

STAFF REPORT: 10/9/2024 MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

ADDRESS: 2061 LONGFELLOW

APPLICATION NO: #HDC-2024-00532

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT: TIM FLINTOFF (4545 ARCHITECTURE)

OWNER: ASM REALTY HOLDINGS LLC

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 9/30/2024

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 9/23/2024

SCOPE: ERECT GARAGE AND REHABILITATE DWELLING

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The property at 2061 Longfellow is a detached, single-family, dwelling that was erected ca. 1915. The building features a side-gabled roof which is topped with three, Palladian-style, arched-roof dormers at the front roof surface and a single, shed-roof dormer at the rear. Dormer side walls are clad with wood shingle siding. Original 8/8, wood windows are located at the front dormers, while the rear dormer windows, which were originally 1/1 wood sash units, are missing/heavily deteriorated. Newly installed asphalt shingles cover the main roof surface. A wood frieze board topped with wood dentils is located below the wood soffit at the building front wall, while a wide, stepped frieze board is located below the soffit at the rear. Classically-inspired eave returns are located at the side elevations. Exterior walls are clad with red brick and windows are the original double-hung and casement wood units. An historic-age, paneled wood door with flanking original sidelites and wood pilasters at the façade serves as the primary entrance. The front façade features a centrally-located porch which is composed of a recently installed concrete block deck and an original, curved roof with dentil detailing. The porch's original fluted wood columns were removed sometime between 2019 and 2022. A deteriorated concrete driveway which was once present to the east/side of the house, leading from the garage to the rear of the house, was removed in 2021. A deteriorated concrete walkway which lead from the sidewalk to the front porch was also removed in 2021.



2061 Longfellow, current appearance. Staff photo taken on 9/30/2024

PROPOSAL

Per the submitted project documents, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval to rehabilitate the dwelling and erect a new garage according the following:

Windows and doors

- Retain and repair all existing windows excepting one remaining wood casement unit with lead coming at the rear wall, second story
- Where 1/1, wood window is missing at the rear first story, install a new 1/1, aluminum-clad wood double hung unit
- Where 1/1, wood window is missing at the rear dormer, install a new 1/1, aluminum-clad wood double hung unit
- Where one (1) wood casement unit with lead coming at the rear wall, second story is missing, install a new aluminum-clad wood casement window
- Replace one (1) existing wood casement unit with lead coming at the rear wall, second story with a new aluminum-clad wood casement window
- Retain and repair existing shutters at second story windows, front façade.
- At rear, retain and repair existing doors at first and second stories
- At front façade primary entrance, retain and repair wood door, sidelites, and fluted wood pilasters

Dormer Siding

- At rear dormer, retain and repair the existing wood shake siding at front and side walls. At front dormers, retain and repair existing wood shake siding at side walls

Porches

- At front façade, retain and repair front porch to include the following:
 - Install new fluted wood columns per the submission
 - Retain and repair the existing rooftop railing
 - Retain the existing porch roof/cornice and repair where necessary using in-kind materials
 - Install a new masonry deck/floor and steps per the attached
- At rear wall, install a new two-story wood and composite porch and deck per the submission

Brick repair

- Tuckpoint where necessary

Garage

- Erect a new 13'-7" high, 20'x20' garage to the rear of the dwelling per the submission. The roof shall be side-gabled and covered with asphalt shingles. Exterior walls will be clad with lapped cement fiber siding

Landscape and hardscape

- Add a new 10'-wide concrete driveway in the rear yard which will widen to a 20'-0" parking apron at the front/north of the garage
- Add a new 6'-0" wide concrete walkway in the front yard which will lead from the sidewalk to the new primary entry porch
- Add a new 3'-0" wide walkway in the rear yard which will lead from the new rear porch to the garage
- Remove two trees from the front yard

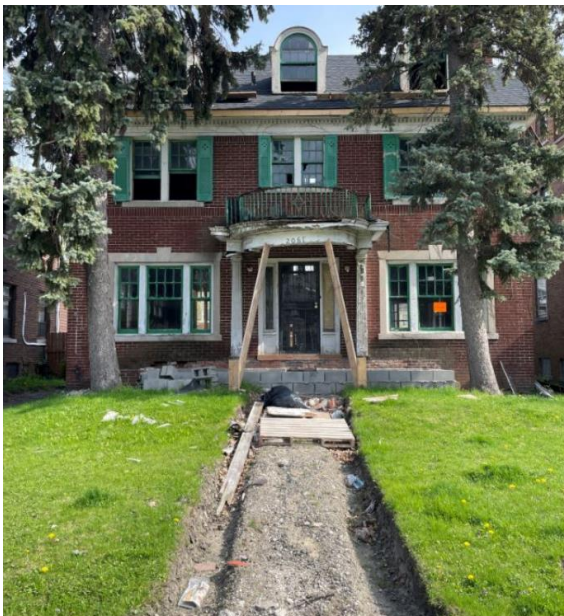
- Plant two new trees at the front yard (species not specified)

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston-Edison Historic District was designated as a local historic district in 1973
- In April 2021, HDC staff visited the site to document unapproved exterior work which was in process to include digging at the front and rear yard; the installation of new asphalt shingles, gutters, and downspouts at the roof; and the removal of a rear balcony and deck. The Detroit building department issued a stop work order in response to HDC staff's report of the unapproved work. A review of Google Streetview images of the property and photos of the property taken by staff in 2021 also indicates that the front porch columns, floor/deck and steps, a concrete walkway and steps in the front yard which led from the sidewalk to the front door, and the concrete driveway were removed without HDC approval sometime between 2019 and 2021. Staff does note that the front porch, driveway, and front yard walkway and steps were in a state of advanced deterioration in the period immediately prior to their unapproved removal.



Google Streetview, appearance in 2019. Note that the original front porch deck and columns, driveway and concrete walkway with steps remain, albeit in deteriorated condition



Staff photo taken in 2021 to document work undertaken without approval. Note that walkway has been removed, the brick front porch deck/floor has been removed and replaced with concrete block, and the porch columns have been removed

- The property owner submitted an application to the Commission for review at the May 2021 meeting for a full rehabilitation of the house, to include the work which had been initiated without HDC review/approval. The application also proposed to erect a new, 18’x18’, hipped-roof garage to the rear of the dwelling. The Commission approved that application. With the new/the current application, the property owner has changed the design of the garage and proposed subtle changes to the design of the front and rear porches.
- The applicant is seeking the Commission’s approval to remove two large, historic-age trees which are directly to the north of the dwelling’s façade/porch because their roots are contributing to damage of the dwelling’s foundation and front porch (see the below photos). The HDC staff landscape architect supports the applicant’s proposal to remove the trees and concurs with their conclusion that the trees are damaging the dwelling. Also, evergreen coniferous are not typical at such a location and thus is incompatible with the historic district. The applicant has proposed to replace these trees with two new trees in the front yard, well north of the dwelling. Staff supports this approach.



Two spruce trees proposed for removal

2061 Longfellow, designation slide showing conditions in 1974. Detroit HDAB



Two spruce trees proposed for removal

2061 Longfellow. Photo taken by HDC staff on 9/30/2024 showing current conditions

- Per the district’s Element of Design # (13), entitled *Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments*:

The typical treatment of individual properties is a flat or graded front lawn area in grass turf, often subdivided by a straight or curving walk leading to the front

entrance. Materials for such walks are concrete, brick, stone, or combinations of those materials. *Some front yards have rectangular raised earthwork terraces upon which the house stands. These unpaved terraces having sloping embankments* or retaining walls which are made of brick, stone, or both, at the change of grade foundation plantings, often of a deciduous character that are characteristic of the period 1900 to 1930, are present virtually without exception.

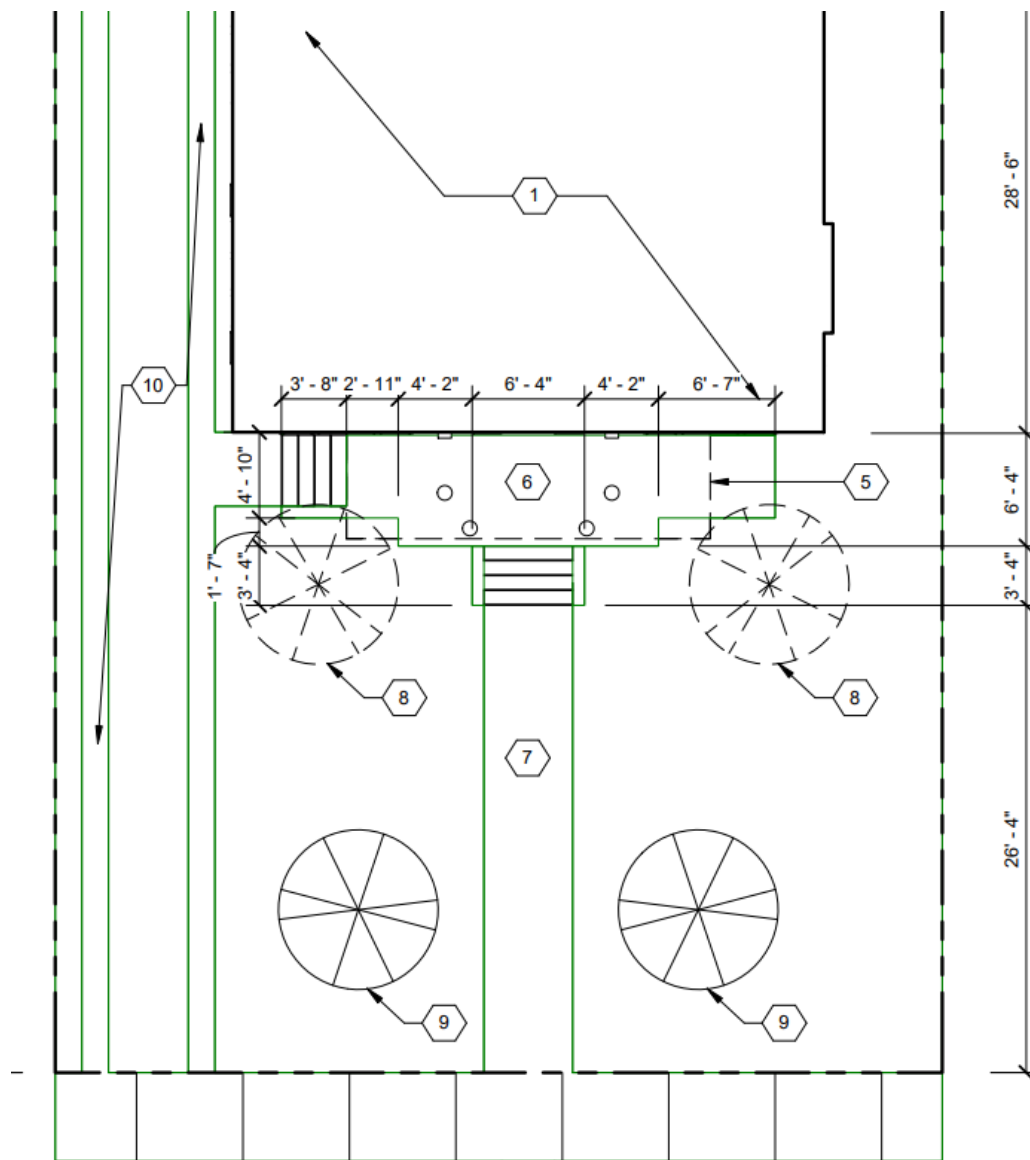
Note that a terrace does currently exist at the property's front yard, directly north of the front façade/front porch (see below photos). The concrete walkway which was removed from the front yard without HDC approval included a single step directly to the south of its junction with the public sidewalk and a three-step rise with a landing to the direct north of a single porch step. The current application appears to indicate that the existing terrace will be removed as it proposes a straight walkway which leads from the sidewalk to the porch steps (four steps total versus the single step which marked the original porch that was removed without HDC approval). It is staff's opinion that the existing terrace is a distinctive, character-defining landscape feature that should be retained. Staff also recommends that the original porch and front yard walkway step configuration/number be replicated in order to accommodate the terrace's maintenance.



Google Streetview, 2009 showing terraced landform at the front yard in addition to the concrete walkway and single porch step that was removed without HDC approval in 2021 (outlined in yellow)



Current conditions, showing distinctive, character-defining terraced landform at front yard



Proposed site plan/porch plan.

- The application proposes to replace one existing distinctive character-defining leaded glass wood casement window at the rear wall, second story with a new single lite aluminum-clad wood casement window. Also, the application proposes to install a new aluminum-clad wood casement window to replace a second leaded glass wood casement window that was removed without HDC approval (see below). Note that the application does not provide evidence that the leaded glass window which is proposed for replacement is deteriorated beyond repair. Additionally, the replacement window does not represent an adequate replication of the leaded glass window that was removed without HDC approval. It is staff's opinion that these work items conflict with Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation #6, which states the following:

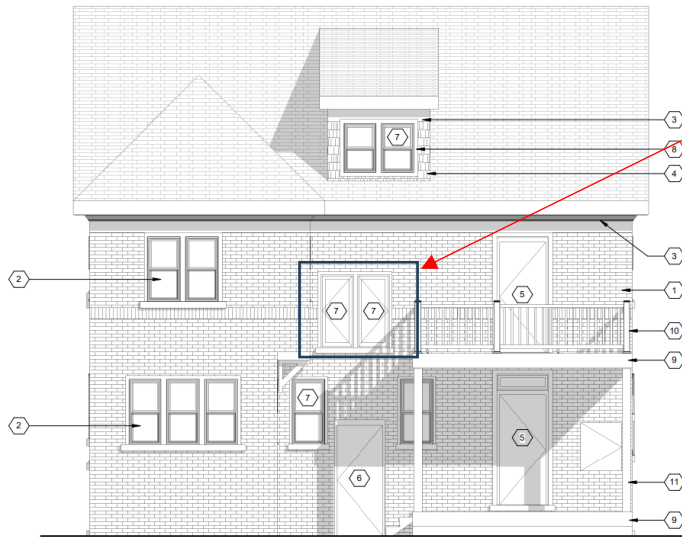
Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

This window is proposed for replacement

A leaded glass window at this location was removed without approval. The applicant proposed to install a single lite aluminum-clad wood casement window in this opening



Rear wall, current appearance. Photo by applicant



New windows proposed to replace historic leaded glass casement units

Proposed rear elevation

ISSUES

- The front yard terrace is a distinctive character-defining feature of the property and therefore the Standards require that it be retained. The original porch and front yard walkway which were removed without HDC approval were also distinctive character-defining features of the property and should be replicated to maintain the property's historic appearance/character and to support the retention of the terrace.
- Per the above, the existing character defining leaded glass window at the rear wall proposed for removal does appear to be deteriorated beyond repair and the new casement window proposed to replace the character defining leaded glass window at the rear wall

which was removed without HDC approval is not an adequate replication. These work items do not meet the Standards

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation - Section 21-2-78 -Certificate of Appropriateness

It is staff's opinion that project generally conforms to the district's Elements of Design and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work with the following conditions:

- The one existing distinctive character-defining wood casement window (with diamond patterned lead coming)at the rear wall, second story proposed for replacement shall be retained and repaired.
- The new window which shall be installed at the rear wall, second story to replace a casement window with diamond patterned lead coming that was removed without HDC approval shall display a lite configuration and material which adequately replicates the window that was originally present within the opening. HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the final window selection.
- The terraced landform at the front yard shall be retained/shall not be lowered or flattened. The new front yard walkway and porch steps shall be redesigned to replicate those which were removed without HDC approval. HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the final design prior to the issuance of the permit.