

STAFF REPORT: FEBRUARY 12, 2025 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00020

ADDRESS: 4015 GLENDALE

HISTORIC DISTRICT: RUSSELL WOODS-SULLIVAN

APPLICANT: JOHN NOVA, NOVA CUSTOM HOMES LLC

PROPERTY OWNER: LOLA SMITH

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION JANUARY 19, 2025

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JANUARY 28, 2025

SCOPE: REPLACE STEEL WINDOWS WITH WOOD WINDOWS



January 2025 photo by staff.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The house at 4015 Glendale is a two-story, red brick, Tudor Revival building built in 1936. Character-defining features include the stone wingwalls, porch platform, entry pavilion, and bay window, stone-tabbed window and door surrounds, and an irregular roofline with subsidiary, front-facing wall gables, one of which is clad in herringbone-pattern brickwork.

Until recently, rolled steel windows were a distinctive feature. Many of the windows were particularly distinctive and likely irreplaceable as they are leaded-glass windows emblazoned with a stained-glass, multicolored, shield motif. Staff observed these windows being removed without approval on January 14, 2025. At the time of the staff observation, all but one of these windows had been replaced with a vinyl window. The Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department promptly issued a Stop Work order.



2022 Google Street View photo showing historic windows.



Left: Close-up of same 2022 Google Street View photo. Right: West elevation showing one remaining historic window. Image from application materials.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to replace the historic windows (already removed without approval) with 28 wood windows. This would include all window openings on the house except for those on an enclosed patio at the rear. The new windows would be wood, double-hung windows by Lincoln Windows. A color is not specified.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District was established by Ordinance 33-99 of the Detroit City Council in 1999. The Final Report for the district states, “The residential buildings in Russell Woods are among the finest examples of middle class, builder-designed residential architecture in the city of Detroit erected between 1920 and 1949,” implying a period of significance.
- The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-168) for the district provide the following observations:
 - (3) *Proportion of openings within the facades.* Typical openings are taller than wide. It is not uncommon for several windows, which are taller than wide, to fill a single opening, which is wider than tall.
 - (7) *Relationship of materials.* Wood is almost universally used for window frames and other functional trim. ... Windows are commonly either metal casements or wooden sash.
- The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation direct that the original windows should not have been removed. Standard #2 (quoted below) directs that historic materials be retained. If deteriorated beyond feasible repair, Standard #6 (also quoted below) would require that they be replaced with windows that replicate the originals.
- The windows removed include highly distinctive stained-glass windows that would require specialized craftsmanship to reproduce. Standard #5 requires that such features be retained. Available photos show no indication that they were deteriorated.
- The proposed sash windows have the “wider than tall” character referenced in the Elements of Design (with the exception of one that is a relatively wide, slider window). However, overall they are not compatible as they are single-hung windows, which have a different profile from true double-hung windows.
- Even a truly compatible window would not change the overall inappropriateness of the proposed work, as the windows should not have been removed in the first place. Even if the removed windows were proven to be beyond repair, replacement with a merely compatible window would not suffice; an appropriate window would “match” the materials (metal and leaded glass), operation (casement), and general appearance (subdivided and bearing stained glass ornamentation, where applicable), per Standard #6.

ISSUES

- There is no evidence that the historic windows (removed without approval) had been beyond repair. Their removal is contrary to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards #2 and #5.
- Many of the historic windows (removed without approval) were highly distinctive, stained glass windows. Their removal eliminates a distinctive feature, also contrary to Standard #5.
- Should the historic windows (removed without approval) be demonstrated to be beyond repair, Standard #6 requires that they “match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.”

RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

Recommendation 1 of 1, Denial

Staff concludes that the proposed window replacement will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District Elements of Design, specifically Standards:

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.*
3. *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.*

For the following reasons:

- The historic windows proposed for removal (already removed without approval) are historic and materials and features that contribute to the character of the property that have not been shown to be beyond repair.
- The historic windows proposed for removal (already removed without approval) include highly distinctive, leaded- and stained-glass windows.
- The proposed replacement windows fail to match the old in materials (they are wood rather than steel), design (they are sash rather than casement), and appearance (they lack the leaded glass subdivisions and stained glass shield motifs).