

**STAFF REPORT:** DECEMBER 11, 2024 REGULAR MEETING  
**APPLICATION NUMBER:** HDC2024-00625  
**ADDRESS:** 1670 EDISON  
**HISTORIC DISTRICT:** BOSTON-EDISON  
**APPLICANT:** JMM SINGLE FAMILY HOLDINGS LLC  
**PROPERTY OWNER:** JMM SINGLE FAMILY HOLDINGS LLC  
**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION:** OCTOBER 22, 2024  
**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT:** NOVEMBER 25, 2024

**PREPARED BY:** T. BOSCARINO

**SCOPE:** REPLACE WOOD WINDOWS WITH VINYL WINDOWS, ADD VINYL SIDING, ALTER ROOF



*May 2023 photo by staff.*

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

1670 Edison is a two-and-one-half-story, side-gabled, brick house, built in 1917 and facing south onto the street. Prior to unapproved alterations (subject of this application) the building was an eclectically styled house, with character-defining features including brown brick, six-over-one sash windows, Prairie- or Craftsman-influenced exposed rafter ends and multilight windows, Colonial-style pedimented dormers, and Arts-and-Crafts-style vergeboards. A subtle belt course of soldier bricks wrapped around the building at the base of the second-story lintels, providing additional, distinctive detail to the facade. A stucco-clad sun porch projected from the rear. Finally, posts and a baluster (see photo next page) once created a second-floor balcony above the front porch. These features have all been altered or obscured. The overall massing of the house remains intact, including an off-center, flat-roof porch, ranked windows with stone sills, and the two-story sun porch.

At several dates in 2024, staff observed work items completed without approval. Windows, roof alterations, and siding are subject of this application and described below. The building was also painted bright white, this is a violation performed without approval and is not included within the application scope; vinyl shutters were also added.



*Left: 1974 photo by the Historic Designation Advisory Board. Right: 2022 Google photo showing the building before the unapproved work.*



*Sun porch with stucco cladding. 1980 photo by the Historic Designation Advisory Board.*

According to Google Maps photos, the second-floor balcony or balustrade was removed in phases over the course of approximately 2011 through 2019. The other work was performed in 2024 and was observed in staff site visits on June 21 and August 6.

## **PROPOSAL**

The proposal is for the following work, completed and visible on the building:

### **Windows**

Wood windows are proposed (work already completed without approval) to be replaced with vinyl windows. Exact specifications, such a product name, are not provided, but the submitted invoice and photos show that they are double-hung vinyl windows (one is a picture window). The brickmould has also been covered in an aluminum wrap.

### **Vinyl siding**

Vinyl siding is proposed (already installed without approval) for the rear/north face of the building, including the

character-defining sun porch. The sun porch was formerly clad in stucco. The new siding is Concord, four-inch reveal, vinyl siding in “windswept smoke” color with “rough-sawn” texture.

### **Roof alterations**

New roofing is proposed (already installed). The new roofing is Timberline HDZ asphalt architectural shingles in “charcoal” color.

Although not specifically mentioned in the application scope, staff observes that the roof work also includes the removal of historic exposed rafter ends, the installation of vinyl soffit panels, and the installation of vinyl gutters and downspouts.



*Image, from application documents, showing proposed (already installed) vinyl windows, vinyl siding, vinyl soffit panels, and vinyl gutters and downspouts.*

### **Additional unapproved work not subject of this application**

The removal of the second-floor balcony/balustrade, the white paint, and the addition of vinyl shutters are visible on the building but not included in this application. Staff has encouraged the applicant to also submit an application for this work.

### **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 (Sec. 21-2-106) provide the following guidance:
  - Windows are “always subdivided” and “usually [further] subdivided by muntins;” “the most common window type is double hung.”
  - “Sun porches, with a very high proportion of window openings subdivided by mullions and muntins, are common.”
  - “The majority of houses are faced with brick, while many are partially or totally stucco ...

- clapboard is rare.”
- “Roofing includes slate, tile, and asphalt shingles.”
- “Wood is almost universally used for window frames and other functional trim and is used in many examples for all trim.”
- “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 ... The use of stucco or concrete, with or without half-timbering, as a contrast to brick surfaces, is not unusual.”
- “Natural brick colors, such as red, yellow, brown, and buff, predominate in wall surfaces. Natural stone colors also exist. Where stucco or concrete exists, it usually remains in its natural state, or is painted in a shade of cream. 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. Paint colors often relate to style.”
- “Façade elements have been determined by what is appropriate for the style. Window sashes are usually subdivided by muntins, which affect the apparent scale of the windows within the façades.”

### Violation history

- On June 21, 2024, staff observed the new vinyl siding on the sun porch (to the extent that it was visible from the street), new vinyl windows, vinyl soffits, and the removal of vergeboards and rafter ends.
- On August 6, 2024, staff observed painting in progress.
- According to Historic District Commission records, the Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department commenced enforcement, including a Stop Work order, on August 19, 2024.



*Left: June 21, 2024, staff photo. Right: August 6, 2024, staff photo.*

### Windows

- As exact specifications for the windows are not provided, staff conducted its review based on a visual assessment from the public sidewalk supplemented with photos provided with the application.
- The windows proposed for replacement (already replaced without approval) were unambiguously character-defining as they are subdivided, as described in the Elements of Design, adding textural interest to the façade and reflecting the era and style of the building. The subdivisions of the upper sashes and the dormer windows were important in establishing the overall scale of the windows as a design feature.

- Based on available evidence, there is no indication that the historic windows were deteriorated beyond repair.

### **Vinyl siding**

- The sun porch is an important, character-defining feature of the building, as the prevalence of sun porches, in general, is highlighted in the Elements of Design, as is the importance of the contrast between stucco and brick that was formerly provided.

### **Roof alterations**

- The lost rafter ends and vergeboards were distinctive and character-defining features, in staff opinion; further, the contrast provided by wood trim is mentioned in the Elements of Design.
- The asphalt shingle replacement is appropriate, in staff opinion. However, the majority of the roof work is inappropriate (see below).

### **ISSUES**

- Staff was unable to inspect the prior windows as they no longer exist. However, they appear to have been original, historic windows that were important to the character of the building. Further, they were present at the time the Boston-Edison Historic District was established, as seen in photos from that time. The Secretary of the Interior’ Standards for Rehabilitation, particularly Standard #2 (quoted below) direct that they be retained.
- If a replacement window were to be warranted (for instance, if the existing windows had deteriorated beyond feasible repair), staff notes that an appropriate replacement window would be a wood sash window with similar dimensions, subdivided upper sashes, and an appropriate color. The proposed (already installed) windows feature the thinner profile commonly found on vinyl windows, are not subdivided, and are an inappropriate pure white color.
- The loss of the historic stucco, rafter ends, and vergeboards constitutes a “removal of historic materials,” contrary to Standard #2 and a failure to preserve “distinctive features,” contrary to Standard #5 (quoted below).
- The aluminum wrap surrounding the windows and obscuring the brickmould, and the addition of vinyl siding onto the character-defining sun porch, and the addition of vinyl soffit panels, gutters, and downspouts, constitute an “alteration of features and spaces that characterize the property,” also contrary to Standard #2.
- Staff again notes that several violation items, including the painting of previously unpainted brick, are not currently included in this application and remain subject to additional Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department action, including court referrals and fines. This work is also likely to be inappropriate, in staff opinion.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

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

Staff concludes that the proposed window replacement does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the following reasons:

- The windows were historic, character-defining features that have not been shown to be beyond repair.
- The replacement windows do not match the three-dimensional qualities and design of the historic windows in that they are thinner and lack subdivided upper sashes.
- The replacement windows do not match the materials of the historic windows (they are vinyl, which has a noticeably different sheen and appearance from historic wood windows).
- The added brickmold introduces an inappropriate element to the building.

Staff further concludes that the proposed siding installation does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the following reasons:

- The proposed work removes historic materials that have not been shown to be beyond repair.
- The proposed work eliminates the important contrast of stucco and brick that was formerly present on this building and specifically highlighted in the Elements of Design.
- The proposed work greatly alters the texture and appearance of the character-defining sun porch.

Staff finally concludes that the proposed roof alterations do not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the following reasons:

- The loss of rafter ends and vergeboards eliminates distinctive features that formerly contributed to the character of the property.
- The installation of vinyl soffit panels, gutters, and downspouts adds non-historic materials and incompatible new features to the building.

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:

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 where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be documented by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*