



**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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SR-2 – ADVISORY STAFF REPORT (04/03/2026)

This advisory report, prepared by staff, represents the opinion and advice of professional staff, and does not represent nor direct the separate review and decision of the Historic District Commission. This report serves as an addendum to SR-1, an objective staff summary of the proposal and property.

ADDRESS: 1606 CHICAGO

MEETING DATE: 04/08/2026

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00679

SCOPE: REPLACE WOOD WINDOWS WITH VINYL WINDOWS (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

ADVISORY STAFF REPORT PREPARED BY: L. SAINT JAMES

STAFF OBJECTIONS TO APPROVAL:

This first section describes itemized conclusions/concerns, which, in staff's professional opinion, would prevent the issue of an unconditional Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). "None" means staff has no objections and believes a COA is warranted, with no conditions. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.

1. The historic wood windows are distinctive, character-defining historic features of the resource. The deterioration noted constitutes typical maintenance needs of old windows and is repairable. Thus, the windows should not be considered "deteriorated beyond repair," the standard required for their replacement.
2. The proposed windows do not "match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, and where possible, materials."
3. Due to their plasticity, flatness, detracting color/sheen, component profiles, and poor material quality, consumer-grade vinyl windows are incompatible with the building's overall historic character and do not exhibit an appearance consistent with the general characteristics of a historic window of the same type and period, as required by National Park Service (NPS) Guidance.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

This second section expands on the reasoning and analysis leading to staff's conclusions given in the first section above. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.

- The applicant stated that “Windows were too old and broken; to protect the property we had to replace the windows, we were not aware of it falls under Historic District hence we have put vinyl windows.”



HDAB designation photo, 1974, showing historic windows



Staff photo, 03/24/2026, showing vinyl windows installed without approval

- The wood windows were unambiguously distinctive, character-defining historic features that were not proven to be beyond feasible repair.
- Per the Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-106) (excerpts from staff):
 - **(3) Proportion of openings within the façade:** *Window openings are always subdivided. The most common window type is double-hung with sashes that are generally further subdivided by muntins or leaded glass. Façades have approximately 15 percent to 35 percent of their area glazed. Sun porches, with a very high proportion of window openings subdivided by mullions and muntins, are common.*
 - **(7) Relationship of Materials:** *Wood is almost universally used for window frames and other functional trim and is used in many examples for all trim.”*



West side of house, Mapillary, 05/31/2024, prior to window replacement



West side of house, staff photo, 03/24/2025, after window replacement

- The installation of the vinyl windows does not follow the [Historic District Commission's 'Historic Wood Window Guidelines'](#) or the [NPS 'Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards.'](#) As stated in the NPS' guidelines for replacement windows, "When historic windows exist, they should be repaired when possible. When they are too deteriorated to repair, selection of the replacement windows must be guided by Standard 6. Design, visual qualities, and materials are specific criteria provided by the Standard that are pertinent to evaluating the match of a replacement window. Evaluating the adequacy of the match of the replacement window involves the consideration of multiple issues." Specifically, referencing the factors to consider in evaluating the match of a window:

- **Glass size and divisions.** *Muntins reproduced as simulated divided lights – consisting of a three-dimensional exterior grid, between-the-glass spacers, and an interior grid – may provide an adequate match when the dimensions and profile of the exterior grid are equivalent to the historic muntin and the grid is permanently affixed tight to the glass.*
- **Materials and finish.**
 - *While it may be theoretically possible to match all the significant characteristics of a historic window in a substitute material, in actuality, finish, profiles, dimensions and details are all affected by a change in material.*
 - *Secondary window elements that do not match the finish or color of the window can also diminish the match. Examples include white vinyl tracks on dark-painted wood windows.*

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

This third and final section takes staff’s itemized “objections” identified in the first section, and presents them in the form of “conditions” in support of a proposed approval recommendation or “reasons” in support of a proposed denial recommendation, in the form required by Section 21-2-78 of the City Code. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.

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

Recommendation 1 of 1, Denial

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and the Boston-Edison Historic District’s Elements of Design, specifically:

- **Standard #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.
- **Standard #5:** Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
- **Standard #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.
- Elements of Design #: 3, 7

For the following reasons;

1. The historic wood windows are distinctive, character-defining features that were not proven to be beyond repair.
2. The proposed windows do not match the old in design, texture, materials, and other visual qualities.

3. Due to their plasticity, flatness, detracting color/sheen, component profiles, and poor material quality, consumer-grade vinyl windows are incompatible with the building's overall historic character and do not exhibit an appearance consistent with the general characteristics of a historic window of the same type and period, as required by National Park Service Guidance.