

STAFF REPORT: FEBRUARY 12, 2025 MEETING

PREPARED BY: A. DYE

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00661

ADDRESS: 258 ELIOT

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BRUSH PARK

APPLICANT: MICHAEL KLINE, KLINE HITECH HOME & COMMERCIAL IMPROVEMENTS

PROPERTY OWNER: WANG LIN

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: JANUARY 21, 2025

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JANUARY 24, 2025

SCOPE: REPLACE WOOD WINDOWS WITH VINYL WINDOWS (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The lot at 258 Eliot is located on the south side of the street, mid-block between Brush and John R. The 2-1/2 story building sits on a raised foundation; the front entrance is accessed by a flat-roofed portico that is supported by round, smooth Tuscan columns. The wall above the portico projects forward and is accentuated by brick quoining and an open gable with a small half-round window. Each window opening is accentuated by a stone sill and a brick and stone lintel. The repeating contrasting pattern above each window opening, coupled with the heavy modillions at the cornice creates a repeating decorative pattern across the facade. The hip roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The symmetrical design of the building is further reinforced by small flat-roofed single window dormers adjacent to the central gable; and narrow, deep chimneys at the east and west walls which have matching corbel brick pattern near the chimney flues.

The dominant window opening is rectangular in shape with double-hung sash; window patterns are six-over-one, or one-over-one. Some openings on the rear are boarded over, and many of the window openings on the west side wall are not visible due to trees. Excepting the rear dormers, all visible openings appear to have replacement windows, and vinyl windows are in the front and side dormers.

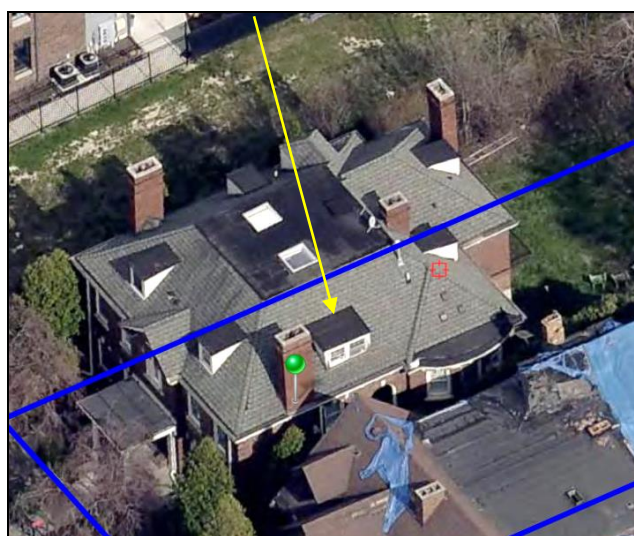


Above: Staff photo, January, 24, 2025

Right: Detroit Parcel Viewer

PROPOSAL

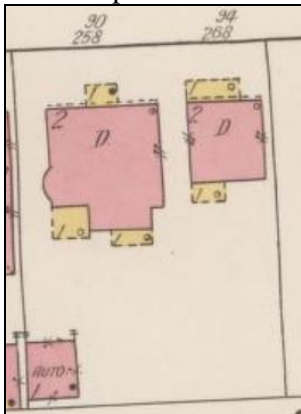
- Install seven vinyl windows within five dormers.
Locations: Two at the north/front, three at the east/side, and two at the west/side.



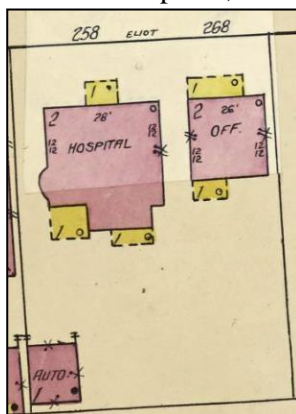
Aerial views, EagleView.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

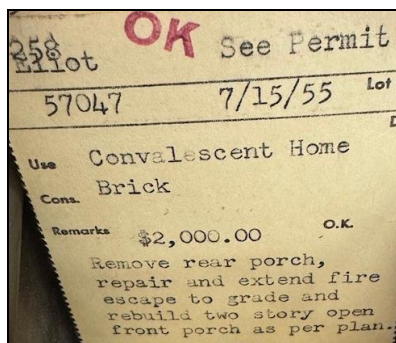
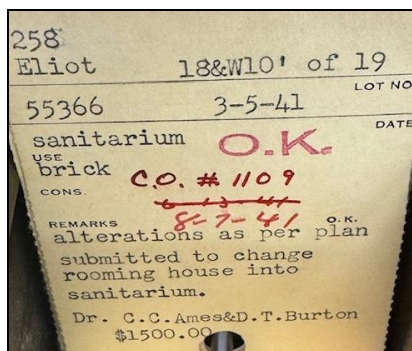
- The Brush Park Historic District was enacted on February 8, 1980.
- Staff couldn't find an original permit card for the house. However, based on the style of dwelling, it is staff's opinion it was likely erected at the beginning of the 20th century. The below Sanborn maps and building permit cards show the evolution of the structure from dwelling to rooming house and then hospital. Multiple interior and exterior alterations took place, a few of which are shown below.



The 1921 Sanborn map identifies 258 and 268 as dwellings.



By 1950, the Sanborn map identifies 258 as a hospital and 268 as an office.

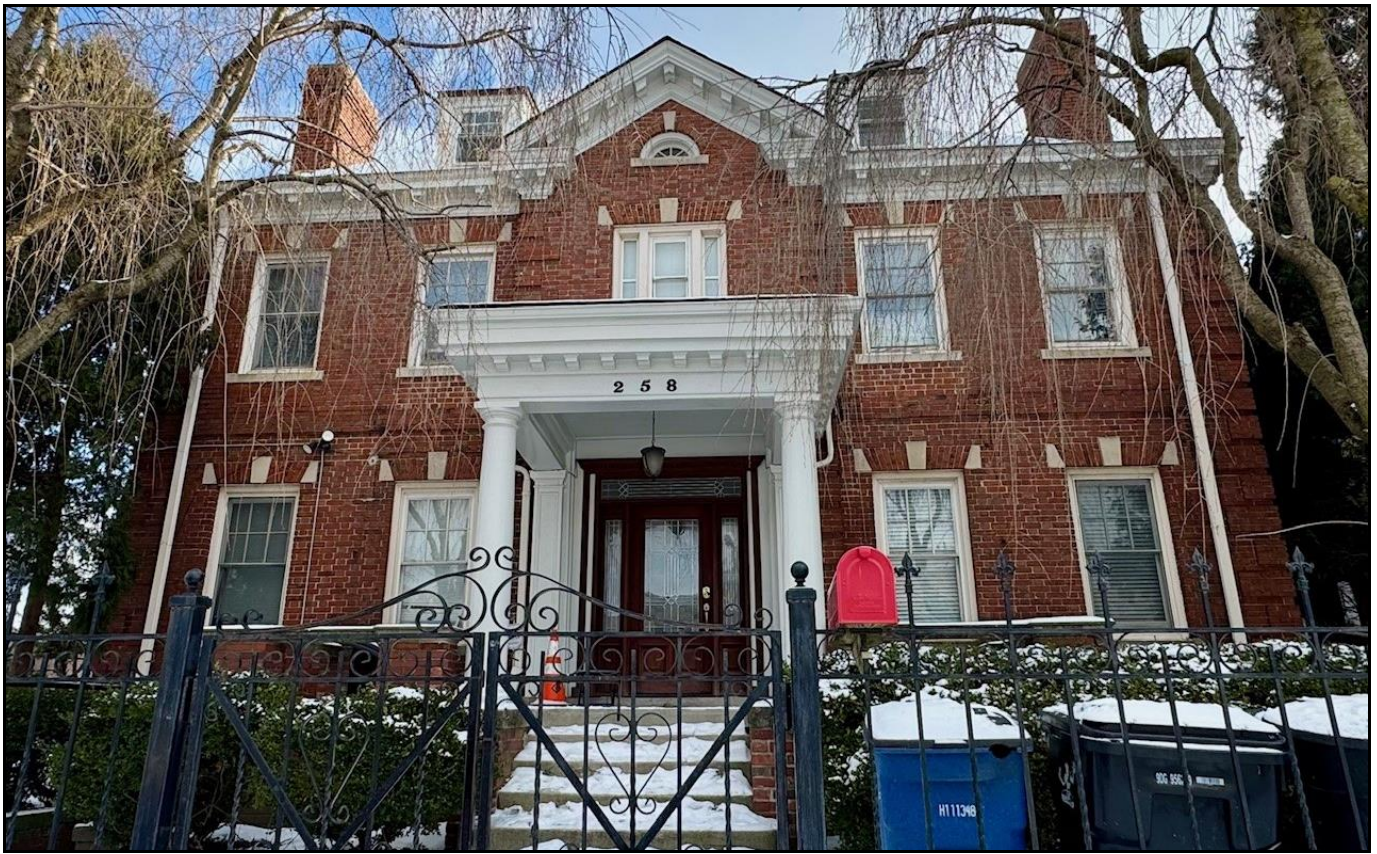


Building permit cards, BSEED.



1980 Designation photo, HDAB.

- The designation photo shows several exterior alterations present in 1980, including doors within window openings, a metal balcony/fire escape at the second floor, missing front entry sidelights, and various patterns of double-hung windows.
- The current application includes a page from an insurance assessment which states a fire occurred at the third floor, necessitating the installation of the vinyl windows.
- According to staff's research on immediate and lasting effects of fire damage, it is possible for fire to stress glass in way that, although intact, it has become extremely fragile and may break by a tap or a push. Intact wood frames might also have damaged seals and/or weakened integrity, and smoke can linger in the wood frames and cavities where operational components, such as the sash cords, are housed.
- Standard Six states, "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."
- Based on the alterations at the front of the house at time of designation, staff doesn't know if original windows were present in the dormers at that time. It is not known what type or material of windows were removed when the vinyl windows were recently installed.
- According to the National Park Service's document [*Replacement Windows that meet the Standards*](#):
 - Replacement windows for missing or non-historic windows must be compatible with the historic appearance and character of the building.
 - Recreation of missing historic windows is not required to meet the Standards.
 - Replacing existing incompatible, non-historic windows with similarly incompatible new windows does not meet the Standards.
- It is staff's opinion, the dormers are character-defining features due to their design, placement, visibility and function and replacement windows must be compatible with the appearance and character of the building.



Façade. The windows in the dormers are vinyl replacement units. Staff photo.

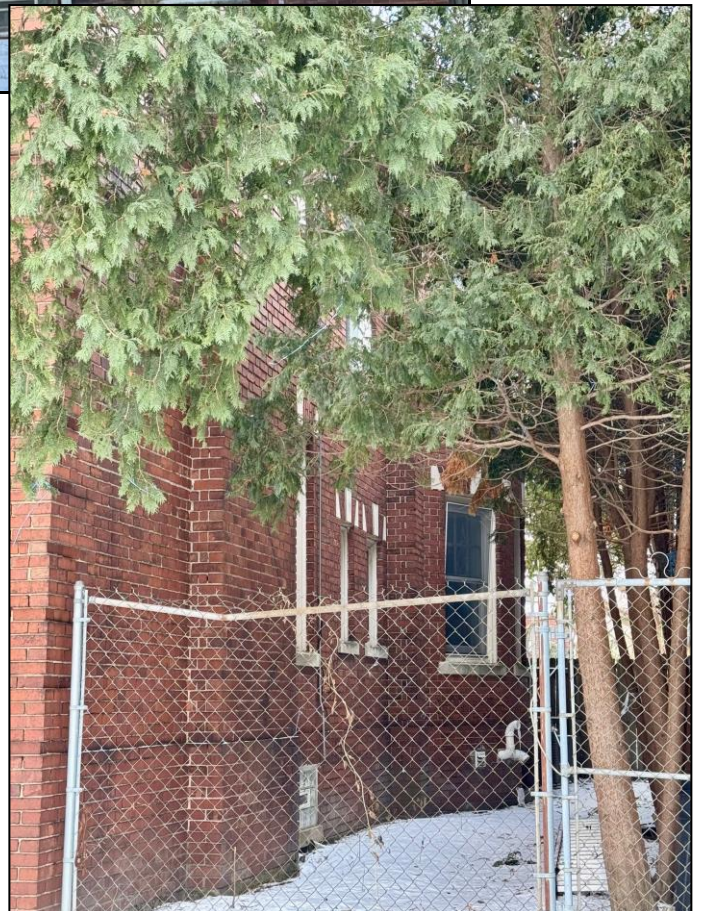


East – side wall. The three windows within the two dormers are vinyl replacement units. Staff photo.



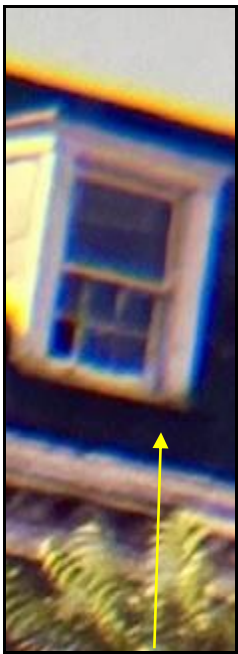
Above: Rear wall of house. The windows in these two dormers appear to be wood. Staff photo, January 24, 2025.

Right: West wall of house is obscured by overgrown trees as well as the adjacent historic house. Staff photo, January 24, 2025.



ISSUES

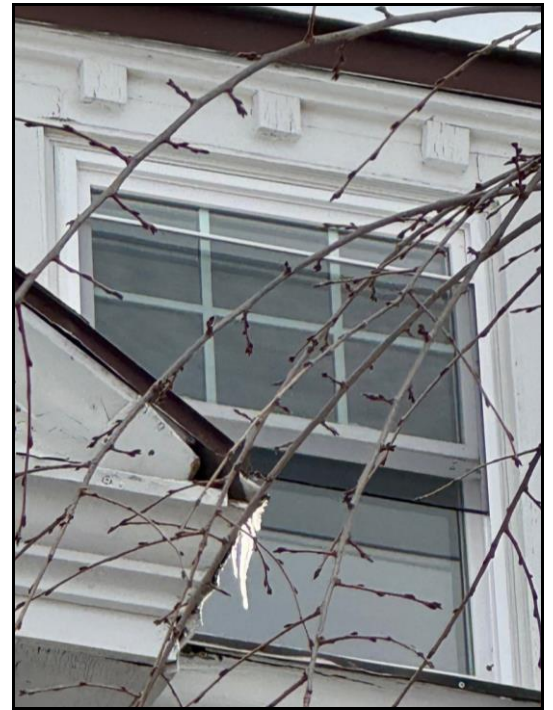
- The installed white vinyl windows with between the glass grids, offer a bright white, flat appearance. Additionally, the forward placement of the window sash within the dormers creates an additional flat surface.
 - Material - It is staff's opinion the proposed vinyl windows are not "consistent with the general characteristics of a historic window of the type and period" and are not "compatible with the overall historic character of the building".
 - Through limits of fabrication and material, vinyl windows are not appropriate for historic districts. Vinyl windows offer a plasticity and flat appearance that does not adequately match the profile/dimensionality and appearance of historic windows, such as wood.
 - Consumer grade vinyl windows weather poorly, deteriorate rapidly, and exhibit poor detailing and detracting color/sheen.
 - The framing material, glazing, and seals (which keeps the argon gas intact between the insulated glass) of vinyl windows break down more quickly in ultraviolet light than wood or steel-framed windows.
 - Vinyl also lacks rigidity and can expand and contract more greatly than wood and steel. This can result in discoloration and warping of the vinyl frames, as well as condensation between the glass layers.
 - Color - Availability of frame colors must be considered as most replacement windows have prefinished exterior cladding. Many replacement windows have bright white frames, a popular color in contemporary architecture, which not a color often used on 19th and 20th century buildings. Bright white window frames are not compatible with the historic character of the building.
 - Placement – Historically, windows are recessed within walls to differing depths, depending on the exterior wall material. Windows within brick clad walls, sit deeply within the window opening, but even with wood framed/clad walls, windows are still recessed from exterior walls. This creates a differential of wall planes, so each element (wall and window) has equal visual impact on an elevation.



Although blurry, this magnified view of a front-facing dormer at time of designation shows the recessed placement of the window sash. Compare this photo to the one at the far right.



This photo is of a dormer on the rear of the house. The wood sash is recessed within the window opening. (This placement is slightly obscured by the protruding aluminum screen frame.) It also appears that replacement glass/flat grids have been installed within the wood sash frame. Staff photo, January 24, 2025.



This current view of a front-facing dormer clearly shows how the dimensionality of the window and window opening were lost due to the between the glass grids and forward placement of the window sash within the wood-framed dormer. Staff photo, January 24, 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation 1 of 1, Denial: Replace wood windows with vinyl windows

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Brush Park Historic District's Elements of Design, specifically:

- *Standard 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.*

For the following reasons:

- White vinyl windows with between the glass grids offer a bright white, flat appearance and the forward placement of the window sash within the dormers creates an additional flat surface.
 - Material - It is staff's opinion the proposed vinyl windows are not "consistent with the general characteristics of a historic window of the type and period" and are not "compatible with the overall historic character of the building".
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