

STAFF REPORT: 10/08/2025 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: L. SAINT JAMES

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00531

ADDRESS: 2224 W. BOSTON

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT / PROPERTY OWNERS: DANIEL ERICKSEN / JULIA COX

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 08/18/2025

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 09/24/2025

SCOPE: WIDEN DRIVEWAY AND SERVICE PATH, REPLACE CONCRETE PORCH FLOORING AND WALKWAY

EXISTING CONDITIONS

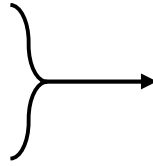
Built in 1924 by architect William H. Kuni for Frank J. MacDonell, this Tudor Revival home in Detroit's Boston-Edison Historic District features a red brick façade with decorative half-timbering and stucco in the front-facing gable. The structure has a steeply pitched roof and a prominent two-story bay window. Windows include leaded glass on the bay and a narrow diamond-pane window above the door. The house is set back from the street with a mature tree and has a 'shared' style driveway on the left (west) side of the front property.



Staff photo, 09/24/2025

PROPOSAL

- Replace/widen driveway and service path
 - Aggregate concrete
- Replace porch flooring and walkway
 - Aggregate concrete



*Example of aggregate concrete,
color and style unspecified*

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

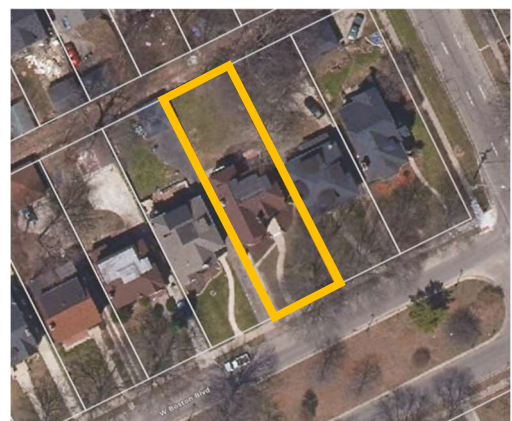
- The Boston Edison Historic District was enacted in 1974.



HDAB designation photo, 1974



Sanborn map, unknown date



Detroit Parcel Viewer



HDAB photo, 1980

- Sometime between 1974, at designation, and 1980, the curved, brick walkway was replaced with concrete. Staff was unable to locate approval documentation for this alteration.
- Staff field observations for the Boston-Edison Historic District's 'shared' driveways are as follows:
 - The placement/design of the driveways do not extend beyond the side wall of the house and into the front yard.

2315 / 2325 W. BOSTON

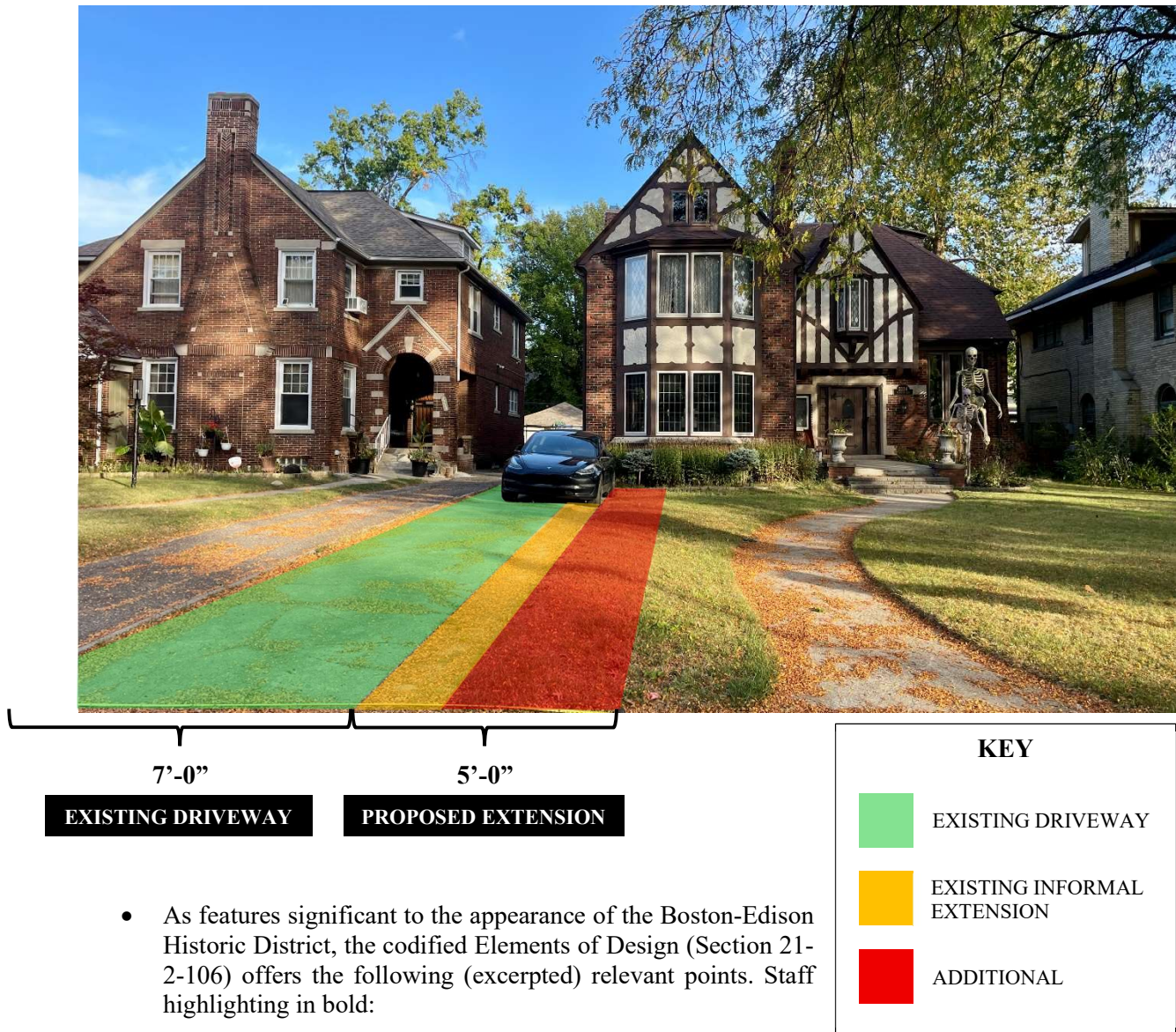


1945 / 1959 W. BOSTON



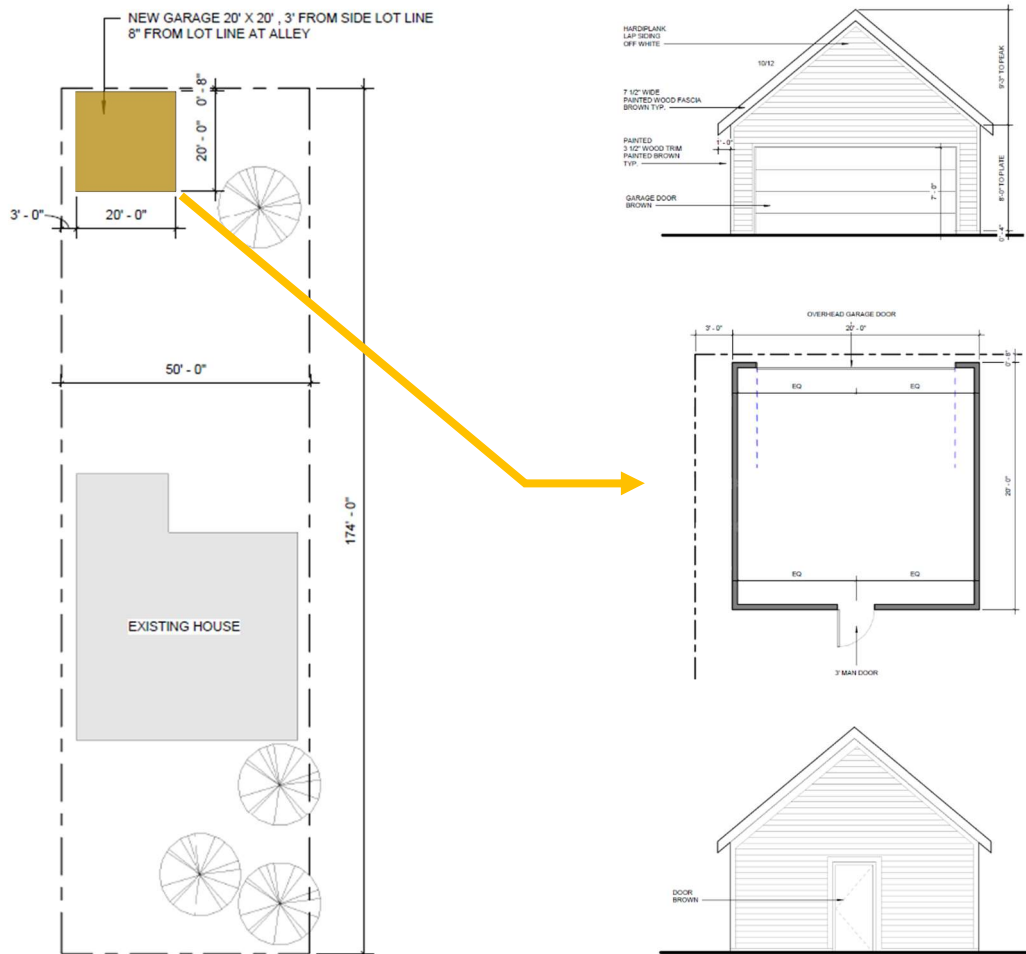
Staff photos, 10/02/2025

- The applicant proposes to widen the driveway from the existing 7'-0" to 12'-0". Staff notes that, in practice, the current parking use has already informally extended the driveway's width into the yard by approximately 1'-4".



- As features significant to the appearance of the Boston-Edison Historic District, the codified Elements of Design (Section 21-2-106) offers the following (excerpted) relevant points. Staff highlighting in bold:
 - (13) Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments.
 - a. The typical treatment of individual properties is **a flat or graded front lawn area in grass turf, often subdivided by a straight or curving walk leading to the front entrance. Materials for such walks are concrete, brick, stone, or combinations of those materials. Some front yards have rectangular raised earthwork terraces upon which the house stands. These unpaved terraces having sloping embankments or retaining walls which are made of brick, stone, or both, at the change of grade foundation plantings, often of a deciduous character that are characteristic of the period 1900 to 1930, are present virtually without exception. Hedges between properties and along front property lines are not uncommon.**

- b. Straight side driveways leading from the street to rear garages are the norm, although access to garages is also off the alley, especially in areas of the district that were developed earlier. On corner lots, garages and driveways often face the side streets. These driveways are paved in asphalt, concrete, or brick. 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.*
- Considering the importance of front lawns throughout the district and the precedent that driveways typically do not extend in front of houses, staff finds the proposed driveway extension to be inappropriate. The applicant also proposes to widen the service path from the driveway to the entrance from 2'-0" to 5'-0". Though the current 2'-0" width is very narrow and could be widened slightly, a 5'-0" width removes a substantial amount of lawn directly in front of the house. The service path, in staff's opinion, should also remain secondary to the front walkway. Staff suggests that widening it to 3'-0" may be compatible with the context. This is also the minimum accessible width for wheelchair access.
- Additionally, the property at 2224 W. Boston received a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) on 05/19/2019 for the construction of a new garage via application #19-6176:



Materials from #19-6176 application



Photo by HDC staff from #19-6176 application to show existing conditions of the alleyway, 05/02/2019



Staff photo of same location to show existing conditions of the alleyway, 09/24/2025



Staff photo, 09/24/2025

- Although this application seeks to widen the front-yard driveway area currently used for parking, it is important to note that the garage, built in 2019, includes a double door facing an accessible alley, providing off-street parking within the garage.



Photos with mark-ups from application

- The applicant states that the existing condition of the concrete driveway, service path, walkway, and porch are cracked and in poor condition. Staff agrees, as this is evident from the conditions shown in the photos provided with the application.



Existing service path

ISSUES

- The front lawn is a character-defining feature of the historic district and the property.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

Recommendation 1 of 2 – Denial – Widen driveway

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.

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 #: 13

For the following reasons:

- Extending the width of the driveway creates an incompatible width contrary to the establish historic context, and further reduces the extent of the lawn/green space, itself an important character-defining feature of the district.

Recommendation 2 of 2 – Certificate of Appropriateness – Replace driveway, replace and widen service path, replace walkway, and replace porch concrete

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, with the condition(s) that:

- The driveway width will not exceed 7'-0"
- The service path width will not exceed 3'-0"