

**STAFF REPORT: JULY 9, 2025 MEETING**

**PREPARED BY: B. SALIE**

**APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00**

**ADDRESS: 1676 CHICAGO BLVD**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON**

**APPLICANT: MEIR ISRAEL**

**PROPERTY OWNER: GCG CLB 28 LLC**

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 06/20/2025**

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 06/26/2025**

**SCOPE: REPLACE ROOF, REPLACE SOFFITS\***

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

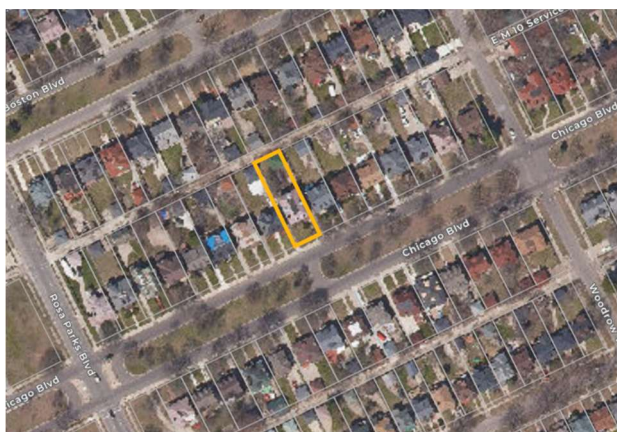
This two-story, single-family dwelling located in the Boston-Edison historic district which was designed by Architect Charles N. Agree in 1921. The house displays features associated with the Neo-Georgian style of architecture to include the following:

- Red brick exterior cladding which is laid in an English bond pattern
- An elaborate classically inspired wood door surround at the primary entrance (recently partially replaced without HDC approval)
- Dentiled wood soffit (recently replaced without HDC approval)
- Stone lintels which feature flat arches with keystones
- Arched and Palladian dormers at roof

Brown asphalt shingles, located at both the main roof and the dormer roofs, were recently installed without HDC approval. Windows are historic 6/1, double hung units.



*1676 Chicago Street View. Photo taken by staff 06/26/2025*



*Detroit Parcel Viewer*



*Aerial View of 1676 Chicago*

*Google Earth*

## **PROPOSAL**

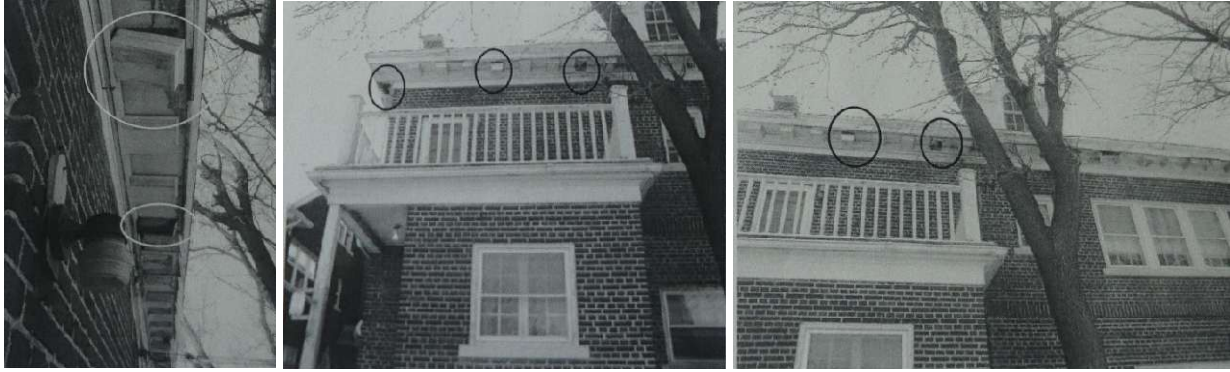
With the current submission, the applicant is seeking an “after-the-fact” COA for work which was recently undertaken at the building’s roof without HDC approval. Specifically, the proposed scope of work is as follows:

- Replace existing asphalt shingle roof including water and ice, synthetic plastic, drip edge
- Install wooden soffit ornament

## **STAFF OBSERVATIONS & RESEARCH**

- Boston-Edison was designated as a historic district in 1998.
- April 2, 1986 Property Owner, Roy Sipes, made an application to install new porch columns. Specifically, the project scope reads: “Installation of two (2) new aluminum round white fluted 8’-0” post at front door to include all necessary trim. Replace the missing wood trim at front of house. Reattach loose wood trim at front of house – prime and finish paint new wood trim. Scrape, prime and finish paint front picture window and front door entrance only to include front door. New trim will match existing in design. The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) was subsequently issued for replacement of round front porch columns exactly and match trim exactly by the historic district commission as per historic district ordinance 161-H.
- At the April 10, 2002 Regular Meeting, the HDC issued a Notice to Proceed for the replacement of the original clay tile roof and internal gutter system at the house due to the roof’s high level of deterioration. The scope of work submitted with the application specifically stated that the clay tile roof would be replaced and wood elements of the roof would be replaced where necessary. With respect to the roof’s soffits, the April 10, 2002 staff report for the project indicated “...at the rear of the house, the applicant has a pile of dentil blocks, which have fallen off the cornice on all sides of the structure. The cornice at the rear of the of the house shows extreme water damage. Many dentil blocks have separated from the building and will soon fall off...the east and west sides of the house also show some water damage with missing dentil blocks...”





*Photos from April 10, 2002 Staff Report showing areas of deterioration at the soffit/eaves of the roof.*

- In February 2024, HDC Staff was made aware that exterior work was being undertaken at the property, to include the installation of new asphalt shingles and dentiled soffit at the roof. Staff reviewed files maintained by the HDC and building department and concluded that a COA had not been issued for the work (see the below photos taken by staff at the time of the reported violation)



*1676 Chicago Boulevard, photo taken by staff 02/04/2024.*

- See the designation photo of the building below, taken in 1980; Google Streetview images of the building taken in 2009, 2014, and 2015; and photos taken by staff in 2025 to note the following with respect to the condition of the soffit/eave area of the roof prior to the current unapproved work compared to the current conditions:
  - Despite the replacement of areas of deteriorated soffit and the internal gutter system with external, hanging gutters in 2002, between 2008-2014, the appearance of roof's dentiled soffit/eave area is consistent with the appearance of soffit at the time of the district's designation.
  - In 2015, the soffit/eave area began to display high levels of deterioration as all of the dentils at the front façade's eaves appear to have fallen from the soffit.
- While the newly installed soffits/dentils are wood, in keeping with the original soffit's material, they do not match the historic appearance.
  - The number of front facing dentils (excluding the corners) was reduced from 22 to 13. The spacing of the original dentils created a rhythm that aligned with the outer walls of the dormers (see arrows), and tied together the elaborate portico, the linear keystones above the windows, as well as the vertical pattern of the original tile roof.
  - The new existing widely spaced dentils are out of proportion with the cohesive patterning of the applied ornament and the decorative coursing of the brick veneer.



*Designation photo taken in 1980*





*July 2009 Google Street View*



*October 2014 Google Street View*



*August 2015 Google Street View*



*June 2025 photo taken by staff*

- It is therefore staff's opinion that the current soffit which was installed without HDC approval/ for which the current application is seeking a COA, does not represent an adequate match to the building's original element.
- It is therefore staff's opinion that the new soffit does not meet the standards as the soffit that was removed was a distinctive, character-defining feature of the property which, per the Standards, should be matched if deteriorated beyond repair.
- Also, note that a review of Google Streetview images indicated that while asphalt shingles were added to the roof's main surface as a result of the 2002 roof replacement, a flat rubberized membrane which was consistent in appearance with the original copper roofing, had been installed at the arched dormer roof. However, the current unapproved work replaced the flat membrane at the dormer roofs with dimensional asphalt shingles.
- It is staff's opinion that the current asphalt shingles which have been installed at the dormer roofs are not consistent with the building's historic appearance/is not appropriate for the following reasons:

- The original copper roofing at the dormer roofs provided a clear contrast in texture and color to the clay tile roof at the house's main roof surface.
  - While the original main roof tiles and dormer copper roofing were replaced in 2002 with asphalt shingles and a rubberized roof membrane, the historic contrast between the main roof surface and the highly visible dormer roofing remained.
  - The current work includes the installation of dimensional asphalt shingles at both the main roof surface and the arched dormer, destroying the historic contrast in texture and color between the two roof areas.
- It is staff's opinion that the proposed new asphalt shingle roofing (work completed) at the house's main roof surface is appropriate because it replaced the asphalt shingles that were approved for installation via notice to proceed in 2002.
  - While undertaking recent fieldwork, staff did note additional unapproved exterior work which is in process. The property owner has elected not to add these items to the current application. See the below historic photo in addition to current photos to note these violations. As this work is not yet complete, staff does not recommend to the applicant that they refer to the provided historic photo to use as a guide to assist in the development of an application for any outstanding/necessary repair of deteriorated exterior historic character-defining elements.



*Photo from original house.*



*Front facing dormers*

*Photo of existing conditions.*



*Photo from original house.*



*Photo of existing conditions.*





*Original photo 1676 Chicago, built 1921.*



*Current condition of house 2025.*

*The elaborate, front-facing, portico has accrued significant deterioration in this century old house. **Please note:** While this is not included in the current application, staff asks that the applicant submit an additional application in replacing the portico and dormer windows.*



*This photo (copy) was taken at completion in spring of 1921/1922. The house was one of only six residences **designed by Charles N. Agree, the famous and prolific Detroit architect of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.** The original photo is among the papers of Charles Agree on the Burton Collection and housed at the Detroit Public Library, main branch, on Woodward Avenue.*





*Dental molding Details*

## ISSUES

- The proposed/completed work at the property's distinctive, character-defining soffit/eave area of the main roof is not an adequate match of the historic element, as required by the standards.
  - The soffit/eave area was removed without HDC approval, therefore the scope of work that would meet the requirements of the historic ordinance (Section 21-2-59(e)), is the fabrication and installation of new wood soffit and dentils that match the historic material that was removed. The replication of the historic components is also required by the standards.



- The asphalt shingle roof which was installed at the dormer roofs is not an adequate match of the historic element, as required by the standards.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

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

#### **Recommendation 1 of 2 – Denial – Replace soffits; install asphalt shingles at dormer roofs**

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:

*Standard #: 2, 5 & 6*

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.

For the following reasons;

- While the newly installed soffits/dentils are wood, in keeping with the original soffits material, they do not match the historic appearance.
- The soffit that was removed was a distinctive character-defining feature of the property which, per the standards, should be matched if deteriorated beyond repair.
- The number of front facing dentils (excluding the corners) was reduced from 22 to 13. The spacing of the original dentils created a rhythm that aligned with the outer walls of the dormers (see arrows), and tied together the elaborate portico, the linear keystones above the windows, as well as the vertical pattern of the original tile roof.
- The new existing widely spaced dentils are out of proportion with the cohesive patterning of the applied ornament and the decorative coursing of the brick veneer.

#### **Recommendation 2 of 2 – Certificate of Appropriateness – Install asphalt shingles at main roof**

Staff recommends that the remaining work items will be appropriate, according to the Secretary of Interior's standards for Rehabilitation and the Boston-Edison Historic District's Elements of Design.