

STAFF REPORT: 09/10/2025 MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

ADDRESS: 2491 LONGFELLOW

APPLICATION NO: HDC2025-00446

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT/OWNER: STEVEN MAMAT

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 8/26/2025

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 8/18/2025

SCOPE: REPLACE FRONT PORCH COLUMNS, REPLACE WINDOWS, INSTALL LANDSCAPING (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL), INSTALL PATIO AT REAR YARD

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1922, the property at 2491 Longfellow has a hipped, asphalt-shingled roof which features deep overhanging eaves with false brackets and hipped-roof dormers. The Colonial Revival-style house is clad in a light brown brick veneer. Windows are 8/1 (with muntins between the glass), 1/1, and horizontal sliding vinyl units. The original wood shutters with decorative crescent shaped cutouts remain at the façade. A masonry porch that is sheltered by a hipped-roof canopy on square wood columns is centrally located at the building's façade. The primary entrance features a wood door with a leaded glass vision panel which was recently installed without HDC approval/Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). Exterior doors at the rear wall are metal doors with fan-shaped vision panels that have also been installed recently without HDC approval/COA.

A one-story, hipped roof garage sits in the rear yard. The garage has brick exterior cladding, 1/1 windows, and metal doors.



2491 Longfellow. Current appearance. Photo by HDC staff, 8/26/2025



2491 Longfellow (outlined in yellow), Detroit Parcel Viewer

PROPOSAL

With the current submission, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval of a number of exterior work items which were completed without HDC approval to include the following:

- Replace original wood windows and brickmould/trim with vinyl 8/1 (with muntins between the glass) vinyl units, 1/1, and horizontal sliding vinyl units with aluminum coilstock trim. The applicant has also provided an alternative proposal to retain the existing vinyl windows and trim, but to also apply "wood veneers" to the front façade vinyl windows
- Replace eight historic round wood columns at the front porch with four, square wood columns, painted black
- Install new landscaping at the front and rear yard
- At the primary, front entry, install a new wood door with leaded glass vision panel

The project also includes the installation of a brick paver or concrete patio in the rear yard. Steps from the deck to the new patio shall also be installed.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston-Edison historic district was designated in 1974
- In 2024, HDC staff observed a number of exterior alterations that had been undertaken at the property without HDC approval, to include the following work items:
 - House and garage asphalt roof replaced with asphalt roof
 - All wood windows (except garage windows) replaced with vinyl windows, basement windows replaced with glass block windows.
 - Front porch rebuilt, to include the replacement of the original wood round/Tuscan columns replaced with square wood columns
 - Rear porch altered
 - Front and rear doors replaced.
 - Garage door and person door replaced
 - Front porch lights fixtures replaced
 - Landscape foundation shrubs replaced
 - House dormer, shutters and porch trim painted black

Please note that the above items included only the unapproved work which HDC staff was able to view from the public right-of-way.

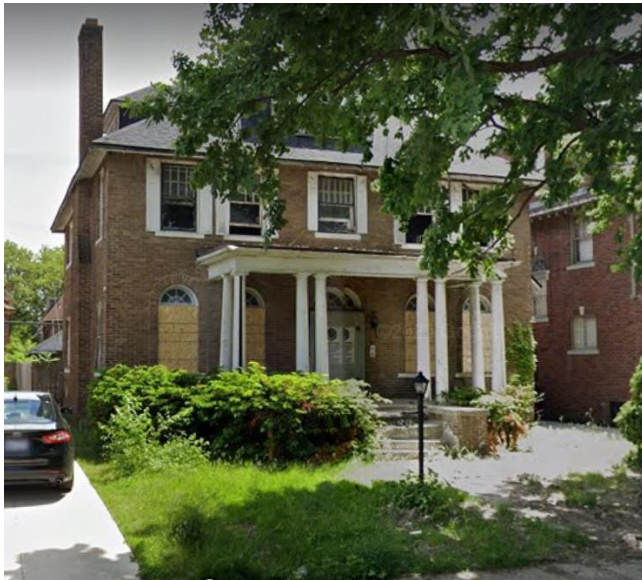
- In early 2024, the current property owner submitted an application (HDC2024-00184) [2491 Longfellow \(05/08/2024\) | City of Detroit](#) to the HDC in an effort to receive an approval of the above-listed unapproved exterior work. The project was docketed for the Commission's review at their 2/28/2024 regular meeting. However, during the meeting the applicant withdrew the following scope items from the application because the staff report had recommended that them for denial:
 - All wood windows replaced with vinyl windows
 - Replacement of the original wood round/Tuscan columns at the house's front porch with square wood columns
 - Replace the house's front and rear doors

Per the COA issued at the 2/28/2024 meeting [CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS](#), the Commission approved the asphalt roof at the house and garage, the installation of glass block at the basement windows, the rebuilt front porch deck, new rear porch, new front façade light fixtures, new garage doors, removal of a tree, installation of a rear gravel parking area and walking path, and the installation of a new wood fence. However, please note that the scope items which the applicant withdrew from the 2/28/2024 application (to include the replacement of the house's front porch columns, wood windows, and front and rear doors) remain as active violations to the Detroit City Code. Finally, note that the applicant has stated that the violations/unapproved work items listed above were undertaken by a previous owner. Staff does note that all code violations are attached to the property and are therefore the responsibility the current owner.

- On 9/26/2024, HDC staff issued a COA for new railing at the front porch
- Please see the below photos, which illustrate the adverse impact that the unapproved alterations have had on the building's historic character:



Designation slide by HDAB, 1974. Elements associated with the Colonial Revival style include the wood tapered round columns at the front porch; the four lite arched fanlight transoms at the first story; the 8/8, true divided lite, double-hung wood and associated wood trim/brickmould at the first story; the 8/1, true divided lite, double-hung wood windows at associated wood trim/brickmould at the second story; and the 4/1 and 6/1, true divided lite, double-hung wood windows and associated trim at the dormer



Google Streetview, taken in 2019. Note that there were 8 columns present at the front porch (4 sets of paired columns)



Current appearance, photo by HDC staff



Current condition. Photo by HDC staff, 8/26/2025. Note unsympathetic alterations which have removed elements associated with the building's Colonial Revival style



Current condition. Photo by HDC staff, 2024. Detail of incompatible opaque glass, vinyl windows, and aluminum brickmould at front the front façade, first story



**Vinyl sliders w/ aluminum
brickmould**

**Vinyl 1/1 windows w/
aluminum brickmould**

Rear wall. Note incompatible vinyl windows. Photo by HDC staff, 2024



East side wall. Note incompatible vinyl 1/1 and slider units with aluminum trim/brickmould. Photo by HDC staff, 2024



West side wall. Note incompatible vinyl 1/1 and slider units with aluminum trim/brickmould. Photo by HDC staff, 2024

- As noted above, the wood windows and brickmould/trim which were removed without HDC approval were distinctive, character-defining features of the house. Per the Standards, if the windows were in poor condition, they should have been retained and repaired. As the current application does not provide evidence that the original windows were deteriorated beyond repair, their removal does not meet the Standards.
- Also, the Standards require that distinctive, character-defining features of a property be matched in-kind if they must be replaced in order to maintain a property's historic character. It is HDC staff's opinion that the current windows and associated trim fall well short of that requirement. Rather, the new windows and trim diminish the building's association with Colonial Revival style. Specific issues/areas in which the new windows and trim do not adequately match the original elements include the following:
 - The lite configuration of the existing vinyl operational units does not match the historic throughout
 - The lite configuration/the radial pattern and opacity of the historic transoms at the front facade has not been matched
 - The operation of several units does not match the historic, to include the replacement of double hung windows with slider units at the front, rear, and side walls.
 - The current consumer grade, vinyl windows and aluminum brickmould display a plasticity and flat/thick appearance that does not adequately match the profile/dimensionality and appearance of the historic windows. Also, the muntins between the glass provided a flattened appearance which is inconsistent with a true divided lite window.
 - Please also note that consumer grade vinyl windows are generally inappropriate for use in historic districts because they weather poorly, deteriorate rapidly, and exhibit poor detailing and detracting color/sheen. Also, the framing material, glazing, and seals 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.
 - Finally, with respect to the window proposal, note that the applicant has also stated that they would be willing to install "wood veneers" at the front façade windows as a mitigative effort. Staff did reach out to the applicant to request that he provide "technical specifications/product specifications/or a contractor description of the process of adding wood veneers to existing vinyl windows." The applicant provided a narrative of unclear authorship which did not provide enough technical detail to convince staff that such an application would be long-lasting and would not contribute to the deterioration of the windows. Staff is also still unclear as to which elements of the new windows and trim would receive the veneer. Finally, the wood veneer application would not address the inconsistencies that the new windows and trim have with the original in terms of operation, lite configuration, the muntins between the glass, and dimension/profiles
 - For the above-listed reasons, Staff recommends that the Commission deny the submitted window proposal.
- With respect to the proposal to retain the existing wood columns at the front porch, staff notes that the round wood columns which were removed without HDC approval were highly distinctive, character-defining features of the house. Per the Standards, if the columns were in poor condition, they should have been retained and repaired. As the current application does not provide evidence that the columns were deteriorated beyond repair, their removal does not meet the Standards. Also, the Standards require that distinctive, character-defining features of

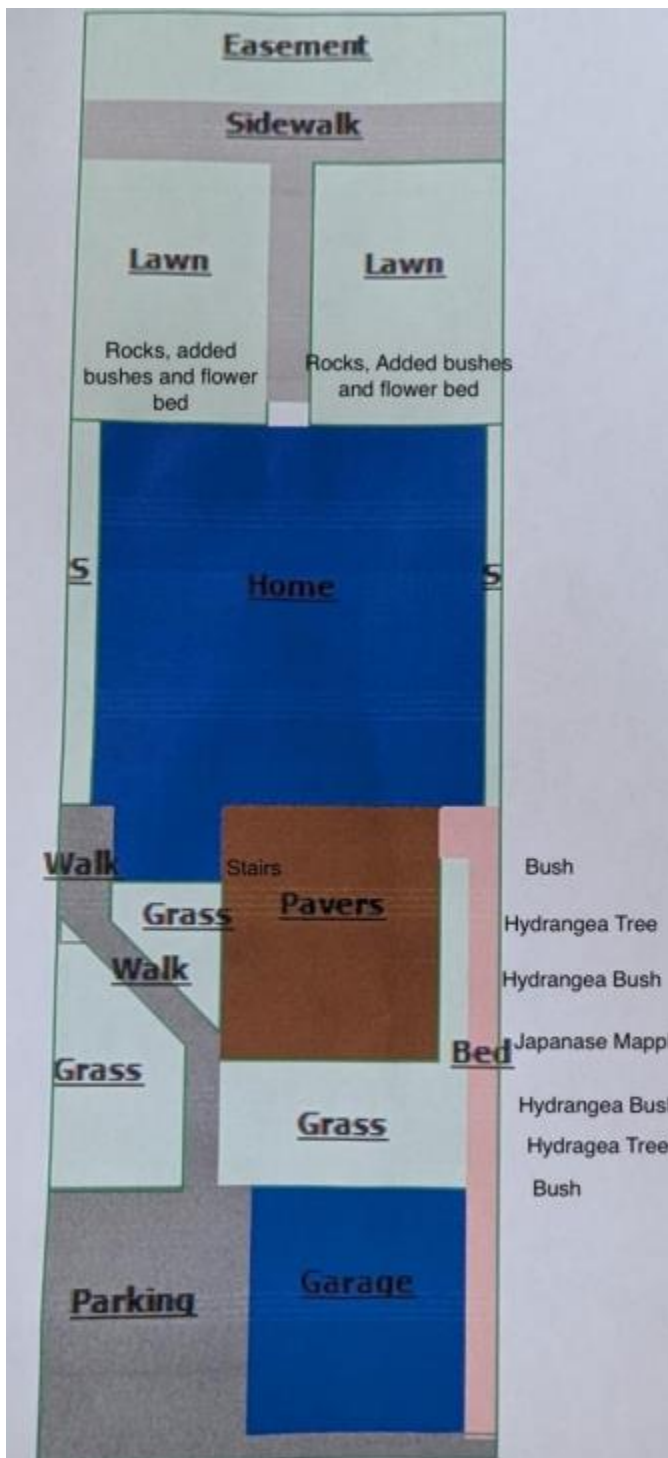
a property be matched in-kind if they must be replaced in order to maintain a property's historic character. It is HDC staff's opinion that the existing columns fall well short of that requirement as they do not match the historic in form, proportion, dimension, and detailing. Also, note that the porch featured eight elegantly tapered, round wood columns prior to the current unapproved work, versus the current four columns at the porch. It is staff's opinion that the replacement of historic columns with the new features greatly alters the porch's distinctive, historic expression. For these reasons, staff recommends that the Commission deny this work item.

- Staff recommends that the Commission deny the existing/proposed front door because its vision panel presents as a modern interpretation of a Victorian era design detail that is wholly incompatible/incongruent with the simplicity of the building's Colonial Revival style.



Current front door was installed without HDC approval. Photo by HDC staff 2024. The applicant proposes to retain this door

- Staff supports the addition of a patio to the rear yard and new steps which will lead from the existing non-historic rear porch to the new patio. The applicant has noted that the patio will be 300 square feet. However, the submitted site plan does not provide overall dimensions of the backyard, existing buildings, and/or the existing hardscape so the scale of the patio relative to these elements is unknown (see the below). Also, the final material for the patio has not been identified. Finally, note that dimensioned drawings of the proposed stairs (in plan and elevation) which will lead from the porch to the patio have not been provided. Staff recommends approval of these items with the condition that the applicant provide the following to staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of permit:
 - Site plan of the backyard which shows the footprint dimensions of all existing buildings, hardscape (walkways and parking pads), planting beds, and the proposed patio
 - Drawing of the proposed steps in plan and elevation which indicates its materiality



Site plan, indicating the location of the proposed patio (labeled “pavers”). Provided by applicant.

ISSUES

- The historic wood windows and associated trim that were removed without HDC approval were historic and distinctive, character-defining features of the property. As the application provides no documentation that the windows and associated trim were deteriorated beyond repair and the new vinyl windows and aluminum trim do not match the historic and are incompatible with the building’s historic character, the work does not meet the Standards.

- The proposed wood veneer application to the front façade's vinyl windows does not provide an appropriate level of information which specifically details how the work will be undertaken and/or which elements of the windows would receive the new veneers/cladding.
- The historic wood columns that were removed without HDC approval were historic and distinctive, character-defining features of the property. As the application provides no documentation that the historic columns were deteriorated beyond repair and the new columns do not match the historic and are incompatible with the building's historic character, the work does not meet the Standards
- The front door's leaded glass vision panel is incompatible with the building's historic character/Colonial Revival style
- The submitted site plan does not provide overall dimensions of the backyard, the existing buildings, and/or the existing hardscape so the scale of the proposed patio relative to these elements is unknown. Also, the final material for the patio has not been identified. Finally, dimensioned drawings of the stairs which will lead from the porch to the patio have not been provided.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

Recommendation 1 of 2, Denial – Replace historic wood windows and trim with vinyl windows and aluminum trim/coilstock; install wood veneer at front façade vinyl windows; replace eight historic columns at the front porch with new wood columns; install a wood door with leaded glass vision panel at front facade entrance

Staff recommends that 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:

- With respect to the existing/proposed vinyl windows and aluminum trim:
 - The historic wood windows and associated wood trim were distinctive, character-defining features of the property. Therefore, they should have been retained and

- repaired. If deteriorated beyond repair, they should have been replaced with new windows and trim that match the historic. The current application did not include documentation demonstrated that the windows and trim were deteriorated beyond repair, therefore their removal was not appropriate.
- The current/proposed vinyl replacement windows and aluminum trim are not an adequate match to the historic for the following reasons:
 - The lite configuration of the operational (double hung and slider) vinyl units does not match the historic
 - The lite configuration/the radial pattern and opacity of the historic transoms at the front facade has not been matched
 - The operation of several of the vinyl units does not match the historic as a number of double-hung windows have been replaced with horizontal sliding units
 - The consumer grade, vinyl windows and aluminum brickmould display a plasticity and flat/thick appearance that does not adequately match the profile/dimensionality and appearance of the historic windows.
 - The muntins between the glass which are present at the vinyl windows at the front façade provides a flattened appearance which is inconsistent with the historic, true divided lite windows
 - Consumer grade vinyl windows are generally inappropriate for use in historic districts because they weather poorly, deteriorate rapidly, and exhibit poor detailing and detracting color/sheen. Also, the framing material, glazing, and seals 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.
 - The proposed application of wood veneer to the front façade's vinyl windows does not provide an appropriate level of information which specifically details how the work will be undertaken and/or which elements of the windows would receive the new veneers/cladding
 - The historic wood columns that were removed from the front porch without HDC approval were distinctive, character-defining features of the property. The application provides no documentation that the historic columns were deteriorated beyond repair and the new/proposed columns do not match the historic in form, proportion, dimension, and detailing. Also, the number of the historic round-columns at the front porch has been reduced from eight (one pair at each side of the porch and two pairs at the front of the porch) to four single square columns lining the front of the porch.
 - The existing/proposed front door's vision panel presents as a modern interpretation of a Victorian era design detail that is wholly incompatible with the simplicity of the Colonial Revival style architecture

Recommendation 2 of 2, Certificate of Appropriateness: Install new landscaping and rear yard patio; erect new stairs at the rear porch

Staff recommends that the remaining work items 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 following conditions:

The applicant shall provide the following to staff for review prior to the issuance of permit:

- Site plan of the backyard which shows the footprint dimensions of all existing buildings, hardscape (walkways and parking pads), planting beds, and the proposed patio
- Drawing of the proposed steps in plan and elevation which indicates its material