

STAFF REPORT: FEBRUARY 8, 2023 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO

APPLICATION NUMBER: 23-8919

ADDRESS: 1505 CHICAGO

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON EDISON

APPLICANT: FRED HILL

PROPERTY OWNER: HILL, JACQUELINE F & FRED D HILL JR

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: DECEMBER 27, 2022

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JANUARY 24, 2022

SCOPE: REPLACE FASCIA, GUTTERS, REBUILD PORCH

EXISTING CONDITIONS

1505 Chicago Boulevard is a two-and-a-half story, red-brown brick, Colonial Revival house, built c. 1916-1918. It faces north onto its street in the Boston-Edison Historic District. Prominent features include a projecting entry portico with simplified Classical columns and entablature and a curved pediment, wide eaves with returns, gabled dormers, and subdivided or mullioned windows of various configurations on all elevations. The historic massing and details remain intact but the building has seen a few alterations: some windows have been replaced, fascia and soffit work (subject of this application) has been completed, and the projecting front porch (also subject of this application) was modified with brick, likely sometime in the 1980s.



January 2023 site visit photo by staff.

PROPOSAL

The applicant submitted a proposal dated September 2, 2022, received by mail and processed by staff on December

27, 2022. The proposal consists of two scope areas, both of which appear to be already completed:

Roof

- Replace the “front portion” of the roof with new sheathing boards and 3-tab shingles in Royal Charcoal color.
- Repair dormers by replacing damaged boards as needed and repainting.
- Replace fascia boards with new 1”x6” boards trimmed with aluminum.
- Add vented vinyl soffit panels.
- Replace gutters and downspouts with 5” aluminum gutters and 4” aluminum downspouts.

Other than the shingles, all new work is pure white, whether due to the selection of a white product or due to being painted white.

Front Porch

- Dismantle and rebuild the existing front porch deck, replacing the poured concrete cap and steps and retaining the existing columns and bricks.

History of work observed

Staff observed much of the work in progress; it now appears to have been completed.

- January 15, 2021: Incomplete application (no scope of work) submitted.
- February 12, 2021: Site visit observes fascia/soffit work in progress.
- February 14, 2021: Site visit observes shingle replacement in progress.
- March 19, 2021: Notice of Work Observed issued, citing roof, dormers, masonry, and windows.*
- December 14, 2021: Notice of Work Observed issued, citing roof, dormers, masonry, and windows.
- August 19, 2022: Notice of Work Observed issued, citing roof, dormers, masonry, and windows.
- September 2, 2022/December 27, 2022: Complete application for fascia/soffit and roof work and masonry.



Work in progress. 2021 photo by staff.

* A few replacement windows are evident on the building, but it is not clear when they were added other than that it was sometime after the building was photographed by the Historic Designation Advisory Board in 1974. They are not a component of this application.

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.



Left: The house in 1974. Historic Designation Advisory Board photo. Right: The house in 2019. Google Street View.

Roof

- The roof shingles are an appropriate texture and color for the style and district.
- The dormer walls can be seen as wood shingles in a 1974 photo; they were replaced with asphalt shingles sometime prior to 2019 (see above photos).
- The dormer work (wood) constitutes in-kind replacement of deteriorated historic materials and is appropriate.
- Fascia and soffit boards are typically viewed as important, character-defining features of a house. This is particularly true with Colonial Revival buildings such as this one, where boxed eave returns provide a simplified version of a Classical entablature, a distinguishing feature of the style.
- Staff photos from 2021, though taken from a distance, appear to show significant deterioration in these areas, such as rusted gutters and rotted wood. Staff suggests that these elements may have deteriorated beyond feasible repair. These conditions are also stated in the application.
- The material and size of the gutters and downspouts is appropriate for the building and the district.
- Bright white is not generally an appropriate trim color for the Colonial Revival style. Many shades of off-white were common during the Period of Significance and are appropriate. However, as all of the trim on the building is already bright white prior to this application, and the proposed scope of work alters only a minority of the trim by area, staff suggests that it is acceptable in this instance to match the existing trim color. Should the building be repainted in the future, a more appropriate color would be recommended.

Front Porch

- The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-106) mention porches in subsections on overall massing and on architectural detail. “Porches are commonly, though not always, treated [with architectural detail].”
- Staff has determined that the front porch is not an original or historic feature of the building. A 1974 photo, taken at the time the Boston-Edison Historic District was established, shows a slightly different configuration. Undated photos in the Historic District Commission property files show the porch was completely demolished, likely sometime in the later 1970s. It was subsequently replaced with a new porch of generally similar materials and spatial qualities, but with an additional concrete step and heightened brick wingwalls without a concrete cap.
- The current proposal is to rebuild the porch in the same configuration. The work appears to already be completed. The applicant states in emails dated February 2, 2022 (included as a component of the application) that the historic columns were retained, “60%” of bricks were reused, and Quickcrete mortar mix was used.
- Staff confirms from a site visit that the new bricks match the old in color and texture.
- Quickcrete mortar mix is a type N product and is appropriate for the location.
- Staff suggests that although the materials, orientation, and massing of the front porch are an important character-defining feature of the house, the exact design of the wingwalls are not; therefore, repairing and rebuilding the most recent version of the porch (rather than replicating the pre-1980s porch based on photographic evidence) is appropriate.



Left to right: The front porch deck in 1974, 2019, and 2023.

ISSUES

- A comparison of the current fascia and soffit work with earlier photos (Google Street View from 2015 and a 1974 photo by the Historic Designation Advisory Board) shows that the dimensions have been carefully preserved. However, the materials are different. Standard #6 states that when existing historic features are in need of replacement, “the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.” The aluminum and vinyl used are not historically appropriate materials and have a different texture. Visually, they stand out and alter the appearance of character-defining eaves and boxed eave returns. Thus, the work violates Standard #2 by removing important historic materials, and violates Standard #6 by introducing new materials with new texture and visual qualities.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation One: Fascia and Soffit Replacement

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

Staff recommends the Commission issue a Denial for the proposed fascia and soffit replacement as the proposed work introduces non-historic materials that alter the appearance of a character-defining architectural feature; consequently, it 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.*
6. *Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.*

Recommendation Two: Dormers, Roof, Gutters, Downspouts, Paint Color, and Porch

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

Staff recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the remaining proposed work items as they meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.