

STAFF REPORT: NOVEMBER 16, 2022 MEETING

PREPARED BY: A. DYE

APPLICATION NUMBER: 22-8103

ADDRESS: 2475 CHICAGO

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT: MARTIN LEGER, CENTRAL DWELLINGS, CORP.

PROPERTY OWNER: MARTIN LEGER

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: OCTOBER 17, 2022

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: OCTOBER 25, 2022

SCOPE: INSTALL ALUMINUM RAILINGS & SLIDING DOOR, INSTALL VINYL WINDOWS AT REAR DORMER (*WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL*), REVISION OF PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ERECTION OF REAR TWO-STORY PORCH (*WORK COMPLETE*), REPLACE WOOD WINDOWS WITH VINYL & GLASS BLOCK WINDOWS,

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The dwelling at 2475 Chicago was erected in 1923. The house is clad with variegated brown brick; the reverse gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles and is punctuated by a small, shed dormer with three mulled double-hung windows. The window and door openings on the first floor closely align with the window openings at the second floor, however the window groupings and operations, coupled with the dominant front porch, obscures this alignment. A box bay at the first floor slightly protrudes from the main elevation; the casement windows with single light transoms further accentuate this distinctive character-defining feature. The dominant double-hung wood sash with 6-over-1 and 8-over-1 patterns, decorative wood shutters (front elevation), and unpainted light-colored stone sills remain intact on the majority of the four elevations and are also character-defining features of the dwelling.



Staff photo, October 25, 2022

The large, deep raised entry porch is covered with a flat roof. Groupings of three slender smooth, square columns with minimally detailed bases and capitals are positioned at each of the two front corners. A recently installed railing encloses the first-floor porch landing and the historic railing remains intact at the upper level.

PROPOSAL

The following items were completed without approval:

- Install aluminum railings at front porch
- Install sliding door and aluminum handrail at rear open porch
- Install vinyl windows at rear shed dormer
- Install new entrance doors at rear porch.

Additional items within this application

- Erect rear two-story porch (revision of previously approved work)
- Install glass block in basement window openings
- Replace wood windows at rear with vinyl replacement units
- Replace one wood window at east elevation first floor, adjacent door, with vinyl replacement unit

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston-Edison Historic District was established in 1974.

Front Elevation



1974 Designation photo, HDAB



1988 photo in property file

- Staff doesn't know when the front porch's first floor railing and step wing walls were removed. Based on photographs on file with the city, the railing disappeared between 1988 and 2017; the wing walls disappeared between 1980 and 1988. There is no record on file for HDC review for the removal of these elements. The existing railing was installed during the review of this application. The applicant's undated photo (below left) submitted with the application documents shows the step railing in place and staff's site visit photo shows a full perimeter railing installed.



Applicant photo



Staff photo, October 25, 2020

- When reviewing the 1974 designation photo, staff noticed a large tree had grown directly adjacent the front porch and wing wall. The tree was removed prior to the city's 1980 image. This could explain the non-matching tuck-pointing, various replacement bricks and white washing of brick at this location, all of which is shown in current images.

Rear Elevation

- During staff's review of this application, multiple completed work items were identified. The applicant agreed to add all of them in this application.
- In December 2019, the Commission issued a Certificate of Appropriateness (19-6525) for the erection of a two-story porch at the rear. The documents below are from that application.



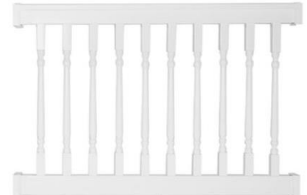
balcony 8' x 4'

10 feet.

2.5 feet from the ground.

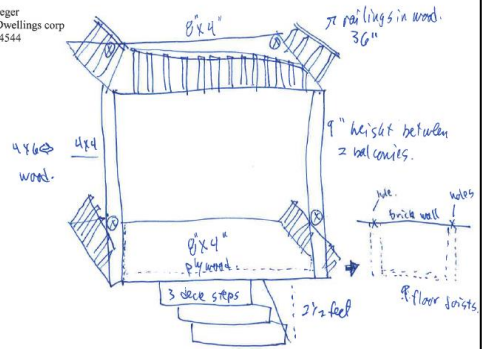
2019 applicant documents

- Photo mock-up
- Selected colonial-style vinyl railing
- Neighbor's house of suggested two-story porch design/footprint
- Hand drawn sketch with dimensions and porch layout



The description of the work is to rebuild a balcony
8 feet width
4 feet deep
Floor of 1st floor balcony 2 1/2 feet height.
9 feet higher will be the 2nd balcony.
Railings in wood around both balconies

Martin Leger
Central Dwellings corp
419 705 4544



The four holes of the floor joists are still happening in the brick wall of the house. Panel lines are still showing where was the previous wood balcony. I took pictures of neighbors to give an idea of this basic balcony. My balcony collapsed 3-4 years ago it was rotten.



The conditions attached to the 2019 Certificate of Appropriateness included:

- The applicant will submit construction documents for the proposed design as required for permitting.
- The applicant will submit catalog cuts for a baluster and balustrade that is sympathetic to the rectilinear nature of the front porch columns and the overall design of the house.
- The horizontal porch decking and stairs will have a dark brown stain, while all vertical porch elements (columns, baluster/balustrade, fascia, etc.) will be painted white.
- The wood will be left exposed for a minimum of six months to allow time for it to dry before painting.

Plans, photographs, and specifications, required to meet the above conditions shall be submitted to staff for review.

- There is no record of the applicant submitting construction documents to staff for review, nor was a building permit issued.



Applicant photo from 2019 HDC application



Recently submitted applicant photo.

- The applicant remarked that the sliding door was added about five years ago. A handrail leading down the open porch stairs, and installed adjacent the brick wing wall, was recently installed. The applicant couldn't provide manufacturer information for these items.
- The installed vinyl windows within the rear shed dormer are smaller in size than the openings and are not uniform in dimension with each other. Also, the operation and/or design of each window unit is different. The opening sizes submitted by the applicant are: 40" h x 24" w, 40" h x 30" w, 38" h x 36" w. Staff assumes, based on the below picture, the 40" h x 24" w window is at far right, the 40" h x 30" w opening is in the center, and the 38" h x 36" w opening is at far left. The applicant didn't provide information on the manufacturer of the windows.
- The application also consists of the request to replace five wood double-hung windows at the rear elevation second floor, one window at the rear elevation first floor, and one wood double-hung window on the east elevation (adjacent an exterior door). The proposed replacement units are [Jeld-Wen V-2500 series](#), which is an entirely vinyl product.
 - The second-floor windows sizes supplied by the applicant are (left to right):
 - 2 @ 54" x 32"
 - 1 @ 45" x 32"
 - 1 @ 60" x 39"
 - 1 @ 60" x 36"
 - The applicant stated the first-floor window opening is 60" h x 38" w.
 - The sliding door opening measures 80" h x 64" w.
 - The side elevation window opening measures 44" h x 36" w. It appears the lower sash is missing.
 - The applicant expanded the number of openings for replacement windows after the Home Depot work order was submitted with his initial application, so the window count is off.
 - Dimensions of the existing window's components (top/meeting/bottom rails, stiles, and muntin bars) were not submitted. Dimensioned sections of the proposed units were also not submitted.
- Based on the applicant's photographs, the basement windows are located on the east and rear elevations. The applicant states the dimensions for the basement openings are 17" h x 38" w. Staff doesn't consider these openings character-defining features of the dwelling.



East elevation – applicant photo



Rear elevation – applicant photo

ISSUES

Front Elevation

- As seen in the 1974 and 1980 photos on page two of the staff report, a strong pattern was set with the historic railing's circular components which created a cohesive appearance to the porch. The recently installed railing is out of scale and does not match or mimic the historic railing in design, thus creating a disjointed appearance to the front porch.
- Wing walls are common historic features on masonry structures. They frame the steps and act as a buffer to the stair edge. It is staff's opinion that the installed single metal handrail with turned spindles and separately installed components, does not meet 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."*



1980 photo, HDAB



Applicant photo



- The 1980 photo shows the first-floor railing was slightly taller than the upper story railing

Rear/Side Elevations

- Vinyl windows are not appropriate for historic structures in the Boston-Edison Historic District.
 - The replacement windows will have shiny plastic frames and an almost flat profile.
 - Between-the-glass "grids" do not match the width or profile of historic dimensional muntin bars.
 - Limited sash colors are offered – the white is a bright white and doesn't comply with the slightly off-white colors appropriate for historic structures.
 - Placement of replacement windows sit forward of historic sash, which adds an additional alteration to window openings which isn't often discussed. Existing conditions on the rear elevation illustrate this issue. A photo comparison is on the following page.
 - Staff doesn't believe the applicant has demonstrated that the existing windows are beyond repair. Therefore, the discussion of replacement windows, regardless of proposed replacement design, is premature.
 - As the applicant's 2019 photos show openings covered with wood panels whereas current photos confirm sash are present, it is not certain that the rear elevation first floor opening does not have a window sash in place. Therefore, the applicant should submit an interior photo of this window opening to confirm its present condition. Staff has authority to approve new window units in openings where no sash is present.

Photo comparison of original and replacement windows



Applicant photos



From a distance, the placement of the historic wood sash is obscured by the frame of the aluminum storm window. Upon closer inspection, the setback of the window sash is noticeable. This recessed placement allows for a subtle shadowing of the windows which further accentuates the openings within the walls.

Taking the above information into consideration, staff believes the older and recently installed replacement sash illustrate how window openings with replacement windows almost become wall components rather than distinctive, dimensional independent features.

Staff isn't clear when this window was replaced and could possibly be an older wood-framed replacement unit. Regardless of frame material, the brick mold is flatter than the historic brickmold (so incremental depth of the unit is lost) and the fabrication as one unit – brickmold and sash – causes a further loss of depth and forward placement within the window opening.

- The installation without approval of vinyl windows in the rear dormer shows discordant windows installed within three originally identical openings. Listed below are comments from the applicant:
 - *These windows were not replacing any windows.*
 - *That corner back portion of the house was partly demolished. Section of roof missing.*
 - *No windows were left there. That exterior wall had to be rebuilt*
 - *For few years, we temporarily installed a glass and a plywood to bring some light*
 - *When there's no windows left, we don't have indications of what was there before.*



Photo submitted by applicant as part of 2019 application

Based on the 2019 photo, staff stipulates that there may not have been windows within the openings. If this was the case, the applicant should have consulted with staff on appropriate windows to install that could have been administratively approved. The 2019 and below left 2022 photos give clear evidence as to the sizes of the original window openings.



Applicant photo submitted October 28, 2022



Photo submitted October 31, 2022. As with the front porch, the applicant continues to do work at this property without approval.

- The erected porch differs from the 2019 approved scope; however, it is staff's opinion the massing references the house's original porch design by its overall size and stairs extending on the side to the driveway, based on the outlines on the brick and structural remnants. The applicant used rectilinear balustrades with flat top and bottom rails, but did not include separate corner posts. It is staff's opinion the porch reads as a distinctly 21st century structure; its minimal design is a small impact to the rear elevation and does not diminish the property's architecturally significant features.



*Photo submitted by applicant.
Outline of previous porch floor and steps.*



- The constructed stair railing is incompatible with the erected porch; however, staff feels the dimension and design of the at-grade baluster is appropriate for this location.
 - The stair's top and bottom rails should precisely meet the top and bottom rails of the porch balustrade, and the spacing of the stair balustrade should match the dimensional spacing of the porch balustrade.
- The diagonal skirting attached to the outer frame of the lower deck is also incompatible with the erected porch.



*Applicant photos.
Left: Stairs and wing walls.
The recently poured concrete
for the new railing is circled.
Right: Ghost lines at rear
door leading to open porch.*



- The raised porch with centrally placed steps flanked by brick wing walls with stone (or concrete) caps are a distinctive character-defining feature of the rear elevation. The outline of painted trim gives evidence that there was some decorative detailing that further accentuated this rear porch.
- Originally, the door leading to the open raised patio would likely have been French doors, or a single door with flanking sidelights (like the front door). The frame of the replacement door appears to be vinyl. The operation and materiality of the sliding doors is a contemporary design and their uneven glass walls are not appropriate for historic structures in the Boston-Edison historic district.
- The installed handrail is incongruous with the rear porch, and the installation method (raised concrete) and railing selection (thin turned aluminum spindles and unfinished end posts) are not appropriate for this historic setting.

Glass block

- Staff asked the applicant to submit a brochure outlining the type of glass block to be installed. Specifications on the dimensions of the blocks and how they will fill the opening, type and color of mortar, installation of vents (if planned), and surface finish of the glass is needed.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation One – Denial – vinyl windows, railings, sliding door

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

It is staff's opinion the installation of vinyl windows, installation of metal railings, and installation of the sliding door would alter the features and spaces that characterize the property. Staff therefore recommends the Commission deny a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed because it does not meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Elements of Design for the district, specifically Standards:

- 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 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 other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

Recommendation Two – Certificate of Appropriateness – rear two-story porch, rear porch doors, and glass block windows

It is staff's opinion the erection the two-story porch and installation of glass block windows will not alter the features and spaces that characterize the property. Staff therefore recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed because it meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Elements of Design for the district.

Staff recommends the Certificate of Appropriateness be issued with the following conditions:

- The rear wood porch stair railing will be replaced with a wood railing that matches the design and dimensions of the porch railing. The ends of the existing and new railings will have miter cuts to fit closely together, as well as ending at the inside edge of the at-grade baluster.
- Vertical skirting will replace the diagonal panels that span the area between the bottom of the deck and grade.
- The two-story porch, new stair railing, and deck skirting will be repainted to better align with the existing white trim on the house.
 - The horizontal porch decking and stairs can retain the concrete-like gray finish, while all vertical and outward facing porch elements (such as columns, baluster/balustrade, deck skirting) will be painted white. The new porch materials will be painted a minimum of three months after installation so the wood can properly dry out.
- The applicant will submit the following items for staff review/approval:
 - A drawing or modified photograph of the existing wood porch that confirms the new stair railing will be installed per the Commission's conditions,
 - A catalog cut sheet of the selected vertical skirting, and
 - Details of the glass block windows, confirming the manufacturer, dimensions of the blocks and how they will fill the opening, type and color of mortar, installation of vents, and surface finish of the glass, will be submitted for staff review.