

STAFF REPORT: 06/12/2024 MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC20204-00182

ADDRESS: 1485 LONGFELLOW

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT: TIM FLINTOFF (4545 ARCHITECTURE)

OWNER: SHARIF AFFAS

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 5/20/2024

DATE OF STAFF VISIT: 4/22/2024 & 5/29/2024

SCOPE OF WORK: ERECT REAR ADDITION

EXISTING CONDITION

The building located at 1485 Longfellow is a single-family house that was erected ca. 1920. The building features a two-story, side-gabled main mass which is clad with brick and a two-story, flat-roof wing with wood shake siding at the rear elevation. A gabled-roof, two-story addition was recently erected at the building's rear wall without Historic District Commission approval. Gabled-roof dormers top the building's roof. A partial-width, flat-roof porch with round wood columns is located at the building's front elevation. Windows are the original double-hung, wood-sash units.



1485 Longfellow, current conditions. Facing southwest. Staff photo taken on 5/29/2024



1485 Longfellow, current conditions. Facing north towards rear elevation. Note new two-story addition which was erected without HDC approval. Photo provided by applicant. Also, note that a new addition has been added to the rear of the house next door/1475 Longfellow without HDC review/approval. 1475 and 1485 Longfellow are owned by the same person. An application for the new addition at 1475 Longfellow has been submitted to the Commission for review at the 6/12/2024 regular meeting



1485 Longfellow, current conditions. Facing south. Note new two-story addition which was erected without HDC approval. Photo provided by applicant



1485 Longfellow, current conditions. Facing northwest. Note that new two-story addition which was erected without HDC approval is directly adjacent to the original, character-defining flat-roof, 2-story wing. Photo provided by applicant. Also note historic wood French doors proposed for replacement. Also, note that a new addition has been added to the rear of the home next door/1475 Longfellow without HDC review/approval. 1475 and 1485 Longfellow are owned by the same person. An application for the new addition at 1475 Longfellow has been submitted to the Commission for review at the 6/12/2024 regular meeting

PROPOSAL

The applicant submitted a proposal to the Commission at the 5/8/2024 regular meeting in which they sought an approval to retain the existing rear two-story, gabled roof addition “as-is”. As previously noted, this addition was erected without Historic District Commission approval and /or permit. However, the applicant elected to postpone their hearing so that they might revise the rear addition’s design and resubmit the application to the Commission. They have therefore submitted the following revised proposal to this body for review:

- Demolish the historic-age, one-story rear addition while maintaining brick foundation walls (work completed)
- Demolish existing west wall of two-story rear mass (work completed)
- Construct new 2-story addition per the current/revised drawings (work initiated)
 - The current gabled roof with be replaced with a shed roof
 - Clad exterior walls with fiber cement lap siding, with color in accordance with appropriate Detroit Historic Commission Color System C
 - Install new asphalt shingle roof to match existing

- Windows will be Anderson 100 series windows with simulated divided lites with wood trim. The finish color of the new windows will coordinate with the color of the existing/historic existing windows
- Add a wood, Anderson panel style door with simulated divided lite vision panel. The door and frame color to coordinate with painted existing windows
- At existing historic-age, two-story rear wing
 - Demolish existing non-historic wood deck and stair. Construct new composite/Trex deck, stairs and railing. The color shall be Charcoal Black
 - Repair and/or replace existing wood cedar shake siding and detailing where required. Where replacement is required, in-kind materials are to be used. Siding to be painted with color in accordance with appropriate Detroit Historic Commission Color System C
- At the original portion of the house, repair and paint existing wood windows as required
- At the original portion of the house, repair rear existing brick cladding as required using in-kind materials

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- HDC records indicate that a violation on the property for “construction” was recorded on the property on 3/8/2017. However, staff is unable to locate details on this violation
- On 11/08/23, the Detroit building department issued a permit for work to the current property owner (RES2023-03845), which expires 5/24/24. Per the application’s scope of work, the owner was seeking a permit to “conduct a full renovation of the interior of this ...The footprint of the home will remain the same and **no changes will be made to the exterior of the home.**”
- On 2/15/24, a neighbor alerted staff that an addition was being erected at the building’s rear wall. Staff reviewed HDC records and determined that the work had not been reviewed and/or approved by the Commission. Please see the below photo of the conditions at the house’s new rear addition on 2/15/2024. Note that staff reported this violation to the Detroit Building department and they issued a stop work order on 2/29/2024 at the property.
- By the time the owner stopped working on the addition, the work had been nearly completed, including the demolition of the former one-story rear wing and the demolition of the west elevation of the rear, original, flat-roof, two-story wing
- It is staff’s opinion that the two-story, shake-clad wing at the rear elevation dates from the building’s original construction and is a distinctive character-defining feature of the home
- It is staff’s opinion that the rear, one-story wing which was removed as a result of the current addition did not date from the home’s original date of construction. Although it was likely historic-age, it is staff’s opinion that it was not a distinctive, character-defining feature of the house. Staff reviewed the photo of the wing prior to its removal and has the opinion that the wing is awkwardly situated at the building’s rear wall in relationship to the original, two-story, shake-clad wing at this elevation. The foundation height is also much lower than that at the original, two-story, shake-clad wing. Finally, staff notes that a projecting bay at the east elevation, first story features the same shake siding as that found at the original, two-story, shake-clad wing at the rear elevation, while the one-story rear wing featured a lapped wood siding with wide exposure which is typical of construction dating from the 1940s/1950s.
- Per National Park Service Bulletin #14, entitled *New Exterior Additions to Historic Properties* [Preservation Brief 14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/pubs/bul14/), new additions which meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation must accomplish the following:
 - Preserve significant historic materials, features and form•
 - Be compatible

- Be differentiated from the historic building.

The guidelines also state that “a new addition should always be subordinate to the historic building; it should not compete in size, scale or design with the historic building. An addition that bears no relationship to the proportions and massing of the historic building—in other words, one that overpowers the historic form and changes the scale will usually compromise the historic character as well.” Furthermore The National Park Service’s *Illustrated Guidelines for New Additions* [The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings-New Additions \(nps.gov\)](#) do not recommend attaching a new addition so that the character-defining features of the historic building are obscured, damaged, or destroyed.

- It is staff’s opinion that the newly erected rear wing does not meet the Standards because it has been directly appended to the character-defining, two-story, rear wing resulting in the removal of its entire west wall and completely changing its overall form. Also, the large scale of the addition overpowers/is not subordinate to the significant rear wing.
- Staff notes that the revised design proposes to install windows which are generally compatible in design, light configuration, and operation with the house’s historic windows. Staff also does note that the proposed replacement of the addition’s gabled roof will somewhat mitigate its overpowering effect on the main, side-gabled portion of the house. However, it is staff’s opinion that its scale is not subordinate to the character-defining historic rear wing and will still result in the removal of the wing’s west wall.



Photo showing home on 2/14/2024. Submitted by resident. Facing northwest, showing unapproved work at rear (outlined in yellow). Also, note that a new addition had been added to the rear of the home next door/1475 Longfellow without HDC review/approval. 1475 Longfellow is also owned by owner of 1485 Longfellow



Photo showing home on 2/14/2024. Photo by staff. Facing southeast, showing unapproved work at rear



Google Streeview image, 2022. Facing southeast



Rear of home, prior to unapproved work, facing north. Photo provided by applicant.

ISSUES

- It is staff's opinion that the newly erected rear wing does not meet the Standards because it has been directly appended to the character-defining, two-story, rear wing resulting in the removal of its entire west wall and completely changing its overall form. Also, the large scale of the addition overpowers/is not subordinate to the significant rear wing.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation # 1 - Section 21-2-73, DENIAL – Erect a rear wing

The rear addition is not appropriate for the following reasons:

- The newly erected rear wing has been directly appended the character-defining, two-story, rear wing resulting in the removal of its entire west wall and completely changing its overall form. The west facing wall of this wing, which is important to the building's historic character, has been destroyed. Also, the large scale of the addition overpowers/is not subordinate to the significant rear wing.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the addition because it does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular, Standards# 2, 5, 6, 9 and 10 which state that:

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

#9) New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

#10) New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Recommendation # 2 - Section 21-2-73, CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS (COA) – Window and cladding repair

It is staff's opinion that the proposed window and cladding repairs at the historic portion of the house are appropriate to the property's historic character. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work items because they meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standard's for Rehabilitation and conform to the district's Elements of Design.