



**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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SR-2 – ADVISORY STAFF REPORT (06-05-2026)

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: 70 W. BOSTON

MEETING DATE: 06-10-2026

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2026-00190

ADVISORY STAFF REPORT PREPARED BY: B. SALIE

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.

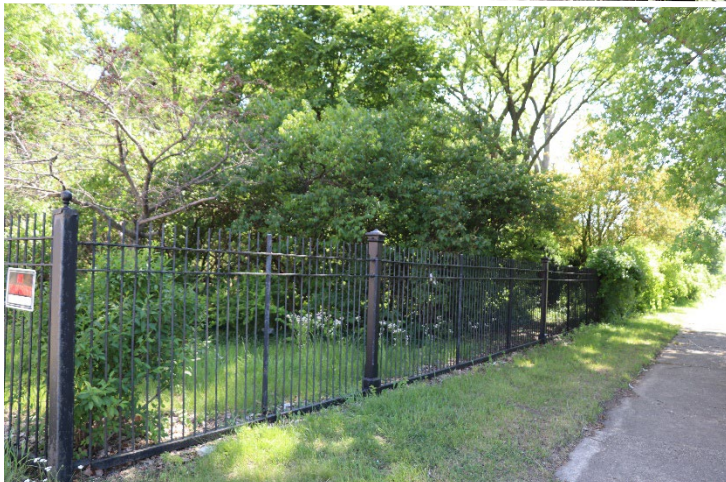
1. The planting of arborvitae trees along the rear of the property and around the tennis court is not compatible with the historic property and may alter the historic integrity of the site as well as its environment.

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.



Photos taken by staff on 06/03/2026, show the rear of the property as seen from Glynn Court. There is a wrought iron fence along the rear property line. The existing trees and shrubs, located between the fence and the sidewalk, are overgrown. The areas pictured above are pertinent to the proposed planting area of arborvitae trees along the rear of the property.



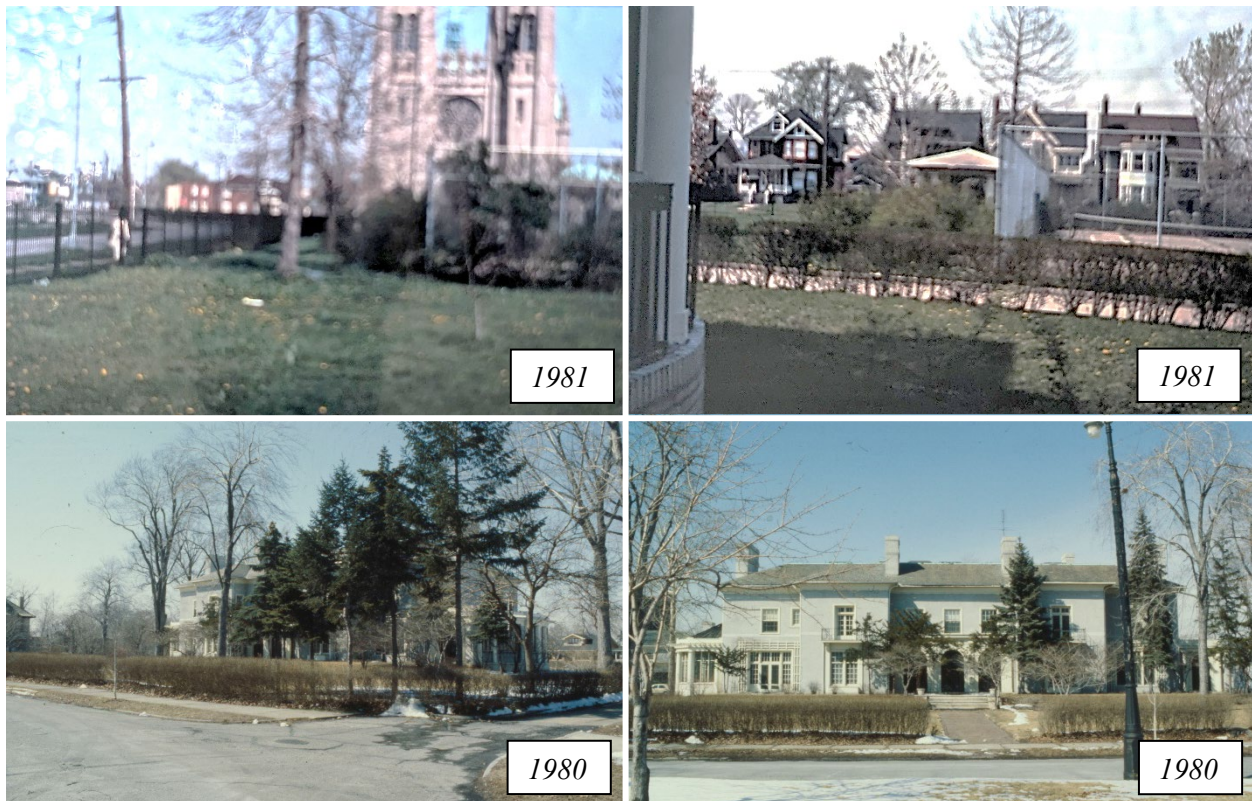
Photos taken by staff on 06/03/2026, show the overgrown trees and shrubs located alongside the wrought-iron-style aluminum fence, which wraps around the perimeter.

**Please note, the proposal does not include the planting of the 6' arborvitae trees in these areas. The top photos show the front of the property, and the left photo is taken at the corner of Glynn Court and Woodward Avenue. The trees will not extend this far.*

- The Boston-Edison historic district was designated in 1973.

HISTORY OF ARBORVITAE TREES

- While Arborvitae trees are native to Michigan soil, the popularity of planting these trees on residential properties only became popular in the 1950's, twenty years outside of the district's period of significance.
 - Arborvitae trees, which gained popularity in the 1950s due to the post-WWII suburban boom, became the go-to choices for quick privacy.
 - The use of arborvitae trees as a privacy screening tactic is a contemporary solution.
 - It is staff's concern that the overuse of arborvitae trees around and into the property will diminish the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
- Based on designation photos, dating 1974-1981, 3'-0" tall hedges originally ran along the front property lines and into the property, along the driveway.



70 W. Boston, designation photos

- Per the HDC's [*Fence and Hedge Guidelines*](#):
 - Hedges – size, location, and height must conform to fence size, location, and height.

- Hedge additions should adhere to the height and location of the wrought-iron-style aluminum fence.
- Per Standards 1 & 2, the alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided and should allow minimal change to the defining characteristics of the property's site and environment.



Site plan provided by the applicant, displays the proposed arborvitae tree placement (yellow dots along rear of property and along the tennis court)

ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

- 13) Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments.
 - a. The typical treatment of individual properties is a flat or graded front lawn area in grass turf, often subdivided by a straight or curving walk leading to the front entrance. Materials for such walks are concrete, brick, stone, or combinations of those materials. Some front yards have rectangular raised earthwork terraces upon which the house stands. These unpaved terraces having sloping embankments or retaining walls which are made of brick, stone, or both, at the change of grade foundation plantings, often of a deciduous character **that are characteristic of the period 1900 to 1930**, are present virtually without exception. **Hedges between properties and along front property lines are not uncommon. It is characteristic for corner lots to have hedges or fencing at side lot lines along the sidewalk.** There is a wide range in the type of fencing. Fencing within the public view was generally designed to compliment the style, design material, and date of the residence. Although the American Elm was once the dominant tree, it is virtually extinct in the district. Replacement trees should be characteristic of the area and period. Plantings of new trees should be directed to "tree lawns" and medians. If an American Elm tree is planted, it should be disease resistant.

- Site additions should be complementary for the 1900-1930 time period. While it is not uncommon for hedges to be located between properties and along the front of the property, the planting of these trees at the rear of the property are not as common. The 1981 designation photo does not show hedges at the rear property line.

*b. Straight side driveways leading from the street to rear garages are the norm, although access to garages is also off the alley, especially in areas of the district that were developed earlier. On corner lots, garages and driveways often face the side streets. These driveways are paved in asphalt, concrete, or brick. **Side lots are not uncommon for the larger properties in the district, and a number of these form a part of the original site plan for the residence. Such side lots are usually landscaped and are often fenced at or near the setback line.***

- Therefore, it is staff's opinion that the planting of 200 arborvitae trees along the rear of the property and around the tennis court will not be compatible with the historic property and will ultimately alter the historic integrity of the site and its environment.

WIDEN DRIVEWAY

- Staff have no objection to the widening of the concrete driveway as the changes will follow the existing footprint and will not impact the concrete at the public right of way (i.e. street or sidewalk). The exposed aggregate concrete will be a gray tint.

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 2, Denial: Plant Arborvitae Trees around property

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:

- *Standards 1 & 2*
 - 1) *A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*
 - 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.*

- *& Elements of Design # 13*

For the following reasons;

1. The planting of arborvitae trees along the rear of the property and around the tennis court is not compatible with the historic property and may alter the historic integrity of the site as well as its environment.

Recommendation 2 of 2, Certificate of Appropriateness: Widen Driveway

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Boston-Edison Historic District's Elements of Design.