

STAFF REPORT: AUGUST 14, 2024 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00400

ADDRESS: 1971 CHICAGO

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT: RAYMOND TRAVIS AND JAQUELINE MELODY SEDLACEK

PROPERTY OWNER: RAYMOND TRAVIS AND JAQUELINE MELODY SEDLACEK

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: JULY 19, 2024

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JULY 25, 2024

SCOPE: REPLACE WOOD WINDOWS WITH VINYL WINDOWS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The subject building is a two-and-one-half-story house built in 1920 and facing south onto Chicago Boulevard. The house is clad in red-brown brick with ornate wood detail at the roof eaves and dormers. The majority of the architectural details are painted off-white. Tabbed stone detailing exists around the windows; the building also features an arched, stone entryway. The hip roof features dormers with curved, four-over-four, wood sash windows, subject of this application, at all four elevations. The symmetrical façade includes an uncovered raised porch, rebuilt subject to a June 23, 2000, Certificate of Appropriateness. Newer roofing and a driveway gate have also been installed with Commission approval.



July 2024 photo by staff.

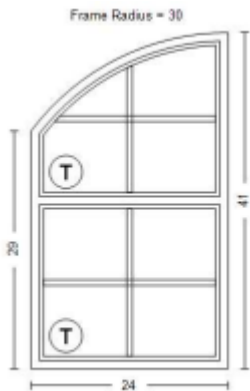
Vinyl windows on the first and second floors, installed without approval, received a Notice of Denial and Order dated August 10, 2000 (original shutters had already been removed prior to this time, also without approval). According to that document, “the Commission hereby orders a remedy to duplicate the original muntin pattern on the vinyl windows or the windows returned to wood to match the original.” The required work has not yet been performed.



1974 photo by the Historic Designation Advisory Board. Note character-defining four-over-four windows since replaced without approval.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is to replace the attic-story windows (still the original wood, four-over-four sash units) with vinyl units by MI Windows and Doors, per the included window schedule.



Example replacement window, per submitted window schedule.

The proposed new windows would be single-hung, sash windows in white vinyl, with simulated divided lites.

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.
- The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-106) mention windows as “always subdivided” and “usually [further] subdivided by muntins;” “the most common window type is double hung.” The Elements of Design also note that “wood is almost universally used for window frames,” which presumably includes the mullions in this case, and windows on Tudor houses are typically “of a dark brown or cream color.”
- The windows proposed for replacement are almost certainly historic and unambiguously character-defining as they are subdivided, as described in the Elements of Design, adding textural interest to the façade and an serving as an important part of the dormers, a prominent visual component of the building. The curved upper sashes also add to their distinctive character.
- The applicant states that there is deterioration to the windows, noting “rotten wood” and that they “no longer open and close all the way.”
- Photos provided with the application show additional, relatively minor, deterioration, such as peeling paint and missing sash cords. Photos also show that the windows seem to have been painted over several times, a condition that will impair their operation.



Photo from application showing peeling paint and missing sash cord.



Photo from application showing peeling paint.



Photo from application showing peeling paint and missing sash cord.

- As an additional note, more extensive deterioration to exterior sills is visible in application photos. However, repair or replacement of these elements is not part of the proposed scope; replacement would require a separate application to the Historic District Commission.



Application photo showing deterioration of sill; cropped by staff with arrow added.

ISSUES

- As noted above, the window replacement on the first and second floors already received a Denial. The replacement of the attic windows is likewise inappropriate, especially given the more distinctive, curved upper sash of these elements. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation (quoted in full below) require that historic materials and distinctive features be retained.
- The deterioration noted above constitutes typical maintenance needs of old windows and is repairable (John H. Myers, “The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows,” Preservation Brief 9, (National Park Service Technical Preservation Services), <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/9-wooden-windows.htm>). Any areas of damaged wood appear, to staff, to be minor and localized, and also repairable. Thus, the windows do not seem to meet the standard of being “deteriorated beyond repair,” the standard required for their replacement under the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation (quoted in full below).
- If replacement windows were warranted (that is, if the historic windows were demonstrated to be beyond repair), the new windows would be required to “match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, and where possible, materials” (Standard #6, quoted in full below). Although some features, such as the curved upper sashes and the four-over-four muntin pattern, are proposed to be replicated in the replacements, the replacement windows still do not fully match, for the following reasons:
 - The replacement windows are vinyl.
 - Although historical dimensions are not provided, the 5/8” or 11/16” simulated divided lite proposed for the windows appears to be thinner than the historic muntins.
 - Likewise, the rails and stiles (the outside edges of each sash) of the proposed replacement windows appear to be thinner than the historical condition.
- The proposed white color may not be consistent with Color System C or Color System D, which recommend either dark or off-white sash colors.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78: Determinations of Historic District Commission

Staff concludes that the proposed window replacement does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the following reasons:

- The wood windows proposed for removal are historic and distinctive materials and features that contribute to the character of the property.
- The windows proposed for removal have not been shown to be deteriorated beyond repair.
- The proposed new windows are not appropriate as they do not match the old windows in design (their dimensions appear to be different, including thinner grilles, rails, and stiles) or materials (they are vinyl).

Therefore, staff recommends that the Commission issue a Denial as the proposed work 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.*
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 where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be documented by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*