and character-defining feature.

- The aluminum siding and window cladding on the sun porch are non-historic alterations. There is no record of Historic District Commission approval for this work; however, it is possible that this work was performed prior to the establishment of the Boston-Edison Historic District in 1974.
- The applicant argues that the windows on the sun porch are not historic features, providing the following information to support this assertion:
 - The applicant states that, according to neighbors, there had been “multiple” fires and “at least one major fire” in the rear of the building. (City records confirm that fire repairs were made to the building in 1981 at a cost of \$19,200.)
 - The applicant states that there was extensive fire and water damage and a “major hole in the roof of the rear, northeast portion of the house” when it was purchased in 2019.
- The applicant also argues that the windows are beyond repair:
 - The property was acquired from the Detroit Land Bank in 2019; according to the applicant, the Detroit Land Bank “recommended repair/replacement of the windows.”
 - The applicant states that they had hired Artisan Renovations to repair the windows, however, “it was not possible for the windows to be fully restored.”
 - The applicant has provided detailed interior and exterior photographs along with a written description of each window. For example, five of the windows are described as having areas that are “soft to the touch” and all ten described as “not flush with the sill.”



Selected images showing deterioration. Please see application documents for full, higher-resolution images.

- From the photos provided by the applicant, staff observes that there are several patches and repairs to the windows and that much of the hardware appears to be non-original.
- The applicant states that three experienced window repair professionals recommended against repair. According to the applicant (as noted in the initial application and in a July 3, 2024, email to staff):
 - Artisan Renovations, the company that repaired or restored 18 windows in 2019, argued that the sun porch windows are beyond repair.
 - Turner Restoration “recommended restoration (noting that anything can be restored) until he saw the condition of the five upstairs windows. He noted that these windows are not original to the house, likely replaced in the 70s or 80s, as they have spring-loaded balancers with vinyl finger joints. He mentioned that restoring these would be challenging due to the difficulty in finding spring-loaded balancers.”
 - Renaissance Restoration “visited and recommended replacing the windows due to their deteriorated state.”



Detail of window 7 (left) and window 9 (right), typical of windows 6 through 10. Photos from applicant.

- Based on photos provided by the applicant, staff concurs that the second-floor windows (numbered 6 through 10 in the application documents) are likely not original or historic, for the same reasons provided by the applicant above. The replacement of non-historic windows is appropriate if the new windows are compatible with the property and the district.
- The first-floor windows (1 through 5) appear to be original or historic, though they have seen extensive repairs. In viewing the photos and written descriptions provided by the applicant, staff observes a noticeable degree of deterioration. Staff suggests that this information, along with the professional opinions noted above, indicates that replacing all ten windows with good matches may be reasonable and appropriate under the Standards.¹ The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, namely Standard #6, allow character-defining features to be replaced when beyond repair: “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 a missing feature shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.”



Above: Second-floor windows; below: first-floor windows. Photos from application materials.

- The proposed Pella window replacement product closely approximates the dimensions and operability of the existing windows.



Interior view of Pella Lifestyle window. Image from product website.

ISSUES

- If the windows are to be replaced, the existing aluminum trim should be removed to determine if the outer casing (head, jamb, and sill) and brickmould, if any of the historic windows remains. If so, the Standards would require their preservation or, if beyond repair, their replacement with matching materials. Prefabricated aluminum cladding products are not appropriate (Standard #6).

RECOMMENDATION

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

Staff recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, with the following condition:

- Historic window casing and brickmould, if any remains, must be preserved.

¹ "The Standards are to be applied in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility." (36 CFR §67.7)