

STAFF REPORT: 05/14/2025 MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

ADDRESS: 1624 EDISON

APPLICATION NO: HDC2025-0200

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT/ARCHITECT: TIM FLINTOFF/4545 ARCHITECTURE

OWNER: VIVEK CIAL

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 4/25/2025

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 4/21/2021

SCOPE: REHABILITATE DWELLING AND GARAGE (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The parcel located at 1624 Edison includes a two-story, single-family dwelling that was erected ca. 1910. The building features a side-gabled main roof with front-gabled dormers. Asphalt shingles cover the building's roof. Synthetic stucco/an exterior insulation and finish system (EIFS) and cement fiber siding with a faux wood grain finish have recently been installed at the building's exterior walls. EIFS has also been added to the endwall chimney and the posts at the front façade porch. New, 6/1, aluminum-clad, double-hung windows have also been installed in the recent past.

The property also includes a detached garage in the rear yard which was erected ca. 2018. The garage has a hipped roof with is covered with asphalt shingles and exterior walls are clad with EIFS. Windows are vinyl units. A single steel overhead door is located at the building's front façade serves as the primary entrance.



Current condition. Staff photo taken 4/25/2025



Current condition at rear. Photo by applicant



Current condition of garage. Photo by applicant

PROPOSAL

The property has recently undergone an extensive exterior rehabilitation which was not approved by the Historic District Commission. The applicant is therefore seeking an “after the fact” approval to retain some of the recently completed work items as well as additional items which they have proposed in an effort to mitigate certain aspects of the unapproved work. Specifically, the project includes the following:

Dwelling

- Replace historic wood 6/1 windows and wood casing/trim with new 6/1, aluminum clad wood double-hung windows and composite trim
- At exterior walls:
 - Install synthetic stucco on EIFS and “DenseGlass” (fiberglass gypsum sheathing)
 - Install cement fiber siding (with a smooth finish)
- Install pargecoat at exterior of chimney
- Install new concrete steps and deck at front porch
- At front porch, replace existing masonry columns (clad with EIFS) with new wood columns
- Install new steel doors at rear, front, and side walls
- At rear wall entrance, install new handrails and steps (materials not specified)
- At roof, replace wood fascia with new wood fascia

Garage

Install synthetic stucco (EIFS and synthetic stucco panel on fiberglass gypsum sheathing) at exterior walls

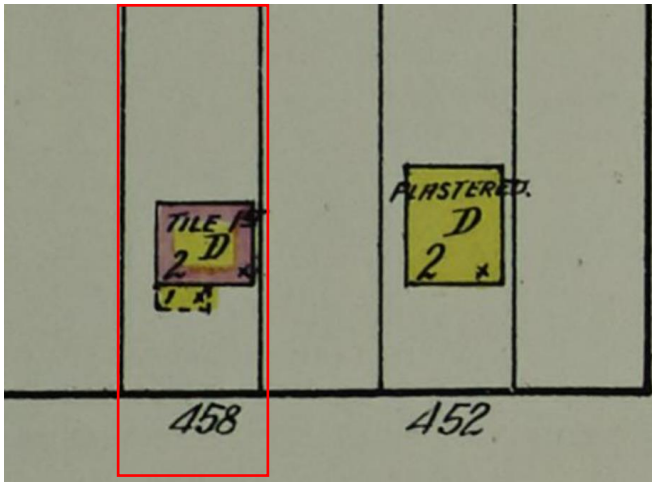
STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston-Edison Historic District was designated in 1973
- Please see the appearance of the house at the time of the district’s designation to note that exterior walls were clad with non-historic aluminum siding and Permastone/synthetic stone. The chimney, porch deck and columns were also clad with non-historic Permastone. However, note that the original 6/1 wood windows and wood brickmould remained, and the roof’s original wood fascia/soffits were present despite the presence of the non-historic siding.



Designation slide, taken in 1974. Source, Detroit HDAB

- See the below Sanborn Map from 1915, indicating that the house was constructed of structural clay tile at the first story. Such tile was typically finished or clad with stucco or brick:



Sanborn Fire Insurance map, 1915. 1624 Edison (outlined in red) was addressed as 458 Edison in 1915 per the above.

- A review of records maintained by the Detroit Historic District Commission indicate the following:
 - A COA was issued on 4/26/2018 to replace the roof shingles, repair the fascia and soffit where necessary in kind, and install new gutters and downspouts
 - A COA was issued on 11/26/2018 to replace a dilapidated garage with a new garage to exactly replicate the existing to include lapped wood siding and replace existing concrete walkways in the front yard with new in the same footprint and material
 - A COA was issued on 1/28/2020 to install new asphalt shingles at the roof
- The following are photos showing the condition of the house in 2020. Note that the exterior materials, windows, roof fascia/soffit appear to be consistent with the 1974 conditions. However, staff does note minor fire damage at the rear, first story, revealing the original stucco cladding beneath. Also, staff observed small areas at the front and side where aluminum siding has fallen off.



Front façade, 2020 photo taken by owner. Note area where Permastone has fallen off (indicated by blue arrow)



Rear, photo taken in 2020 by owner. Note apparent fire damage at first story. The area outlined in green shows original stucco finish at first story. Also, note that the fire has exposed the historic lapped wood siding at the siding at the hipped roof wing



Photo taken in 2020 by owner. Note area where aluminum siding has fallen off, revealing synthetic shingle siding underneath.

- Google Streetview images indicate that the following conditions existed in 2022/the following work had been undertaken without HDC approval (see below photo):
 - The aluminum siding had been removed, revealing the synthetic shingle siding underneath.
 - New front porch steps had been installed
 - Original windows at the front dormer had been replaced with vinyl
 - Original windows and siding at the front two-story bay have been completely removed



Conditions in 2020, per Google Streetview



Conditions in 2020, per Google Streetview. Note where PermaStone has been removed to reveal original stucco finish at first story

- In January 2023, HDC staff was alerted that the following work had been undertaken without HDC approval (see below photos):
 - All windows and associated brickmold/trim removed
 - All synthetic exterior cladding removed
 - Side wall, second story bay rebuilt
 - Original fascia and soffit at main roof and porch roof replaced
 - New driveway added
 - EIFS in process of installation
 - One original porch column at the front porch had been removed

Staff therefore reported the work to the building department and requested that a stop work order be issued. The building department inspected the site in response to HDC staff request. The following photos illustrate conditions at that time:



Conditions on 1/24/2023. Photo by HDC staff. Note that stucco remains beneath the current EIFS at the first story (red arrow). Also, note that the original masonry porch columns were masonry with stucco, as seen beneath the Permastone (yellow arrow). A centrally-located porch column had been removed by this point (blue arrow)



Conditions on 1/24/2023. Photo by HDC staff. Note stucco at chimney, porch floor and front wall (green arrows)

- On December 12, 2023, HDC staff visited the site a second time to note ongoing unapproved work at the property. At this point, new EIFS siding had been added throughout and new synthetic/EIFS fascia and soffit had been installed at the roof. HDC staff forwarded the report of unapproved work to the building department for enforcement that same day. The following photo illustrates conditions in December 2023.



Photo by HDC staff, taken on 12/12/2023

- On March 21, 2024, HDC staff visited the site for a third time, noting that construction continued unabated, to include the installation of cement fiber siding. HDC staff reported the unapproved work to the building department that same day. In response, the building department visited the site on 3/26/2024 and issued a stop work order. Please see the below photos which recorded conditions on 3/21/2024:



Front façade. Photo taken by HDC staff on 3/21/2024



Front façade. Photo taken by HDC staff on 3/21/2024

- The photos which depict current conditions indicate that new wood aluminum-clad wood windows were added sometime after the 3/21/2024 HDC staff visit.
- The property owner presented an application to the Commission at the 11/13/2024 regular meeting in which they sought approval for the work as is. The Commission issued a Denial for the work/determined that the project did not meet the Standards or conform to the Boston-Edison Historic Elements of Design for the following reasons:

- The wood windows and roof soffit/fascia that were removed without HDC approval do not appear to have been deteriorated beyond repair. Therefore, their removal does not meet the Standards
- The new scored EIFS/faux stucco siding presents an expression of stucco which is not appropriate to the current residential setting/historic character of the dwelling and its nearby surrounds. Also, please note that EIFS is prone to moisture infiltration and is highly susceptible to impact damage.
- The new cement fiber siding displays a faux wood grain which does not provide an adequate replication of painted historic wood (which would display a smooth surface).
- The current synthetic window trim EIFS clad fascia/soffits are wider and flatter than the historic wood window and roof trim.
- The cumulative effect of the work, to include the wide/flat window and roof trim (soffit/fascia), the EFIS and cement fiber siding, the massive, boxy, EIFS clad columns at the front porch, and the EFIS clad chimney, is a modern/suburban appearance which is wholly at odds with the property's historic character.

Current Project

- With the current submission, the applicant has revised their proposal in an effort to mitigate the inappropriate work which was completed without HDC approval.
- Staff reviewed the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps and photos and images of the building prior to the current unapproved exterior work (provided above). Staff also conducted fieldwork within the district to review the appearance of other houses within the district and notes the following regarding the dwelling's **original exterior cladding**:
 - The house's first story was constructed of clay tile which was finished with stucco at the exterior. The stucco was present at the time of the unapproved work. It appears that the current EIFS was installed over the stucco siding at the first story/the original stucco remains per the above staff photos taken in 1/2023.
 - The property owner should have undertaken an exploratory effort/removal of areas of the synthetic siding at the second story, in consultation with HDC staff, in order to identify the material of the original siding at this location. However, as the property owner initiated the installation of the new siding without first consulting with HDC staff, the original material is unknown. In staff's 2024 report, they surmised that the second story was likely clad with wood clapboard/lapped wood siding. However, staff conducted field inspections within the neighborhood for the current report and noted the following:
 - Within the district, the condition of stucco at the first story and a different material at the second story is relatively unique. Typically, where stucco is present, houses are either fully clad with stucco OR have either brick or stone at the first story and stucco at the second
 - In the relatively few cases where stucco is present at the first story only, most houses had wood shake at the second story. Staff did observe a few houses that had lapped wood siding at the second story (see the below photos).
 - In the absence of the applicant/owner providing evidence to the contrary, is staff's opinion that the second story was likely clad with a wood shake siding.



Stucco at the first story, wood shake at the second. Staff photo taken on 5/5/2025. 900 block of Edison Street



Stucco at the first story, wood shake at the second Staff photo taken on 5/5/2025. 803 Longfellow Street



Stucco at the first story, wood shake at the second, both houses. Staff photo taken on 5/5/2025. 900 block of Longfellow Street



Stucco at the first story, wood shake at the second , both houses. Staff photo taken on 5/5/2025. 900 block of Longfellow Street



835 Chicago Street. Google Streetview



Stucco at the first story, lapped wood siding at the second. Staff photo taken on 5/5/2025. 821 Edison



Stucco at the first story, lapped wood at the second. . Staff photo taken on 5/5/2025 800 block of Edison Street

- As noted above, staff reviewed available documentation for the current reporting effort and did note that the original masonry front porch columns and floor remained at the time of the unapproved work. It appears that the original columns and porch floor are still extant and were re clad with EIFS
- Staff has the following opinion regarding the dwelling's appearance **prior to the unapproved work which was undertaken in 2023-2024:**
 - The house appeared to be in poor condition in 2022, with minor fire damage to the rear, first story
 - The house's synthetic siding was incompatible to its historic appearance. Staff supports the removal of the synthetic siding.
 - It is staff's opinion that the house's remaining windows and casing/trim, roof fascia/soffits, and stucco exterior cladding at the first story (beneath the non-historic synthetic siding) were distinctive, character-defining features of the property and should have been retained and repaired where necessary. Also, the stucco which remained under the PermaStone at the front porch deck and columns should have been retained and repaired where necessary.
 - Despite the property's poor condition and incompatible siding, it was erected within the district's Period of Significance and did retain its original form. Also, the building retained the above-listed original, character-defining elements. For these reasons, it is staff's opinion that the house was contributing to the district prior to the current unapproved conditions.
 - As noted above, the applicant should have undertaken an effort to determine if the original siding remained at the second story, beneath the synthetic siding at the second story prior to the unapproved installation of the EIFS siding. As they did not, staff is unsure of the material of the original cladding at the second story
- As previously noted, the removal of the original windows and associated wood trim/casing; the removal of wood roof soffit/fascia; and the covering of original siding,

porch columns, and porch floor was not appropriate as these elements were original, character-defining features of the house. These features should have been retained and repaired in-kind where necessary. If these elements were deteriorated beyond repair, they should have been replicated exactly. As such, the current application does not meet the Standards. Specifically, the following aspects of the proposal do not to the Standards:

- The Standards require a replication of original, character defining features when deteriorated beyond repair. The proposed synthetic stucco products proposed for the first story do not provide an adequate replication of the original cladding as they present a contemporary expression of stucco which is not appropriate to the current residential setting/historic character of the dwelling and its nearby surrounds. Also, if not installed correctly, synthetic stucco can trap moisture, leading to water damage, rot, and mold growth. Staff does note that the current siding was installed without permit, so they are unsure of the level of quality control that was employed at the time of system's installation. Finally, synthetic stucco siding has a relatively short lifespan. Staff suggests that a more durable, long-lasting cladding such as stucco is more compatible with the building's long-term preservation versus the proposed synthetic stucco products
- With respect to the proposed treatment for the second story cladding, staff notes that the application does not provide adequate documentation if the original materials do not exist beneath the existing EFIS and cement fiber siding and, if so, what that material is and its condition. Therefore, staff cannot determine if it is appropriate to install new cladding at this location. Also, is its staff's opinion that cement fiber siding is generally not appropriate for installation on historic/contributing buildings within historic districts because it does not present an adequate replication of true lapped wood siding as the profile is too thin. Finally, cement fiber presents a machined, uniform appearance that is not typical with true wood siding. If new lapped siding is determined to be appropriate for installation at the building's exterior walls, then true wood siding of an historically appropriate exposure, thickness, and profile should be selected.
- The original windows and associated trim/casing/brickmould remained and appeared to be in good condition prior to the unapproved work, The application's proposal for the window casing/trim/brickmould does not propose to replicate these elements in dimension, material, and detail.
- The original roof fascia/soffits remained prior to the current unapproved work and appeared to be in good condition. The current application does not fully demonstrate that these elements will be replicated in dimension and detail.
- With respect to the proposed treatment for the front porch columns, staff notes that the application does not provide adequate documentation if the original columns exist beneath the EFIS, and, if so, what their condition is. Therefore, staff cannot determine if it is appropriate to completely remove the existing columns. If new columns must be installed, they should the original elements in material, detail, and dimension.
- The cumulative effect of the proposed project is a modern/suburban appearance which is wholly at odds with the property's historic character
- Staff provides the following guidance to the applicant in an effort to assist in the development of a new proposal which might more closely align with the Standards.
 - The EIFS at the first story should be removed throughout. The original stucco cladding underneath should be retained and repaired where necessary. If the stucco is deteriorated beyond repair, it should be replaced with a new true stucco system to match the original/historic in material, design, and texture.
 - New wood window trim/casing/brickmould which matches the original in profile,

dimension, and thickness should be installed at all windows at the first and second stories. True wood mullions at the front façade's bay which match the original should be installed

- New wood window trim/casing, to include true wood mullions which match the original in profile, dimension, and thickness should be installed at the front elevation's roof dormer
- New wood sills which match the original in detailing, profile, and dimension should be installed at the first and second story windows at the front façade bay
- The EIFS should be removed from the front porch posts and deck. If the original stucco cladding underneath remains, it should be retained and repaired where necessary. If the stucco is deteriorated beyond repair, it should be replaced with new stucco (pargecoat at the porch deck exterior) to match the original/historic in material, design, and texture.
- The EIFS and cement fiber siding at the second story should be removed. If the original exterior cladding remains, then it should be retained and repaired in kind where necessary. If deteriorated beyond repair, the siding should be replicated. If no remnant of the original siding at the second story remains, then new wood shake siding is the most compatible cladding in staff's opinion and should be installed at that location. Alternatively, the applicant may conduct further research and propose cladding besides wood shake to staff for review and approval.
- The cement fiber siding in the front porch roof's gable end and the rooftop dormer's gable end should be removed. If the original siding remains, then it should be retained and repaired in kind where necessary. If the original siding remains but is deteriorated beyond repair, it should be replicated. However, if no siding remains beneath the current siding, then the applicant should undertake an

assessment of nearby houses of the same style/with the same type of porch roof to assist in the development of an appropriate treatment for new cladding at that location. Staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the final proposal

- As noted above synthetic stucco is generally not an appropriate material for use in historic districts due to uniform appearance and long-term performance issues. Staff therefore recommends against the approval of the proposed synthetic siding at the garage, despite its recent date of construction. The COA for the garage allowed for the installation of true stucco at the building's exterior walls.

ISSUES

- The unapproved work resulted in the removal of distinctive, character-defining historic features that should have been retained and repaired where necessary.
- The current project does not propose to replicate all original elements that were removed as a result of the unapproved work
- The application does not present documentation which shows if the original siding exists under the current cladding at the second story, the front porch gable end, and/or front porch columns
- Synthetic stucco is generally not appropriate for installation in historic districts due to its uniform appearance and long-term performance issues
- Synthetic wood siding products are generally not appropriate for installation on historic/contributing buildings because they do not adequately replicate the original in profile. They also present a uniform/machined appearance that is not found in true/natural wood products.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 1 of 1, Denial: Rehabilitate dwelling and garage

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 original elements that were removed without HDC approval do not appear to have been deteriorated beyond repair. Therefore, their removal does not meet the Standards
- The Standards require replication when original, character defining features are deteriorated beyond repair. The proposed synthetic stucco products proposed for the first story do not provide an adequate replication of the original cladding as they present a contemporary expression of stucco which is not appropriate to the current residential setting/historic character of the dwelling and its nearby surrounds. Also, if not installed correctly, synthetic stucco can trap moisture, leading to water damage, rot, and mold growth. Finally, synthetic stucco siding has a relatively short lifespan. A more durable, long-lasting cladding such as true stucco is more compatible with the building's long-term preservation/fitness
- With respect to the proposed treatment for the second story cladding, the application does not provide adequate documentation that the original materials do not exist beneath the existing EFIS and cement fiber siding. Therefore, it cannot be determined if it is appropriate to install new cladding at this location.
- Cement fiber siding is generally not appropriate for historic/contributing buildings within historic districts because it does not present an adequate replication of true lapped wood siding as the profile is too thin. Also, cement fiber siding presents a machined, uniform appearance that is not typical with true wood siding.
- The original windows and associated trim/casing/brickmould remained and appeared to be in good condition prior to their unapproved removal. The application's proposal for the window casing/trim/brickmould does not replicate these elements in dimension, material, and detail.
- The original roof fascia/soffits remained prior to the current unapproved work and appeared to be in good condition. The current application does not demonstrate that these elements will be replicated in dimension and detail.
- With respect to the proposed treatment for the front porch columns, the application does not provide adequate documentation if the original columns exist beneath the EFIS, and

if so, what their condition is. Therefore, it cannot be determined if it is appropriate to completely remove and replace the existing columns.

- With respect to the proposed treatment for the front porch roof/gable end, the application does not present documentation which shows if the original siding exists under the current cladding. Therefore, it cannot be determined if the proposed treatment is appropriate.
- The cumulative effect of the proposed project is a modern/suburban appearance which is wholly at odds with the property's historic character