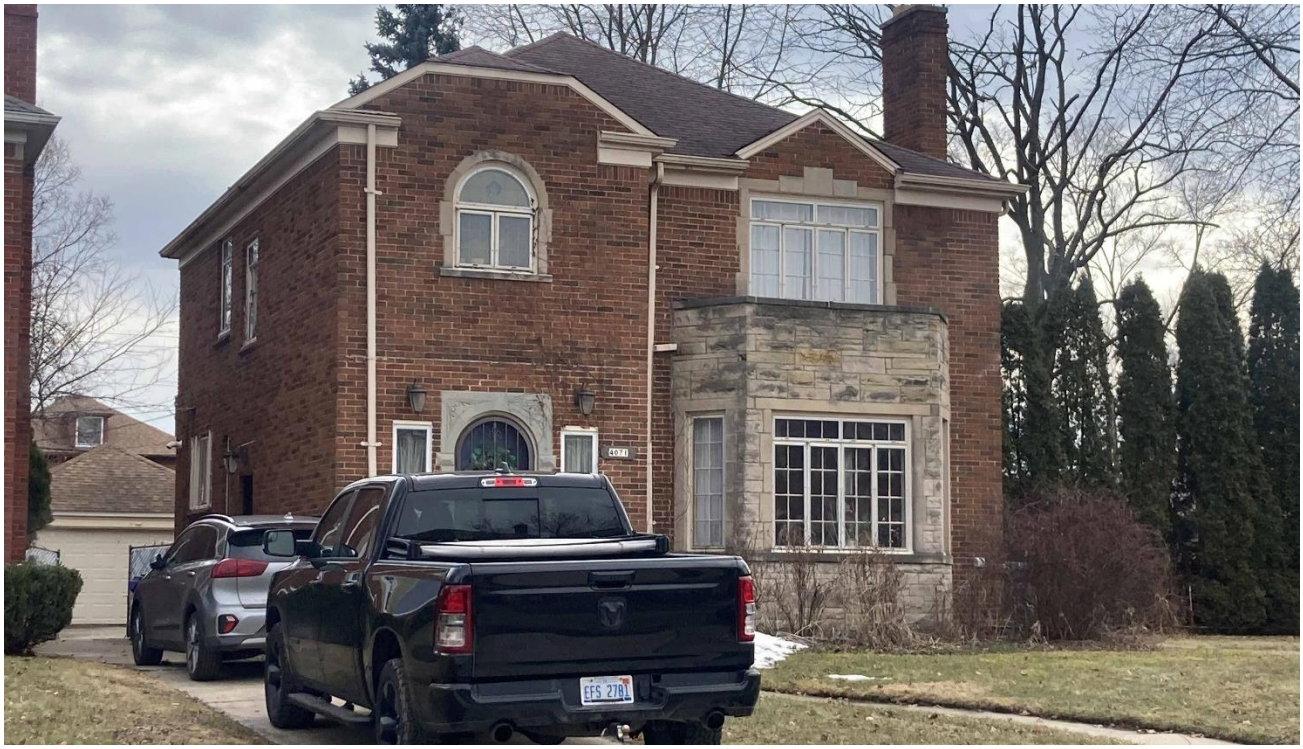
STAFF REPORT: 03/12/2025 REGULAR MEETING **PREPARED BY**: J. ROSS
ADDRESS: 4071 LESLIE
APPLICATION NO: HDC2025-00014
HISTORIC DISTRICT: RUSSELL WOODS-SULLIVAN
APPLICANT/CONTRACTOR: ALEXANDER BELILOVESKY/ALEXANDRIA MANAGEMENT
OWNER: DARIN BARNES
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 2/25/2025
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 02/18/2025

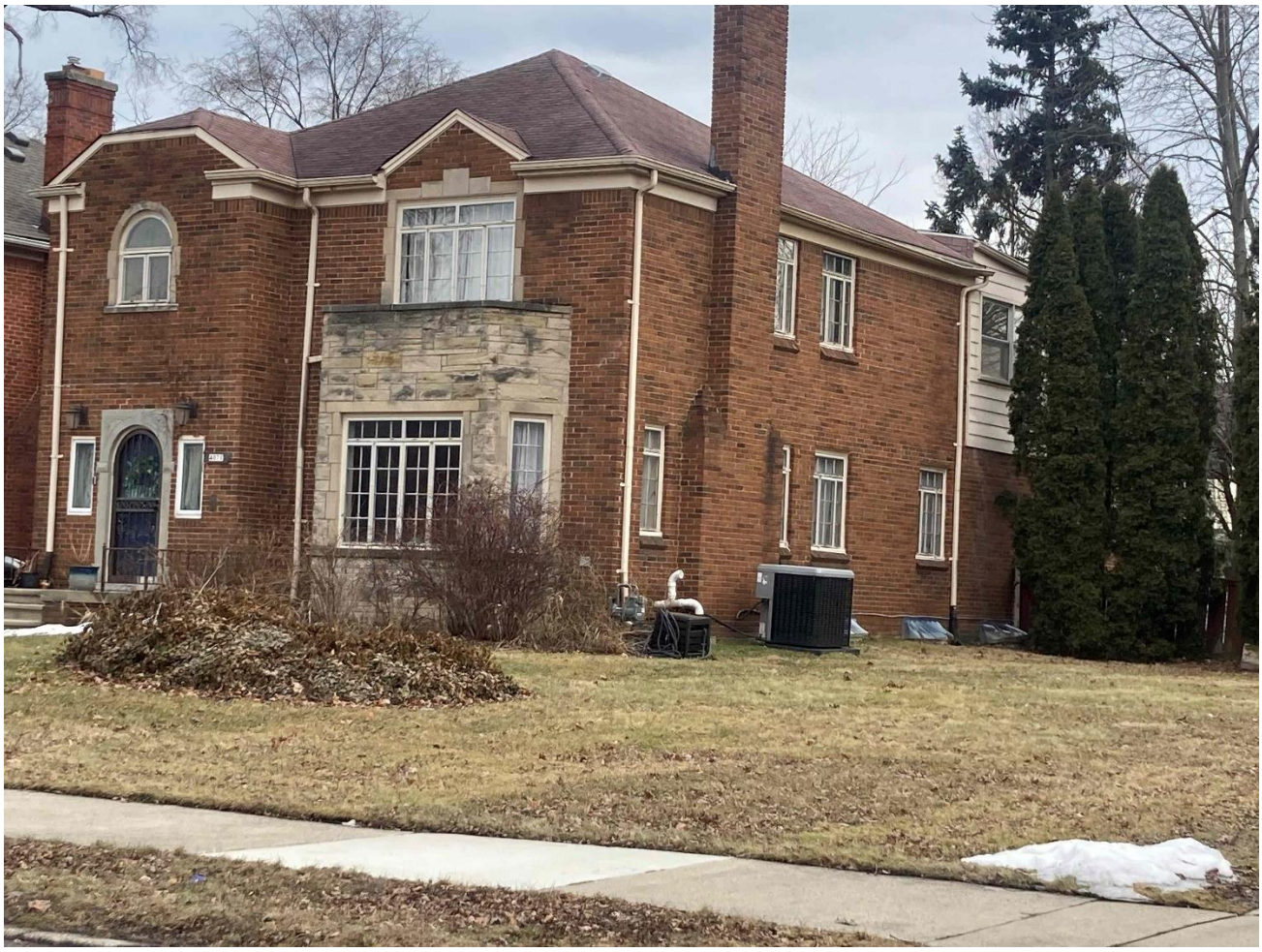
SCOPE: REPLACE STEEL CASEMENT WINDOWS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The two-story residence at 4071 Leslie is located on the south side of Leslie, between Petoskey and Holmur. The building permit was issued on May 1, 1941. The variegated brown brick was laid in a running bond pattern and stone covers the walls of the tall, flat roofed bay window. Cast stone quoins were used for the window surround at the second floor, while at the front entrance carved panels accentuate the arch-topped entry door. Aluminum siding is located at the rear first and second story enclosed porches. The wood front door with asymmetrical leaded glass window, a common detail for houses of this era and architectural style, is likely original. The front door is accessed by an open raised porch. Brick wing walls with stone caps enclose the stairs and the historic iron railing remains in place at the perimeter of the porch floor Fixed vinyl units fill the window openings at both sides of primary façade's front door. An arched window opening above the primary entry door, which is comprised of leaded and stained-glass double steel casement units and a fixed half-round unit, mirrors the shape of the entry door. The majority of the remaining window openings are comprised of varying designs of multiple operation steel windows while vinyl units are located at front façade, flanking the primary entry door, and at the rear second story addition. Note that all of the window openings retain their original wood brickmould.



4071 Leslie, current conditions. Photo by staff 2/25/2025



4071 Leslie, current conditions. Photo by staff 2/25/2025

PROPOSAL

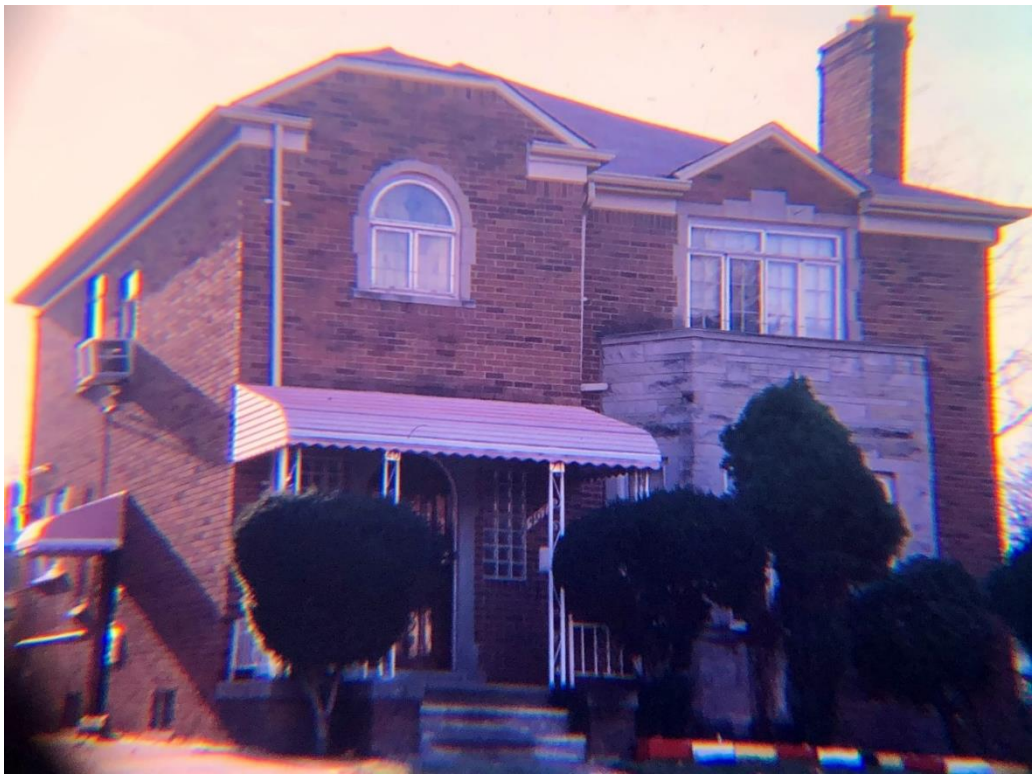
With the current submission, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval to undertake the following work items per the submitted proposal:

- Replace existing steel casement windows with aluminum-clad wood units with the exception of the decorative arched window at the front façade, second story
- Replace the (two) 2 vinyl windows at the front façade and (three) 3 at the rear, second-story enclosed sunporch with aluminum-clad wood units
- Replace the aluminum siding at the rear enclosed first and second story porches with cement fiber siding

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

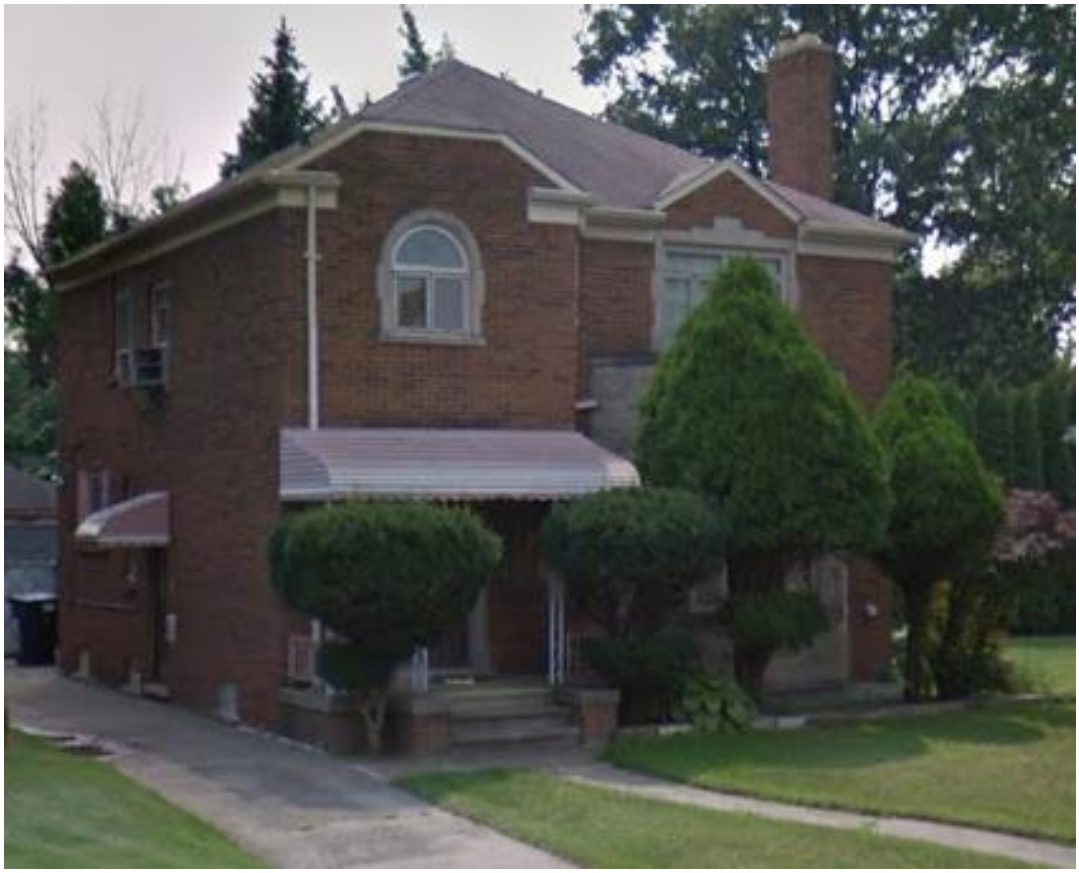
- In 2023, the property owner submitted an application to the Commission for the replacement of the existing windows with aluminum-clad wood units, to include the original steel casement and fixed units and the non-historic vinyl units at the front and rear facades. At their 5/10/2023 meeting, the Commission approved the proposed replacement of the non-historic windows and one steel casement window and wood trim located at the east side wall, second story which was severely altered/compromised beyond repair as the result of the installation of an air-conditioning condenser unit in the opening. However, the Commission denied the the replacement of the remaining historic-age windows because they determined that the project did not meet the Standards for the following reasons:
    - The multi-operational arrangement of window sash within window openings is a

common feature in Russell Woods and is a distinctive character-defining feature of this house.
    - The selected replacement windows do not emulate the profile, pattern, and operation of the existing windows and would alter the features that characterize the property.
- The property owner subsequently appealed the Commission's denial and on August 7, 2023, during the hearing on the matter, withdrew his request for appeal.
- As more than a year has passed since the Commission's 2023 denial of the proposal to replace the building's historic windows, the property owner has submitted the current proposal in an effort to garner the Commission's approval to replace the building's historic steel windows.
- The Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District was established in 1999. The designation report states that the district's period of significance is 1920-1949
- Building permits to erect the house and garage were issued in 1941. Staff assesses the building as a ***Contributing*** resource to the district.
- Per City of Detroit building department records, a permit for enclosing the rear, 1st-story porch was issued in 1948. Permits for the erection of the second-floor rear sunporch and the installation of a metal awning at the front façade were issued in 1967
- See the below designation photo of the building to note the following:
    - The windows which flank the primary entrance were glass block at the time of designation.
    - The aluminum awning which was installed in 1967 per building department records was extant at the time of designation
    - A window air conditioner condenser unit was present at a second-story, side façade window at the time of designation

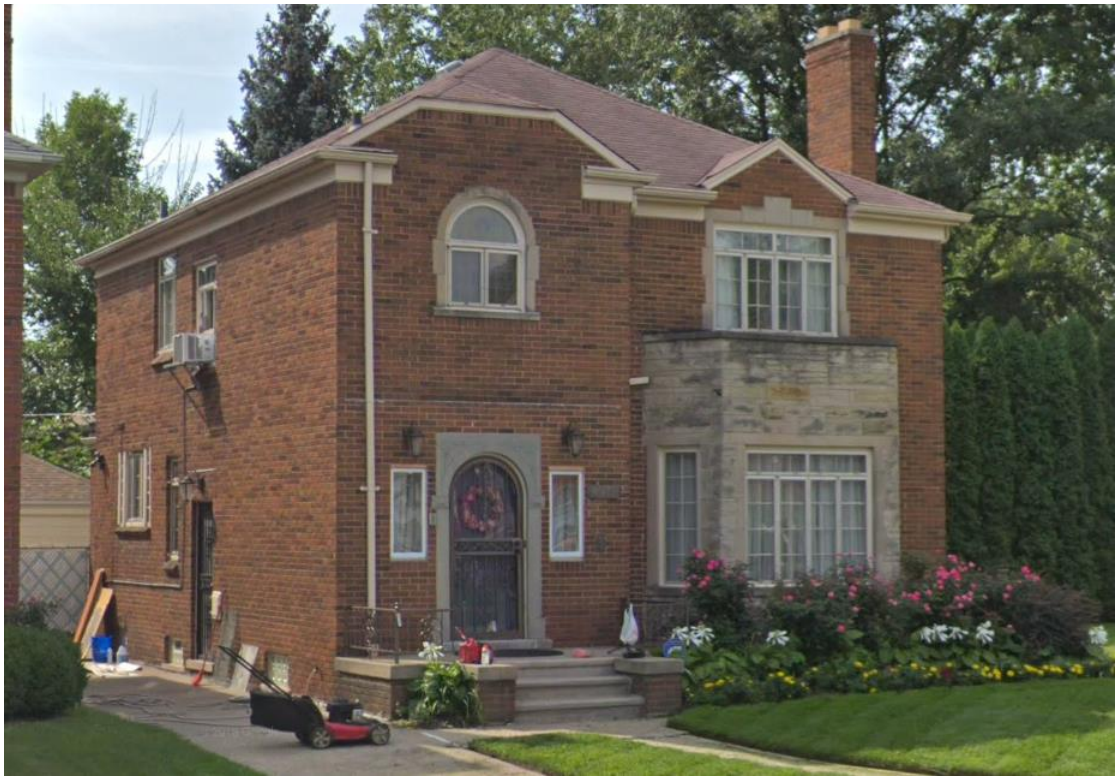


Designation slide, taken in 1999 by HDAB

- Per the below images, the front façade glass block windows which flanked the front door, the awnings which were installed in 1967, and front yard foundation plantings were removed without HDC approval sometime between 2013 and 2018, by a previous owner

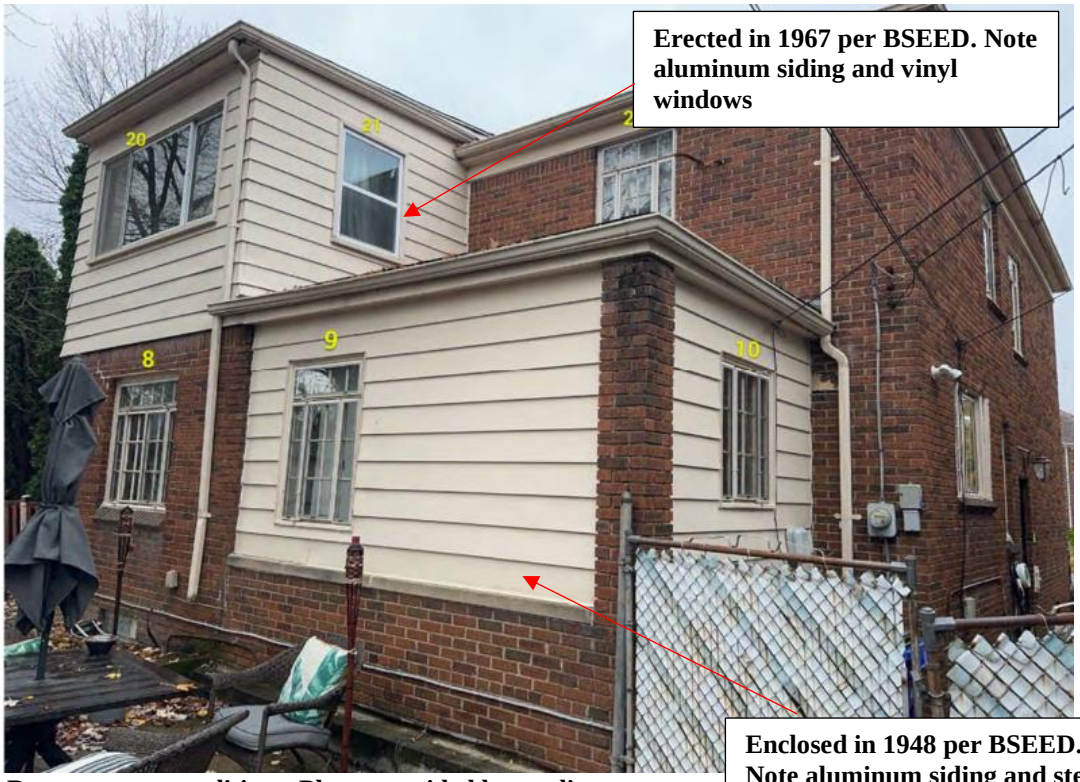


Google Streetview image from 2013. Note that the house appears much as it did at the time of the district's designation. Specifically, the awnings, foundation planting, and glass block windows at the front façade, flanking the front door, still remain



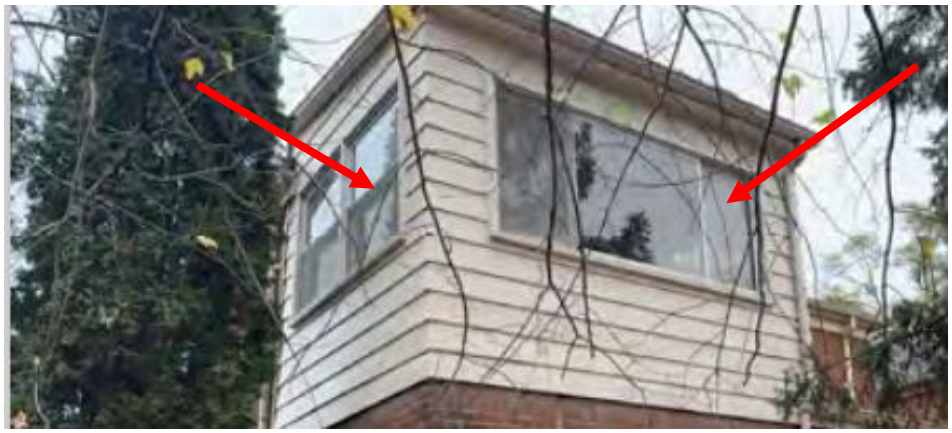
Google Streetview image from 2018. Note that the glass block windows that flanked the front door at the time of designation have now been replaced with fixed vinyl units. Also, the 1967 awnings have been removed and the foundation planting which were present at the time of designation are no longer present

- The building has two rear enclosed porches (see the below photo). As noted above, the lower/first story porch was enclosed in 1948, during the district's period of significance. Building department records indicate that the rear second story sunporch was built in 1967. Both porches are currently clad with aluminum siding. The application proposes to replace this siding with cement fiber siding. Staff notes the following with respect to this scope item:
    - The district's Elements of Design note the following re: exterior cladding materials:
        - *(7) Relationship of materials.* The majority of houses are faced with brick, often combined with wood, stone or stucco.
        - *(8) Relationship of textures.* The major texture is that of brick laid in mortar, often juxtaposed with wood or smooth or rough-faced stone elements and trim. Textured brick and brick laid in patterns creates considerable interest, as does half-timbering, leaded and subdivided windows, and wood-shingled or horizontal-sided elements.
    - The first-story rear porch was enclosed during the district's period of significance and remains as a character-defining feature of the house. As the current aluminum siding was installed ca. 1980, it is not clear to staff if historic siding remains underneath. Note that the first-story rear porch enclosure displays steel casement windows which hint that it is possible that historic siding remains beneath the current aluminum siding. Therefore, staff recommends that enough of the current aluminum siding be removed to determine if historic age, character-defining siding remains underneath. If historic siding does remain underneath the aluminum siding at the rear first story enclosed porch, it should be retained and repaired. If historic siding remains beneath the aluminum siding, but is deteriorated beyond repair, it should be replicated per the Standards. If no historic siding remains beneath the existing aluminum siding, then new siding which is compatible with the building's historic character should be installed. In this case, it is staff's opinion that wood siding (either lapped horizontal or shake) would be the most appropriate cladding if no historic siding remains underneath the current aluminum siding. Wood siding is readily available and, per the above-referenced Elements of Design, is commonly found in combination with brick siding within the district. Fiber cement is not recommended for this application because it is not as thick as traditional wood siding and therefore cannot provide the same deep shadow line that wood offers. The Standards prioritize replacement in-kind for character-defining features, when reasonable.
    - As the second story porch was erected in 1967, after the district's period of significance, any siding that remains beneath the current aluminum siding would not be considered to be character defining/historically significant. Therefore, it can be removed and replaced as long as the new siding is compatible with the building's historic character. Again, wood siding (either lapped horizontal or shake) would be the most appropriate cladding for this location as it is readily available and, per the above-referenced Elements of Design, is commonly found in combination with brick siding within the district.

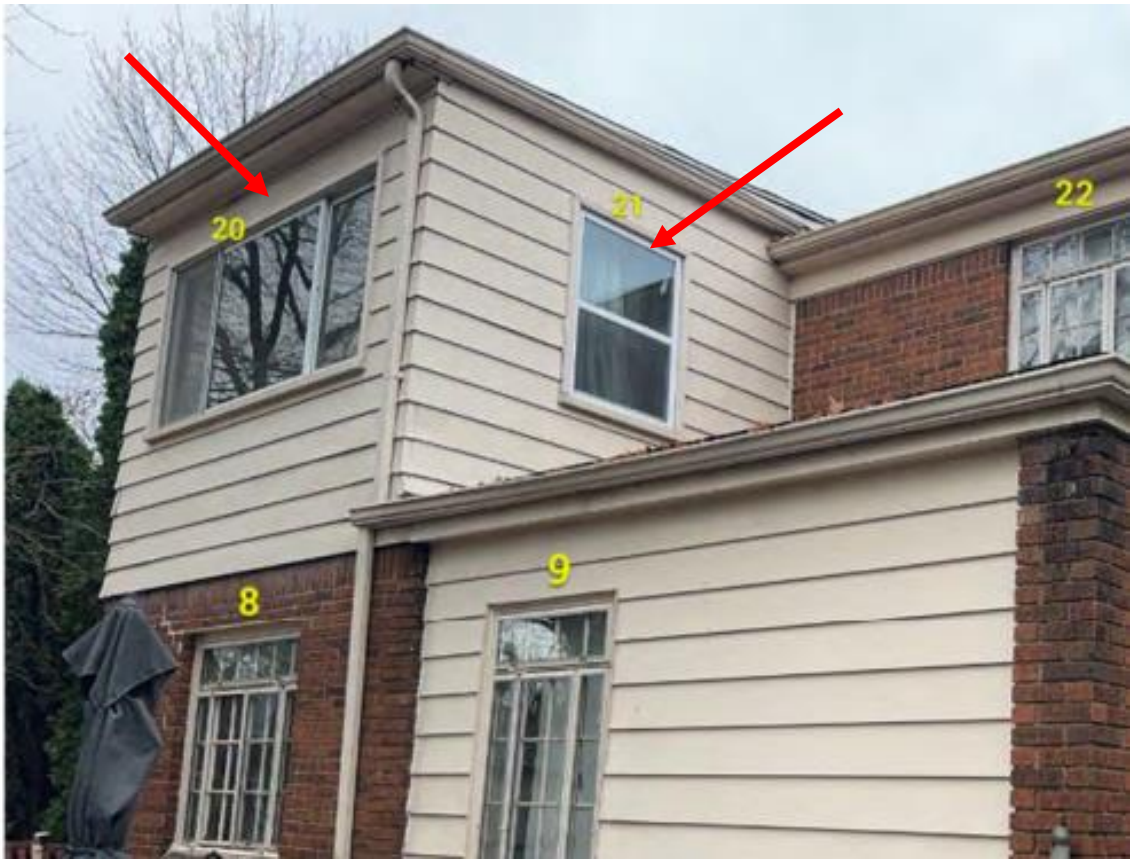


Rear, current conditions. Photo provided by applicant

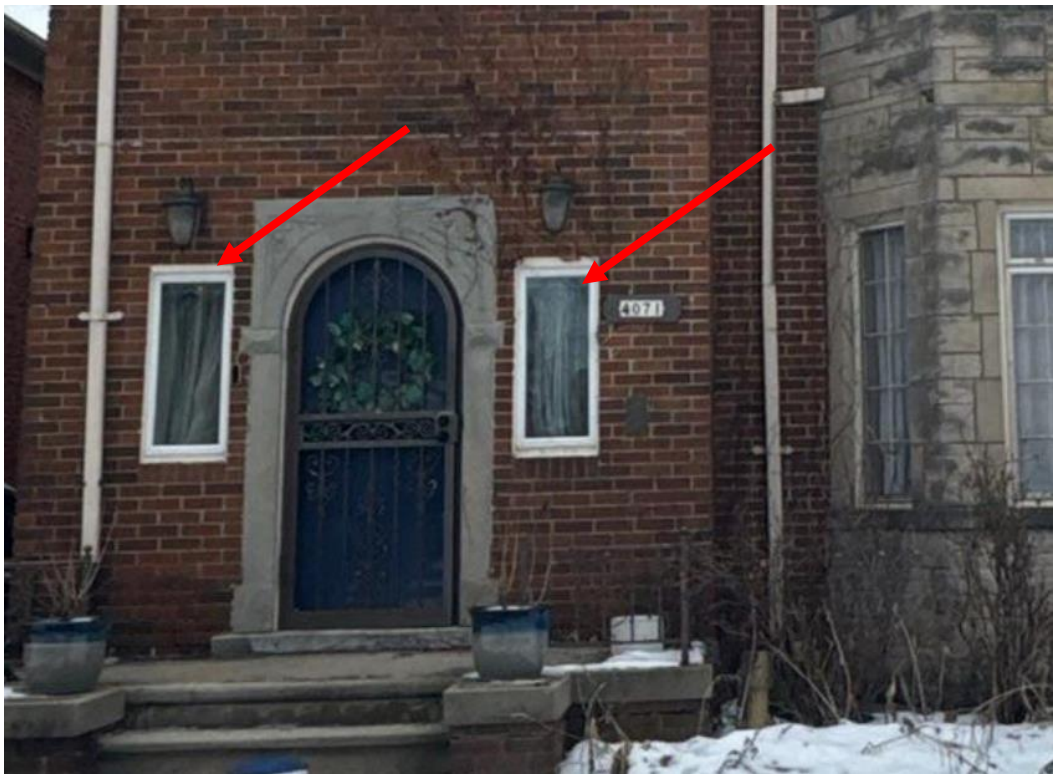
- As noted, the project proposes to replace the building's five non-historic vinyl windows (three (3) at the rear, second story 1967 porch and two (2) at the front façade, flanking the door) with aluminum-clad wood units. Also, the project is seeking to replace one (1) steel casement window and wood trim located at the east side wall, second story, which appears to be heavily altered/compromised beyond repair to an extent that it has lost its historic integrity.
    - Please note that the Commission approved the replacement of these six windows in 2023. As the existing non-historic windows are not distinctive character-defining features, the one (1) steel window at the east side wall, second story, has been heavily altered/compromised beyond repair to an extent that it has lost its historic integrity, and the new windows which will replace these six (6) units will have an operation and lite configuration that is compatible with the existing steel casement units, staff supports their replacement per the current proposal. See the below photos of the non-historic vinyl units and single heavily altered steel window at the east side wall, second story which are proposed for replacement with new aluminum-clad wood units



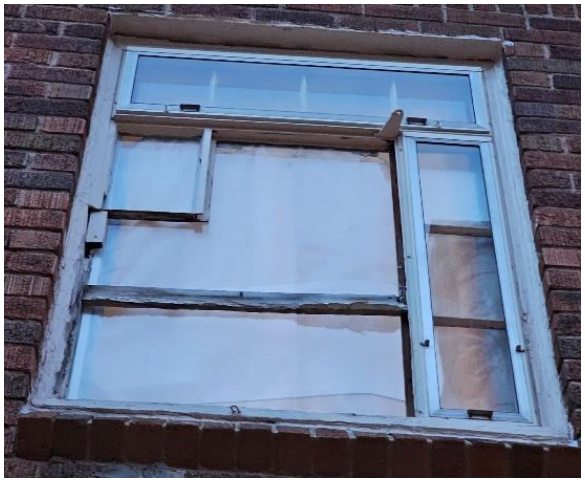
Rear second story porch, erected in 1967. Vinyl windows proposed for replacement with aluminum-clad wood units, indicated by arrows. Photo by applicant



Rear second story porch, erected in 1967. Vinyl windows proposed for replacement with aluminum-clad wood units, indicated by arrows. Photo by applicant



Front façade vinyl windows added ca. 2013. Proposed for replacement with aluminum-clad wood units, indicated by arrows. Photo by applicant



Window at the side/east façade, second story. This window has been compromised to the extent that it no longer retains its historic integrity and thus can be replaced with a new compatible window, in staff opinion. All remaining steel windows appear to be in repairable condition. Photo by staff, 2023

- The current steel windows and their associated wood trim/brickmould are historic age/original to the building's construction and remain as distinctive, character-defining features of the building
- The application proposes to replace the historic, character-defining steel windows with new windows of a different material (aluminum-clad wood). Although the new windows would match the existing in lite configuration, it is unclear if the new windows would match the existing in operation because the window schedule does not explicitly indicate the operation of the new units. Also, a review of the submitted window schedule indicates that the associated historic wood trim/brickmould would be removed as a result of the new window installation.
- Please note the following regarding the proposed removal/replacement of the building's historic windows and wood trim/brickmould:
    - The Russell Woods Sullivan Elements of Design, number (7) *Relationship of materials* states that "…windows are commonly either metal casements or wooden sash"
    - Multi-operational, steel windows such as the historic units located at 4071 Leslie are a common feature in this district, and only occasionally found in other districts. Staff did not observe wood casement windows within the near vicinity of the subject property
    - A review of the submitted photos revealed that the remaining steel casement and associated wood trim/brickmould (with the exception of the heavily altered/compromised unit at the east façade, second story) did not appear to be deteriorated beyond repair. Also, the application did not include an assessment from a qualified historic window repair expert which states that the windows cannot be repaired or that the cost to repair the units would be unreasonable/financially infeasible. Finally, note that the application does not include a cost estimate for the replication of the historic steel windows and associated wood trim, so the Commission would not be able to determine the financial feasibility of an in-kind replacement should they find that the historic windows merit replacement. Therefore, per the Standards, the window sash AND associated trim/brickmould must be retained and repaired.
    - For these reasons, the proposed removal/replacement of the building's historic windows do not meet the Standards.

ISSUES

- If historic siding remains beneath the current aluminum cladding at the first story rear porch, it should be retained and repaired or replaced in kind if the siding cannot be repaired. If new siding is required to be installed at the rear enclosed porches, wood siding (either lapped horizontal or shake) would be the most appropriate cladding.
- The application does not provide information which indicates that it is technically or financially infeasible to repair the house's historic steel casement windows and associated wood trim/brickmould. Also, should the Commission determine that the historic steel casement windows and wood trim/brickmould merit replacement, the proposed new windows do not match the existing in material and the application does not indicate that it infeasible or unreasonable to replicate the steel windows and associated wood trim in/kind.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

Recommendation 1 of 2, Denial: Replace historic steel windows and associated wood trim with new aluminum-clad wood windows

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Boston-Edison Historic District's 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.*
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 other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*
9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*

For the following reasons:

- The steel windows and associated wood trim/brickmould proposed for replacement are distinctive, character-defining features of the building
- The submitted documentation did not indicate that the remaining steel windows and associated wood trim/brickmould are deteriorated beyond repair.
- If replacement of the character-defining steel windows is necessary, the proposed new windows do not match the existing windows and trim/brickmould in material and the application does not include information that indicates that it is unreasonable or infeasible to replicate the windows and trim in-kind.

Recommendation 2 of 2, Certificate of Appropriateness: Remaining work items

Staff recommends that the remaining work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Boston-Edison Historic District's Elements of Design, with the conditions that:

- The current aluminum siding at the rear first-story enclosed porch shall be removed to an extent necessary to determine if historic age, character-defining siding remains underneath. Photos of

the conditions underneath the aluminum siding shall be submitted to HDC for review prior to any additional work at the rear porches. If historic siding does remain underneath the aluminum siding at the rear first story enclosed porch, it shall be retained and repaired. If historic siding remains beneath the aluminum siding at the first story enclosed porch, but is deteriorated beyond repair, it shall be replicated. If no historic siding remains beneath the existing aluminum siding, then new wood siding (either lapped horizontal or shake) shall be installed at the first story, enclosed porch.

- Cement fiber siding shall not be installed at the second story rear enclosed porch. Rather, wood siding (either lapped horizontal or shake) shall be installed, subject to HDC staff review and approval.