

STAFF REPORT: 05/14/2025 MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

ADDRESS: 4015 GLENDALE

APPLICATION NO: HDC2025-00065

HISTORIC DISTRICT: RUSSELL WOODS-SULLIVAN

APPLICANT/CONTRACTOR: JOHN NOVA/NOVAS CUSTOM HOMES LLC

OWNER: JAYS BUYS DETROIT LLC

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 4/25/2025

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 4/21/2025

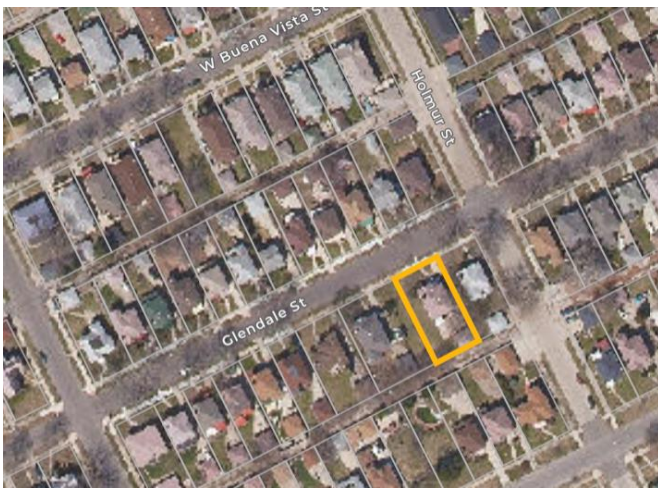
SCOPE: REPLACE STEEL CASEMENT WINDOWS (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The house at 4015 Glendale is a two-story, red brick, Tudor Revival building that was 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. The building's original windows were replaced with the current 1/1 and sliding vinyl windows without HDC approval and/or permit. A rear, flat-roof, porch at the rear has been enclosed with aluminum panels sometime prior to 2013. A hipped-roof garage with brick exterior walls sits to the rear of the house.



4015 Glendale. Photo taken by HDC staff on 4/25/2025



4015 Glendale outlined in yellow. Detroit Parcel Viewer

PROPOSAL

Recently, the building's original steel casement windows were removed and replaced with the current 1/1 and sliding vinyl units without HDC approval and/or permit. With the current submission, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval of the following:

- At the sides and rear, remove the historic steel casement windows (work completed) and replace with the current vinyl units, which will be moved 2 ½" forward within the opening and new wood trim added.
- At the front façade, remove the historic steel casement windows (work completed) and replace with new steel windows
- Remove the non-historic, aluminum front porch roof and columns (work completed)
- Install new asphalt shingles at the roof (work completed)
- At the second story of the rear porch, remove the non-historic roof and aluminum wall system. Install new guardrails at second story porch (material, height and specific design not provided)

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District was established by Ordinance 33-99 of the Detroit City Council in 1999. See the below for a photo of the building at the time of the district's designation:

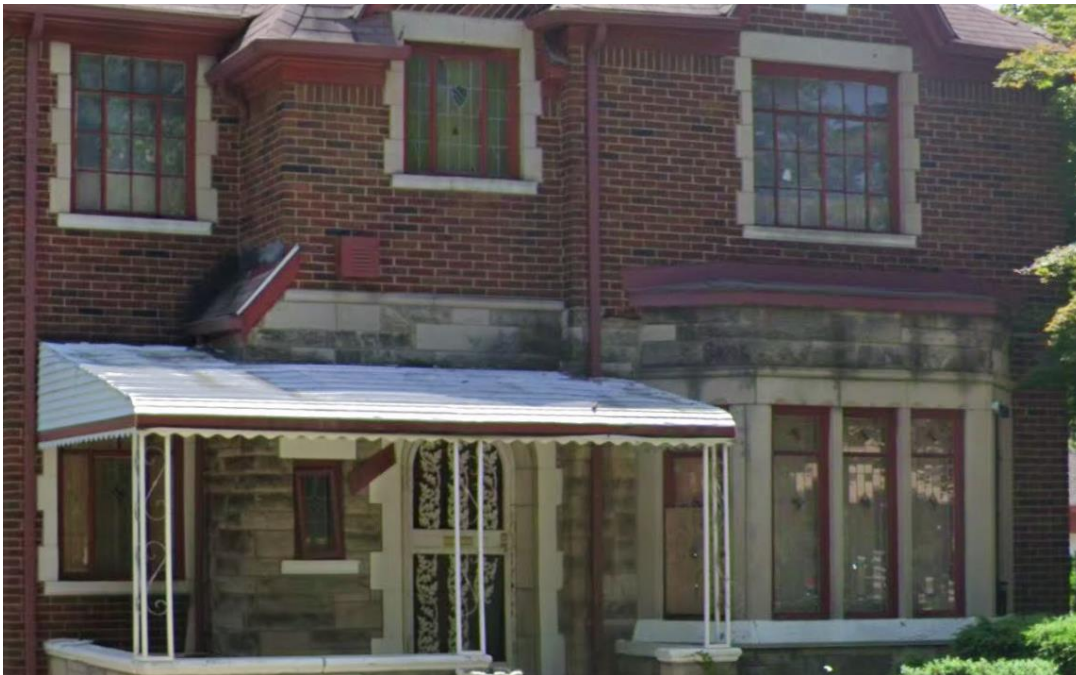


**4015 Glendale.
Designation slide by
HDAB, 1999**

- Until recently, the property's original steel windows (fixed and casement) had remained intact throughout and were a distinctive character-defining feature of the property. Many of the windows were particularly distinctive as they had leaded-glass panes emblazoned with stained-glass, multicolored, shield motif. See the below images of the house prior to the unapproved windows removal:



Zillow.com, photo taken in 2023



Google Streetview, 2023



Google Streetview, 2015. Note ca. 1970 rear porch enclosure (indicated by yellow arrow)



Conditions in December 2023/January 2024. Screenshot from video posted on Facebook. Note that the non-historic/ca. 1970s aluminum front porch canopy and columns are no longer extant



Conditions in in December 2023/January 2024. Screengrab from video posted on Facebook



Conditions in in December 2023/January 2024. Screengrab from video posted on Facebook



Conditions in in December 2023/January 2024. Screengrab from video posted on Facebook. Note that the 1970s/non-historic aluminum second story panels/porch enclosure and roof are no longer extant



Conditions in in December 2023/January 2024. Screengrab from video posted on Facebook



Conditions in in December 2023/January 2024. Screenshot from video posted on Facebook

- On 1/14/2025 HDC staff visited the site and noted that all but one of the original windows had been removed and had been replaced with the current vinyl units. See the below photos, taken by HDC on 1/14/2025. The Detroit Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department therefore issued a Stop Work order to forestall any further unapproved/unpermitted work.



4015 Glendale. Staff photo taken in 1/2025, while the unapproved window replacement was in progress



4015 Glendale. Staff photo taken in 1/2025, while the unapproved window replacement was in progress



4015 Glendale. Staff photo taken in 1/2025, while the unapproved window replacement was in progress



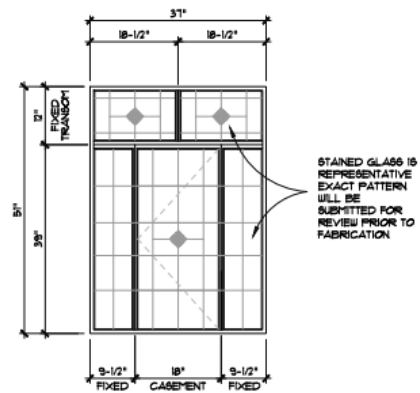
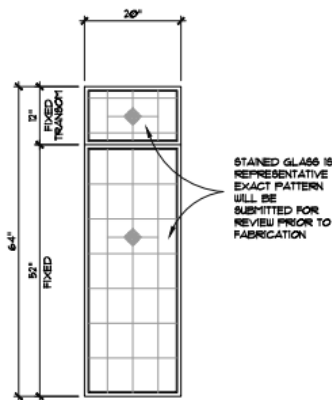
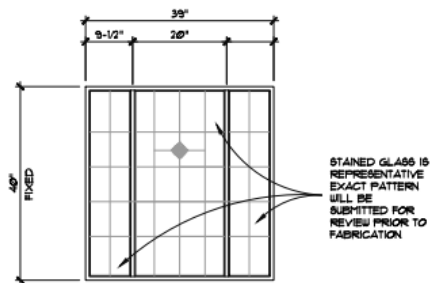
4015 Glendale. Staff photo taken in 1/2025, while the unapproved window replacement was in progress

- The applicant attended the Commission’s February 12, 2025 regular meeting and presented a proposal to the Commission to replace the historic windows (already removed without approval) with new double-hung wood units. The Commission denied that application, noting that it did not meet the Standards, nor did it conform to the district’s Elements of Design, 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).
- As stated above, it is staff's opinion that the steel windows that were removed were clearly a distinctive, character-defining feature of the house. A review of a video posted on Facebook in late 2024/early 2025 indicated that the windows did not appear to be deteriorated beyond repair. Also, the current application provides no evidence of such deteriorated conditions. Therefore, per the Standards, the windows should have been retained and repaired in kind where necessary. As such, the current proposal does not meet the Standards as it seeking a COA for the removal of distinctive, character-defining historic features which could have been repaired. However, staff does realize that the original windows are gone and that any effort to replace the existing inappropriate windows must be undertaken in a manner that meets the Standards, which would require that any replacement windows match/exactly replicate the original historic windows that were removed in violation
- With the current submission, the applicant is seeking to mitigate the current inappropriate window removal/vinyl window installation via the installation of windows that closely approximate the original at the front elevation and the retaining of the existing 1/1 vinyl windows at the sides and rear facades.
- Re: the proposal for the windows at the front façade, staff notes the following:
 - Staff has reviewed the proposal for the front façade and finds that the window units proposed for installation at this location would provide an adequate replication of those which were removed without approval in some respects. However, see the below which outlines the areas of the proposal which do explicitly match the original:
 - See the below image. Note that the following window types existed at the front façade:



- See the below submitted drawings which depict the new windows which will be installed at the front façade to replace those which were removed. While the new steel casement labeled F and G generally appear to match the original, the more decorative windows, labeled A, B, and C, do not clearly indicate that the windows will include lead coming to match the original. Should the Commission approve this work item (replace original windows at the front façade per the submitted application), staff recommends that they do so with the condition the applicant provide clear documentation of the design of the windows prior to their removal, the new windows exactly match the original in operation, material, design, and dimension, and that staff be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the final proposal prior to issuance of the permit.

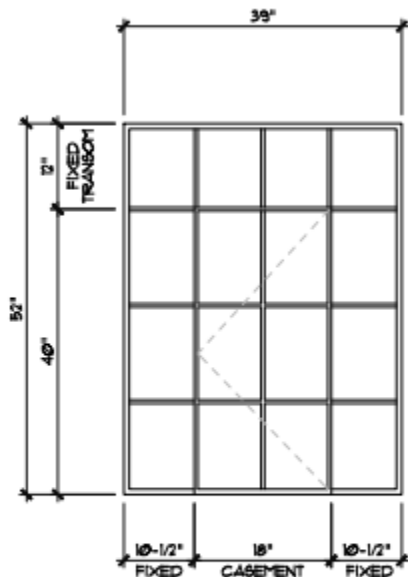


SEE SHT A-1
FOR LOCATION →

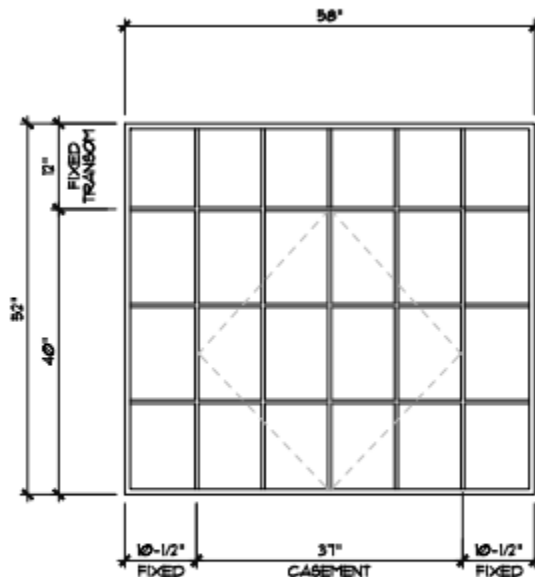
(A)

(B)

(C)

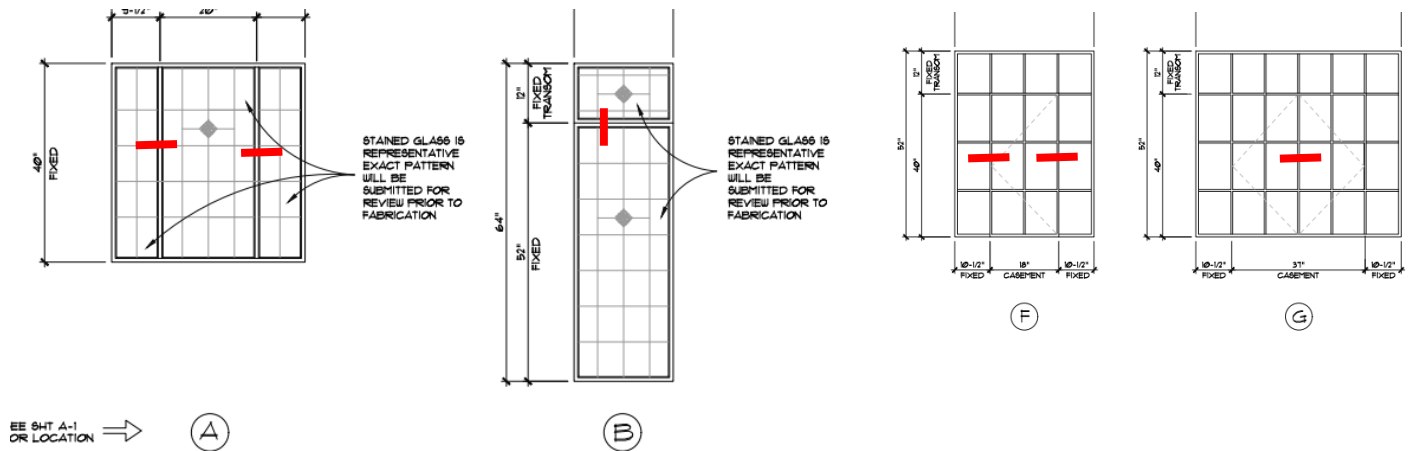


(F)



(G)

- Staff also recommends that the applicant provide typical dimensioned section detail drawings at the mullions/at each of the below indicated areas (indicated in red) to ensure the new windows will adequately match the historic units should the Commission approve the windows proposed for installation at the front facade:



- Staff does not recommend approval of the window proposal for the building's side and rear facades as the new/vinyl windows do not match the original/historic steel casement in operation, material, design, and/or light configuration. Vinyl is not consistent with the general characteristics of an historic steel window and are not compatible with the overall historic character of the building. Specifically, vinyl windows are generally inappropriate for installation in historic districts for the following reasons:
 - Thorough the 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 steel.
 - 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.
- Staff supports the removal of the 1970s aluminum canopy and columns at the front porch and aluminum enclosure and roof at the rear porch second story because these elements do not date from the property's period of significance and detracted from the building's historic character. However, staff does note that the current submission does not specify the height, material, and specific design of the guardrails proposed for the rear, second story porch.

ISSUES

- The windows that were removed without approval were a distinctive historic character-defining feature of the property

- The current application does not provide information that the windows that were replaced without approval were deteriorated beyond repair. Therefore, they should have been retained and repaired in kind where necessary.
- The windows proposed for approval at the sides and rear are inappropriate to the building's historic character and do not meet the Standards because they do not match the original in material, operation, light configuration, and design
- The application materials do not fully indicate that the new windows proposed for installation at the front façade are a 100% match to the historic windows that were removed without approval

RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

Recommendation 1 of 2, Denial: Replace original windows with new vinyl and steel units

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 windows that were a distinctive character-defining feature of the property
- The current application does not provide information that the windows were deteriorated beyond repair. Therefore, they should have been retained and repaired in kind where necessary.
- Vinyl windows are generally inappropriate for installation in historic districts for the following reasons:
 - Thorough the 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 steel.
 - 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.

Recommendation 2 of 2, Certificate of Appropriateness: Remove aluminum columns and canopy at front porch; remove aluminum porch enclosure at rear, second story; and install an asphalt shingle roof

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 condition that:

- HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the height, material, and design of the guardrail proposed for the rear porch, second story prior to the issuance of the project's permit