

STAFF REPORT: MAY 14, 2025 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: A. DYE

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00157

ADDRESS: 150 W. BOSTON (a.k.a. BENJAMIN SIEGEL HOUSE)

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER: MAURICE MORTON

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: APRIL 21, 2025

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: MAY 2, 2025

SCOPE: ERECT BATHROOM/SHOWER POOL STRUCTURE (REVISION TO PREVIOUSLY APPROVED DESIGN)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1914, the property at 150 W. Boston was designed by architect Albert Kahn for Benjamin Siegel. Siegel immigrated to the United States from Germany and made his fortune selling women's apparel at his B. Siegel Company stores in Detroit. Occupying half a block, this 2-acre site is a park-like setting with lines of hedgerows and a tree canopy that feature the 2 ½ story house on the west portion of the lot. The elongated hipped roof features broad eaves, clay tile, and three central symmetrically placed dormers. Limestone chimneys on either side of the main structure match the limestone cladding. The individual window openings hold double-hung, 1-over-1 windows; each have stone surround detailing. The first floor features a series of glass doors, each with its own elaborate enframement of stone. Broad stone-columns support a limestone Juliette balcony, under which the main entrance is slightly recessed. Simple stone entrance steps lead to a small stone terrace surrounded by a hedgerow that leads to the main walk to the public sidewalk. This walk is a procession of perennials, hedgerows and evergreen shrubs that contribute to this grand landscape.

The Historic District Commission (HDC) issued approvals in 2022 to erect a greenhouse/conservatory at the rear side of this property and in 2024 to construct a swimming pool, pergola structures, hardscaping and associated landscape elements.



Above: Façade.

Right: View looking northwest from sidewalk. The location of the pool, patio and associated structures are in the backyard, near the east/side property line.

Staff photos, May 2, 2025.



PROPOSAL

The applicant is seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for a modification to the previously approved covered patio/gazebo.

- The size has increased - additional length of 10', additional width of 1':
 - Proposed size: 28'-6" long x 13'-8" wide (previous size: 18' long x 12'-6" wide).
 - The increased size is to accommodate the addition of a bathroom enclosure - 7'-9" long x 13'-2" wide.
 - The location of the patio remains the same.



Aerial by Detroit Parcel Viewer, showing location of proposed pool and landscape (arrow).



Current design and placement of the patio with bathroom enclosure. The extra length of the structure was accommodated by extending the structure to the end of the patio, as seen in the rendering below.



2024 rendering - previous design.

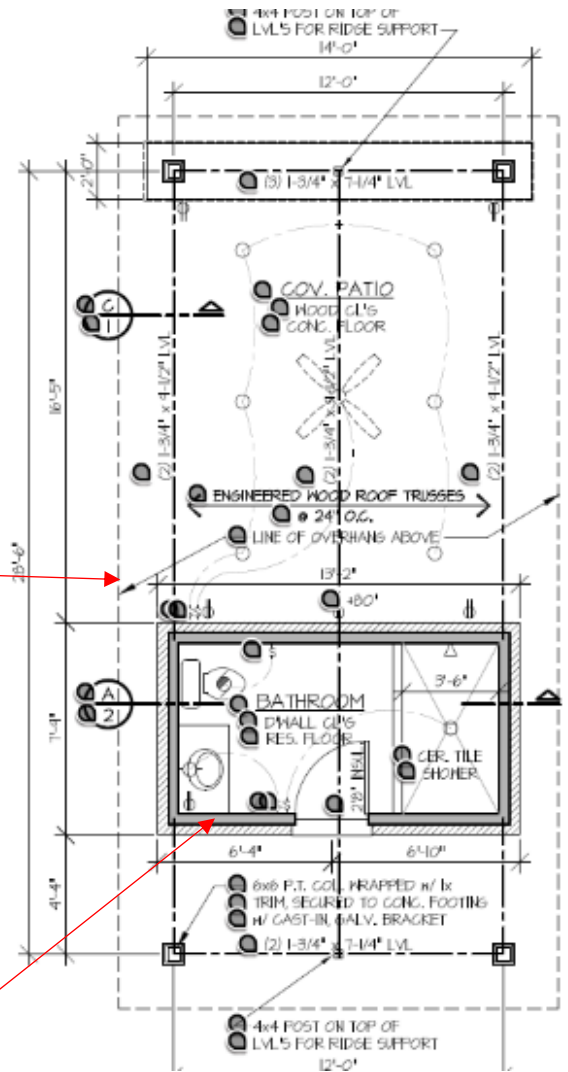
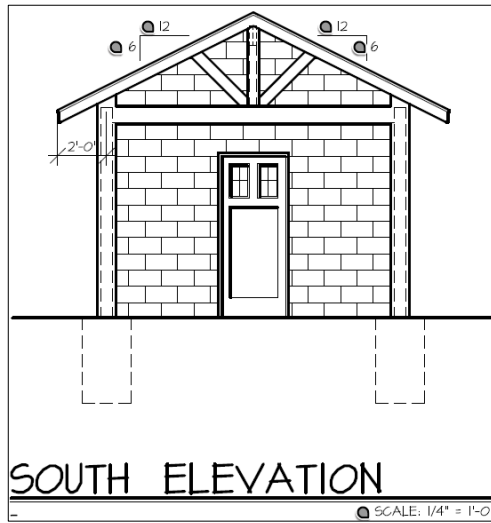


The above and below renderings are from the previous application (HDC2024-00509), approved by the HDC at the November 2024 meeting.



STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston-Edison Historic District was established in 1974. Staff retained the below Elements of Design analysis from the 2024 application, as they remain relevant to the review of this modification of the covered patio and its relationship to the previously approved pool project.
 - *“Relationship of textures. The most common relationship of textures in the district is that of a low-relief pattern of mortar joints in brick contrasted with the smooth surface of wood or stone trim.”*
 - *“Relationship of colors. Natural brick colors, such as red, yellow, brown, and buff, predominate in wall surfaces. Natural stone colors also exist. Where stucco or concrete exists, it usually remains in its natural state, or is painted in a shade of cream..”*
 - *“Relationship of architectural details. Architectural details generally relate to style... Details on "Mediterranean" style or vernacular buildings, including arched windows, door openings and porches, are often done in stone, brick, tile, and sometimes in stucco.”*
 - *“Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments... Materials for walks are concrete, brick, stone, or combinations of those materials... Hedges between properties and along front property lines are not uncommon. It is characteristic for corner lots to have hedges or fencing at side lot lines along the sidewalk... Fencing within the public view was generally designed to compliment the style, design material, and date of the residence... Replacement trees should be characteristic of the area and period... Side lots are not uncommon for the larger properties in the district, and a number of these form a part of the original site plan for the residence. Such side lots are usually landscaped and are often fenced at or near the setback line...”*
 - *“Relationship of open space to structures.... Where an original or early arrangement of house and grounds included, and still includes, landscaped lots which form part of the landscaping plan for the residence, such landscaped lots have significant landscape features.”*
- The placement of the pool, patio, hot tub, fireplace, pergola, gazebo, and walking path creates an appropriately unconfined spatial relationship of outdoor activities, surrounded by a privacy enclosure of plantings.
- The scale of the proposed gazebo and pergola are deferential to the scale of the house and appear to be a modern interpretation of the use of materials and design that is characteristic of Mediterranean homes. Design elements such as the raised masonry garden walls, cedar wood beams and broad scaled pavers all in a formal, nearly symmetrical composition reflect a relationship of scale and design to the existing architectural features of the home.



Applicant drawings. The width (approximately ¼ the length of the patio), its slight asymmetrical placement, and open space between each pair of corner columns, reduces the physical presence of this solid element. The stone veneer cladding will complement the house and surrounding landscape elements within the pool area.

ISSUES

- None.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation 1 of 1, Certificate of Appropriateness

Staff recommends that the proposed 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.