

**STAFF REPORT:** 10/08/2025 REGULAR MEETING      **PREPARED BY:** L. SAINT JAMES  
**APPLICATION NUMBER:** HDC2025-00461 & HDC 2025-00464  
**ADDRESS:** 2011 & 2025 ORLEANS  
**HISTORIC DISTRICT:** LAFAYETTE PARK/MIES VAN DER ROHE  
**APPLICANT:** RAYMOND SINCLAIR / THE HOME DEPOT  
**2011 ORLEANS PROPERTY OWNER:** DOUGLAS THEDFORD / TRUDY THEDFORD  
**2025 ORLEANS PROPERTY OWNER:** FRANCINE BURGESS  
**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION:** 08/25/2025  
**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT:** 09/24/2025

**SCOPE:** REPLACE HISTORIC ALUMINUM WINDOWS WITH FIBREX WINDOWS

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Parc Lafayette Condominiums, originally known as the Regency Square Apartments, are located on Orleans Street in the Lafayette Park/Mies van der Rohe Historic District, which is a notable example of post-war urban renewal and modern residential planning. Designed by architects Isaac Green and Joseph F. Savin and built in 1966, the complex reflects the Modernist principles evident throughout Lafayette Park. The three-story structures feature clean lines, flat roofs, and expansive window walls that emphasize natural light and transparency. The buildings use a simple palette of materials, primarily brick, aluminum, and glass.



*Staff photo, 09/24/2025*

## PROPOSAL

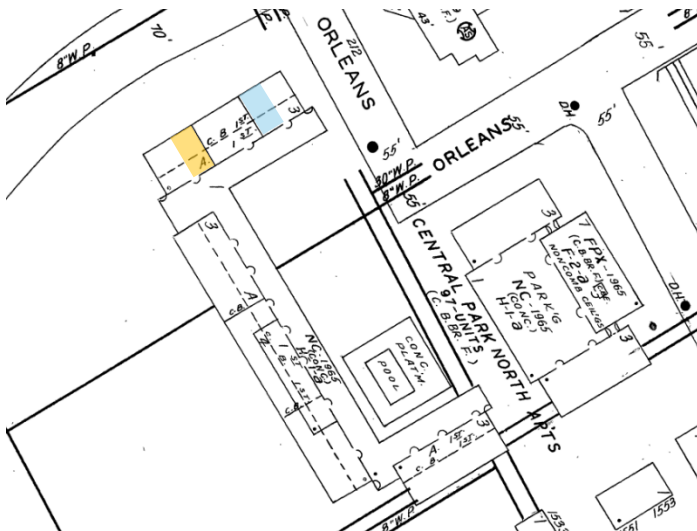
- Replace historic aluminum windows with Fibrex windows

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Lafayette Park/Mies van der Rohe Historic District was enacted in 2003.



*Photo from parclafayettedetroit.com, 1966*



*Sanborn map, unknown date*



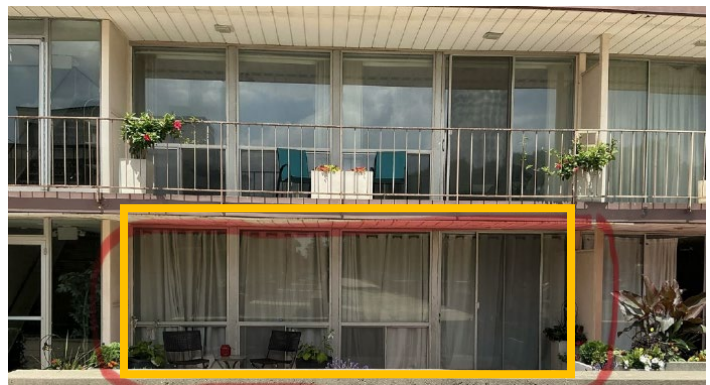
*Detroit Parcel Viewer*



- There is a total of five (5) sections of windows between both units that are proposed to be replaced.



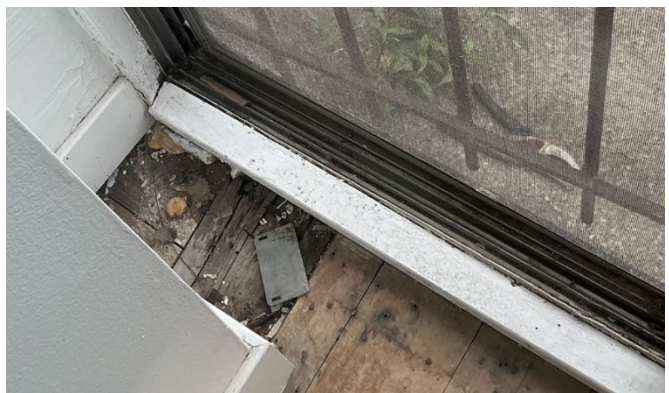
*Staff photos, 09/24/2025. North elevation.*



*Photos from application. South elevation.*

- The applicant states “The building currently retains its original window units, which are aluminum-framed, early-generation double-pane glass panels installed during original construction circa 1966. While these windows were once modern in appearance and functional for their time, they now exhibit signs of significant wear, energy inefficiency, and safety concerns.” They also provide the following descriptions of the existing conditions:
  - *Structural and Operational Deterioration: Many of the current windows have rusting or pitted frames, compromised locking mechanisms, and non-functional sashes, creating not only aesthetic issues but also safety and egress concerns.*
  - *Moisture Infiltration: Several units have reported water penetration at the window perimeters, creating risks of mold, interior damage, and long-term structural decay.*





*Photos from application of existing conditions*

- Staff considers the historic aluminum window systems to be distinctive and historic character-defining features. These features are identified within the Lafayette Park/Mies van der Rohe Historic District's Elements of Design (emphasis by staff):
  - **(3) Proportion of openings within the façades.** *The proportion of openings varies widely. Doors are generally taller than wide but door openings may be made wider through the use of glass panels on one or both sides of the door. Individual panes of glass are wider than tall, taller than wide, or about equal in width and height. **The use of glass as virtually the entire wall of a building is common.** The percentage of voids in façades ranges from none in the end walls of some low-rise buildings to nearly 100 percent in those buildings with glass curtain walls.*
  - **(4) Rhythm of solids to voids in front façades.** *In the buildings by Mies van der Rohe, the use of glass curtain walls virtually eliminates solids as part of the front façades. The three tall buildings by Mies van der Rohe all have recessed first- and second-story curtain walls, creating a "colonnade" surrounding the building at grade, the vertical structural supports expressed as the columns; the first floor of the two-story building in the shopping center is similarly treated. At Four Freedoms/Windsor Tower, large approximately square window openings are centered in external expressions of the structural frame, while on the ground floor the voids and solids are precisely reversed, the windows being at the sides of each structural bay and the center being solid. In the upper floors, narrow windows flank the service core wall at the center of the façade. At Regency Square/Parc Lafayette the use of balconies tends to create spatial voids behind which the window and door voids are in shadow; on the street façades facing Chestnut, **the buildings display large, flat areas of window flanked by sections of blank brick wall.** A regular rhythm of fenestration is typical in the district.*
  - **(7) Relationship of materials.** *Building materials, **common to exterior surfaces in the district, are brick, granite, marble, glass and metal.** Wood window frames exist in Chateaufort and Cherboneau. Exposed aggregate panels exist only in the two-story building in the shopping center.*
  - **(8) Relationship of textures.** *The low-relief pattern of mortar joints in brick, where it exists, provides textural interest. **Large glass surfaces are smooth in texture and often subdivided by small-scale metal elements, which creates a texture in the curtain walls of tall buildings.** At Four Freedoms/Windsor Tower, the external expression of the structural frame contains recessed brick walls; therefore, the entire façade takes on a texture.*
  - **(10) Relationship of architectural details.** *Architectural details are limited to expressions of structure and **the subdivision of glass curtain walls.** All of the buildings in the district are in the modern style of the 1960s, which avoided decorative details.*
- Although the existing aluminum window systems are distinctive and historic character-defining features, considering the amount deterioration, it is staff's opinion that the existing historic aluminum window systems are beyond reasonable repair.

- The installation of Fibrex windows does not follow National Park Service (NPS) guidelines for replacement windows. As stated by the NPS in the [Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards](#), “When historic windows exist, they should be repaired when possible. When they are too deteriorated to repair, selection of the replacement windows must be guided by Standard 6. Design, visual qualities, and materials are specific criteria provided by the Standard that are pertinent to evaluating the match of a replacement window. Evaluating the adequacy of the match of the replacement window involves the consideration of multiple issues.” Specifically, referencing the factors to consider in evaluating the match of a window:
  - **Materials and finish.**
    - While it may be theoretically possible to match all the significant characteristics of a historic window in a substitute material, in actuality, finish, profiles, dimensions and details are all affected by a change in material.
    - Secondary window elements that do not match the finish or color of the window can also diminish the match. Examples include white vinyl tracks on dark-painted wood windows or wide, black, glazing gaskets on white aluminum windows.

## ISSUES

- If replacement windows were warranted (that is, if the historic windows were demonstrated to be beyond repair), the new windows would be required to “match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, and where possible, materials” (Standard #6, quoted in full below).

## RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

#### **Recommendation 1 of 1 – Denial – Replace historic aluminum windows with Fibrex windows**

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and the Lafayette Park/Mies van der Rohe Historic District’s Elements of Design, specifically:

*Standards #:*

*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.*

*Elements of Design #: 3, 4, 7, 8, 10*

For the following reasons:

- Though the existing historic aluminum windows appear to be deteriorated beyond feasible repair, the proposed windows are not in-kind matches to the historic windows at this property.