

STAFF REPORT: 07/10/2024 MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC20204-00227

ADDRESS: 2285 LONGFELLOW

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT: LAUREN KALMAN

OWNER: LAUREN KALMAN

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 5/20/2024

DATE OF STAFF VISIT: 5/29/2024

SCOPE OF WORK: REPLACE SIDING AND SOFFIT WITH SYNTHETIC PRODUCTS

EXISTING CONDITION

Erected ca. 1915, 2285 Longfellow is a two-story, single-family house that is located in the Boston-Edison historic district. The house's roof features a central side-gable with projecting jerkin head/clipped gabled wings at the front and rear. A two-story, hipped roof wing is also located at the rear elevation. Prominent shed-roof dormers are located at the front and side roof surfaces. Buff brick is located at the building's first story, the front elevation's gable end, and the rear, two-story hipped-roof wing. Aluminum siding is found at the dormers, the rear facing gable end, and a small, enclosed porch area at the rear. The roof's soffits and fascia have also been wrapped with aluminum. Decorative false brackets remain in the eaves at the first story and front elevation gable end, despite the current aluminum cladding at that location. Windows are the original wood-sash, double-hung units. All window trim/casing has been wrapped with aluminum coilstock at the exterior.



2285 Longfellow. Staff photo taken 5/29/3034. Remarkably, there are two other extant identical houses in the nearby LaSalle Gardens neighborhood. Photos located near the end of the report.



2285 Longfellow, rear. Photo provided by applicant

PROPOSAL

The applicant is seeking to repair the porch at the rear elevation and remove the existing aluminum siding/wrapping at the roof, exterior walls, and windows. Specifically, per the submitted documentation and subsequent correspondence, the current application includes the following work items:

Repair porch

- At rear elevation, repair porch to include replacement of damaged areas of brick with new brick to match existing (work completed), replace wood decking with new wood decking to match existing (work completed), replace existing wood support with new wood support to match existing (work initiated), paint/stain new wood deck according to assigned color chart

Remove Existing Aluminum Siding

- At roof, remove all existing aluminum at fascia and soffit
- At the dormer front and sidewalls, remove all existing aluminum siding
- At the rear walls/enclosed porch area and gable end, remove all existing aluminum siding
- At window trim/casing, remove all existing coilstock

Alternative Proposal # 1

- At the roof where soffit is not present, add aluminum or vinyl soffit
- At roof where wood fascia, soffit, and window trim/casing is present after removal of aluminum wrap, retain and repair in kind where necessary (pending cost). Alternatively, install new vinyl or aluminum at fascia, soffit, and at existing window trim/casing if cost to retain and repair in kind is too great, historic fascia, soffit, and window trim/casing is not present, or the elements are present but deteriorated beyond repair
- At dormer side and front walls, rear gable end, and rear enclosed porch walls, if cedar shake is present after removal of aluminum siding, retain and repair in kind where necessary (pending cost). Alternatively, install new cement fiber (Hardi) or vinyl shake/shingles at these locations if cost to retain and repair in kind is too great, cedar shake is not present, or cedar shake is present but deteriorated beyond repair

Alternative Proposal #2

- At front façade, retain and repair any existing wood soffit, fascia, cedar shake and window trim/casing. If missing, replicate in kind to match historic appearance.
- At side and rear elevations, install vinyl or aluminum siding at dormer front and sidewalls, rear gable end, and rear enclosed porch walls
- At side and rear elevations, add aluminum or vinyl soffits

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The applicant received a Certificate of Appropriateness to repaint the house in 2017, replace nine windows in 2018, and to install a new fence and driveway in 2021
- Staff reviewed a recent photo of the rear elevation and noted that repairs to the porch have been recently undertaken, to include brick repair and the installation of new wood decking and steps. A porch support has also been removed (see the below photos). A review of HDC files indicated that this work has not been approved by the Commission. The applicant has therefore elected to add this scope item to the current application. It is staff's opinion that the repair of the porch as completed is compatible with the house's historic character and did not result in the removal of distinctive, character defining elements.



Rear porch. Condition prior to unapproved repair (left) and current condition showing new brick, wood decking, and temporary support (right). Photos provided by applicant

- Per the below photo, the aluminum at the dormers, eaves and fascia, was present at the time of the district's designation



2285 Longfellow. Designation photo, taken in 1980

- Regarding the extent of existing historic wood siding, fascia, soffits, and window trim/casing beneath the current aluminum siding and wrapping, the applicant has noted the following:

2285 Longfellow currently has horizontal aluminum siding, aluminum soffits, and aluminum wrapping on the fascia and windows. Our desire to move the home closer to its historic appearance by having a shake shingle rather than the vertical siding and to paint the home according to historic colors (approved by the commission in 2017). We also need new gutters to prevent damage to the facade of the home. At this juncture we would like to remove the aluminum siding and wrapping. We know that the soffits have been removed on the upper part of the house (some of the aluminum has fallen and we can see through the underside of the roof). We know that some of the wood fascias are intact (we can see these where some of the aluminum has fallen off), but we do not know if all of the decorative trim details are intact (including the soffits and decorative beams in the first level). While the contractor quotes included fascia and window wrapping it is not our intent to rewrap the trim, rather repair and paint the original wood. At this juncture we are looking for options to move forward depending on the condition that we find under the aluminum siding and soffits.

- The below photos, as well as the presence of decorative brackets at the eaves, suggest that the original wood eaves and fascia are largely intact beneath the current aluminum wrapping. If the current aluminum wrapping is to be removed, staff recommends that the any remaining wood eaves, fascia, and brackets be retained and repaired in kind where deteriorated. If these original elements do not remain beneath the existing aluminum wrapping, new wood eaves and fascia which are compatible to the building's historic appearance should be installed. The addition of new vinyl or aluminum to these areas as these materials would be incompatible with the building's historic character and thus would not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
- Where the applicant has noted that no soffits remain beneath the current aluminum wrapping and new soffits are proposed, staff recommends that they be made of wood to match the original extant soffit instead of adding new vinyl or aluminum to these areas as these materials are incompatible with the building's historic character and thus would not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
- Where aluminum coilstock will be removed at the window trim/casing, it is staff's opinion that any extant wood elements be retained and repaired in kind. If the window trim/casing is missing or deteriorated beyond repair, new compatible wood trim/casing should be installed as aluminum coilstock or vinyl wrapping are incompatible with the building's historic character and thus would not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
- The applicant has noted that he has explored areas of the wall under the aluminum siding at the rear elevation enclosed porch and found tar paper with no siding beneath. If the original siding existed anywhere beneath the current aluminum siding at the rear wall and gable end and the dormer front and sidewalls, staff would recommend that it be retained and repaired in-kind where necessary. However, if no siding exists beneath the current aluminum siding at these areas, it is appropriate to identify a new siding which is compatible with the property's historic appearance and character.
- The applicant has noted that two nearby similar houses display historic wood shake siding at the dormers (see below staff photos). He has also noted that he found fragments of cedar shake in the house's attic. He has proposed the installation of new cement fiber (Hardi) shake at the areas of the dormers and rear elevation where aluminum siding currently exists if their budget allows. The applicant has also proposed to install vinyl or aluminum siding at these locations as an alternative.
- Staff does support the removal of the current inappropriate aluminum siding at the dormers, rear gable end, and rear enclosed porch and concurs that a shake siding would be an appropriate siding

for these areas. However, staff notes the following for the Commission's consideration regarding the applicant's proposal:

- Traditional/historic cedar wood shake typically displays the following characteristics:
 - It is typically installed as individual shakes, not as a multiple shake panels
 - It typically presents an irregular appearance when installed
 - When painted, wood shake typically displays a smooth surface
 - Corners are typically mitered
 - The thickness of shakes vary from 1/2" to 3/4" or greater at the butt end
- It is staff's opinion that both the proposed vinyl and fiber cement shake panels would detract from the home's historic character as they do not provide an adequate representation of authentic wood shake for the following reasons:
 - Both products present a regular, machined appearance versus the irregular and naturally varied appearance which cedar shake offers
 - Both products present an unnatural "imprinted" wood grain versus the smooth surface that painted wood shake displays
 - Both products are thinner than a typical wood shake and therefore do not provide the profile, shadow, and depth of a typical cedar shake
 - Wall corners for both vinyl and fiber cement shake are typically finished with trim boards/are not typically mitered. This creates an awkward and ahistorical framing effect.
- Regarding the proposal to install aluminum siding:
 - It is staff's opinion that this material is historically inappropriate because it is prone to scratching and dents, has a tendency to fade, and presents a regular, machined appearance versus the appearance of traditional wood siding
- It is staff's opinion that traditional cedar shake siding is a more appropriate material for installation at the dormers and rear elevation enclosed porch walls and gable end if the original materials are no longer extant below the current aluminum siding. The applicant has noted that he explored that option, but that it was prohibitively expensive/financially infeasible. Staff has therefore requested that the applicant provide his wood shake quotes for the Commission's review. Staff will forward the requested quote to the Commission upon receipt of the document.



Wood fascia and soffit

Aluminum clad bracket

Staff photo, taken on 5/29/2024. Facing front elevation gable end. Note that an area of the original wood fascia is visible after a portion of the aluminum wrapping has fallen off. Also note brackets in the eaves, currently wrapped in aluminum.



Photo by applicant. Showing brackets in the eaves, currently wrapped in aluminum



Photo by applicant. Detail of wood bracket in the eaves at the rear elevation. Showing area of wood rot.



**Staff photo taken on 6/7/2024. House of nearly identical design in the LaSalle Gardens neighborhood (8751 LaSalle.)
Not in a local historic district**



**Staff photo taken on 6/7/2024. House of nearly identical design in the LaSalle Gardens neighborhood (8751 LaSalle.)
Not in a local historic district**



**Staff photo taken on 6/7/2024. House of nearly identical design in the LaSalle Gardens neighborhood (8751 LaSalle.)
Not in a local historic district**



A third version of 2285 Longfellow, found at 7735 W. LaSalle Gardens. Note the consistent detailing on all three houses, especially the wood shakes and eave brackets.

ISSUES

- As noted above, aluminum covers the dormer walls (to include window trim), rear gable end (to include window and door trim), and the rear porch's exterior wall surfaces. Aluminum is also located in the roof's fascia and soffit area. The full extent and condition of the remaining historic wood elements at these areas is unknown at this time as the applicant does not have HDC approval to remove the existing incompatible aluminum. As staff does have the authority to approve the removal of non-historic siding, staff cannot approve the products which are proposed for to replace the current aluminum cladding. proposal
- The aluminum which current exists is not compatible with the building's historic appearance as it does not adequately approximate historic wood siding, fascia, window/door trim, and/or soffits. Specifically, aluminum is prone to scratching and dents, has a tendency to fade, and presents a regular, machined appearance versus the appearance of traditional wood siding. Therefore, any proposed installation of new aluminum to replace the existing would not meet the Standards. Similarly, the installation of vinyl at these locations would be incompatible to the house's historic character.
- Per the above staff observation, the vinyl and cement fiber shake products proposed for installation at the dormer front and sidewalls, the rear gable end, and rear enclosed porch are not compatible with the property's historic character for the following reasons:
 - Both products present a regular, machined appearance versus the irregular and naturally varied appearance which cedar shake offers
 - Both products present an unnatural, "imprinted" wood grain versus the smooth surface that painted wood shake displays
 - Both products are thinner than a typical wood shake and therefore do not provide the profile, shadow, and depth of a typical cedar shake
 - Wall corners for both vinyl and fiber cement shake are typically finished with trim boards/are not typically mitered

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation #1 - Section 21-2-73, DENIAL – Install new vinyl or aluminum at fascia, soffit area, or window/door trim; Install vinyl , aluminum, or fiber cement siding at dormers and rear elevation gable end

The above listed items are inappropriate for the following reasons:

- The aluminum which current exists is not compatible with the building's historic appearance as it does not adequately approximate historic wood siding, fascia, window/door trim, and/or soffits. Specifically, aluminum is prone to scratching and dents, has a tendency to fade, and presents a regular, machined appearance versus the appearance of traditional wood siding. Therefore, any proposed installation of new aluminum to replace the existing would not meet the Standards. Similarly, the installation of vinyl at these locations would be incompatible with the house's historic character.
- The original wood eaves and fascia likely remain beneath the current aluminum wrapping. If the current aluminum wrapping is to be removed, any remaining historic wood soffits, fascia, brackets, and window/door trim should be retained and repaired with new wood to match the existing where deteriorated. If these original elements do not remain beneath the existing aluminum wrapping or are deteriorated beyond repair, new wood soffits, fascia, and window/door trim which are compatible to the building's historic appearance should be installed. The addition of new vinyl or aluminum to these areas as these materials would be incompatible with the building's historic character
- The proposed installation of vinyl or fiber cement shake siding products to the rear dormer, rear enclosed porch walls, and dormer sidewalls is inappropriate because the materials:

- Present a regular, machined/modern appearance, versus the irregular, naturally varied appearance which cedar shake offers
- Present an unnatural wood grain versus the smooth surface that painted wood shake displays
- Are thinner than a typical wood shake and therefore do not provide the profile, shadow, and depth of a typical cedar shake
- Typically wall corners are finished with trim boards/are not mitered as is common for wood shake installations

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the above described scope items because they do not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular, Standards# 2, 5, and 6, 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

Recommendation #2 - Section 21-2-73, CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS – Remove aluminum from dormers, rear facing gable end, rear enclosed porch, fascia, soffit, and window/door trim; repair rear porch

It is staff's opinion that the proposal's remaining work items are appropriate to the building's historic character and therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work because it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and conforms to the district's Elements of Design