

STAFF REPORT: OCTOBER 9, 2024, REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00490

ADDRESS: 15035 GRANDVILLE

HISTORIC DISTRICT: ROSEDALE PARK

APPLICANT: ALBERT BENEZRA, WEATHERGARD WINDOWS

PROPERTY OWNER: ROMEO J. HARVEY

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: AUGUST 23, 2024

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

SCOPE: REPLACE WOOD WINDOWS WITH VINYL WINDOWS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The subject building is a two-story house built in 1937 and facing east onto Grandville Avenue. It is a Colonial Revival, three-bay, side-gable house with a prominent wall chimney on the north elevation. Other character-defining features include a Classical pediment and pilasters around the front entrance, Classical cornice with returns at the roofline, and, subject of this application, distinctive wood sash windows. On the front façade, windows are eight-over-twelve on the first floor and eight-over-eight on the second floor and feature character-defining, angled rowlock sills and distinctive rusticated, flat-arched lintels with keystones. One small rear (west elevation) window is presently vinyl. A small, enclosed rear porch is clad in vinyl siding and has vinyl windows. The wood windows on the building feature aluminum storms.



September 2024 photo by staff.

Some changes to the building have been made in recent decades, with no record of approval by the Historic District Commission. Shutters, apparently original and most likely wood, have been replaced by slightly

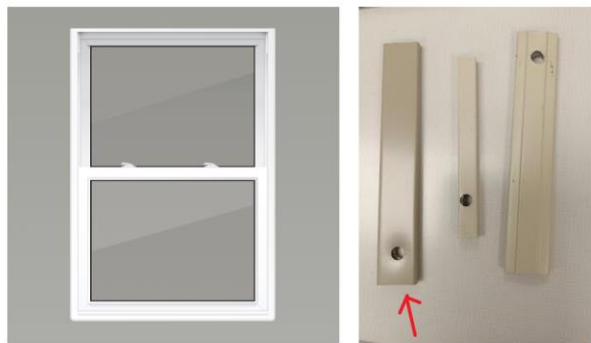
smaller vinyl shutters. This work was done between 2013 and 2018, according to Google Maps image. Sometime between 2007 and 2013, large dentils beneath the roofline and downspouts with prominent collector boxes once existed, both details commonly associated with Colonial Revival architecture and important to the character of the building, were removed. Finally, the entrance pilasters, with capitals, and pediment with distinctive dentil work, were covered in what appears to be vinyl or aluminum.



Circa 2007 photo by the Historic Designation Advisory Board.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is to replace seventeen windows (sixteen wood sash windows and one vinyl window) with WeatherGard double-hung vinyl sash windows. The windows would be white in color, with “flat” between-the-glass grids in white on all windows other than the back of the house. Although the submitted window schedule is not clearly keyed to the submitted exterior photographs, this appears to comprise all the windows on the building other than the glass-block basement windows, two small attic windows, and existing vinyl windows on the enclosed rear porch.



Left: WeatherGard double-hung sash window in white. Image from product website. Right: WeatherGard “flat” between-the-glass grid unit indicated by arrow. Image from applicant.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston-Edison Historic District was established by City Council ordinance in 2007. The Historic Designation Advisory Board Final Report notes that the district is significant for its 1910s and 1920s architecture and for its history as a streetcar suburb and planned community. A period of significance is implied as ranging from the 1910s into the 1950s.
- The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-199) provide the following pertinent observations:
 - “Wood is almost universally used for window frames...”
 - “Windows are commonly either of the metal casement or wooden sash variety.”
 - “Subdivided windows” create “considerable interest.”
 - “vinyl siding and vinyl windows, where they exist, are replacements.”
 - “Paint colors often relate to style ... the buildings derived from Classical precedents, such as the Neo-Dutch Colonials and Garrison Colonials, generally have woodwork painted in the white or cream range.”
- The windows proposed for replacement are almost certainly original to the building, based on materials and style. Unambiguously character-defining: they are subdivided, as described in the Elements of Design, adding textural interest to the façade; further, sash windows are an important component of the building’s Colonial Revival style.
- Photos provided by the applicant do not show visible deterioration of the windows other than relatively small areas of peeling paint.



Example photos from application materials, arranged and cropped by staff.

ISSUES

- The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation #2 and #5 (quoted in full below) require that historic materials and distinctive features be retained unless they are beyond repair.

- Even 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 the proposed windows roughly reproduce some visual qualities of the historic windows, such as double-hung configuration (both sashes are of the same thickness, unlike some replacement windows), subdivided sashes, and comparable rail and stile (outside edges of each sash) thickness, they are still not an adequate match, for the following reasons:
 - The use of between-the-glass grids, rather than true muntins or simulated divided lites, provides a thin and textureless appearance that is noticeably different than that of a historic window.
 - The between-the-glass grid pattern is different from the historic configuration. (For example, the eight-over-twelve pattern on the first floor, front façade windows would be replaced with a three-over-six pattern.)

- The proposed windows are vinyl, which is a non-historic material with a noticeably different finish and sheen than historic wood, and therefore contrary to Standard #6.

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:
 - They employ between-the-glass grids, rather than true divided lites.
 - The grids are of a different pattern than that of the historic muntin pattern.
- The proposed new windows are not appropriate as they do not match the old windows in materials (they are vinyl rather than wood).

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.*