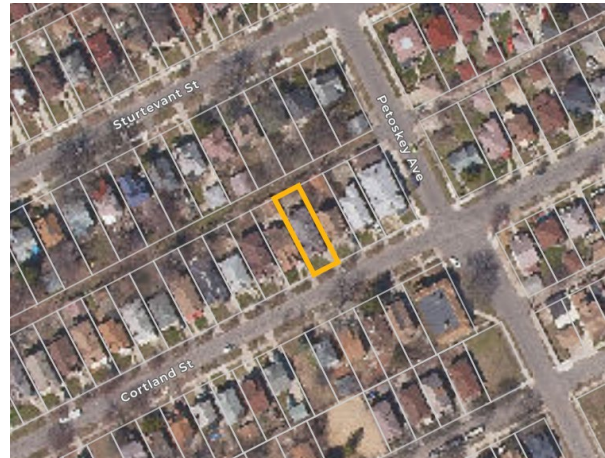


REVISED STAFF REPORT: NOVEMBER 12, 2025 REGULAR MEETING **PREPARED BY:** B. SALIE
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00584
ADDRESS: 4224 CORTLAND
HISTORIC DISTRICT: RUSSELL WOODS-SULLIVAN
APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER: BRANDON JENKINS
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 10/29/2025
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 11/03/2025

SCOPE: REMOVE HISTORIC STEEL WINDOWS & INSTALL VINYL WINDOWS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1927, this two-and-a-half story house is located in the Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District. This two-family residence is in the middle of the block between Broadstreet and Petoskey Avenue. The house is characterized by its red brick veneer and aluminum siding, steeply pitched roof, covered front porch and second story balcony.



Right: Detroit Parcel Viewer



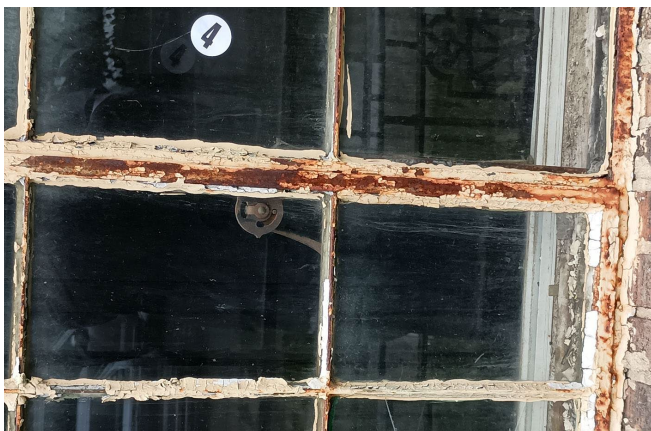
Photo taken by staff on 11/03/25



PROPOSAL

The scope of work is as follows:

1. Remove five (5) historic steel casement windows at the first-floor front elevation of the house
2. Install five (5) vinyl fiberglass windows
3. Replace historic metal railing at second story balcony with wood railing



Photos provided by applicant, show the historic steel casement window with significant rust and peeling paint on the trim and muntins



1999 Designation Photo

STAFF OBSERVATIONS & RESEARCH

- The Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District was established in 1999. The house is a contributing resource to the district, in staff's opinion
- The house currently retains its original window units at the front, which are steel casement, installed during original construction in 1927. They now exhibit signs of significant wear, energy inefficiency, and safety concerns.
- While the house has retained much of its historical integrity since its time of designation, minute changes have been made to the materials and colors, and certain significant materials have been removed. This includes the railing on the side of the porch and on the side of the stairs. According to Google Street View Images, the railings at the stairs and side of the porch were removed sometime between August 2011 to August 2013. The window mullions have also been painted, disrupting the original consistent brown of the horizontal aluminum siding on the front bay.
- The front bay of the house has retained its historic aged windows. The windows at the front of the house are a distinctive, character-defining feature for this property. Since time of designation, the window frame and muntins were painted, which is now rusted and peeled.
- It is staff's opinion that the deterioration and the build-up of rust over the years show the windows to be beyond repair. However, vinyl is not an appropriate replacement window type for historic buildings, in particular for the thin profiles of steel casement windows:

- Vinyl windows and poly-products offer a plasticity and flat/thick appearance that does not adequately match the profile/dimensionality and appearance of historic windows
 - Consumer-grade vinyl windows weather poorly, deteriorate rapidly and exhibit poor detailing and detracting "bright white" color/sheen.
 - The framing material, glazing, and seals break down more quickly in ultraviolet light than higher quality materials, introducing condensation and other degradation to the insulated glass unit in a few years' time.
 - Vinyl also lacks rigidity and can expand and contract more than wood and steel during exposure to weather. This can result in discoloration and warping of the frames and failure of window elements.
- Per the district's *Elements of Design*, wood and metal windows are the most common material within the district: *(7)Relationship of materials. The majority of houses are faced with brick, often combined with wood, stone or stucco. Some houses on Glendale and Waverly Avenues in the Russell Woods Subdivision are entirely of wood; very few houses are entirely stucco. Stone trim is common, and wood is almost universally used for window frames and other functional trim. **Windows are commonly either metal casements or wooden sash. Original metal awning shades and balustrades exist.** Roofs on the majority of the buildings in the Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District are now asphalt shingled, whereas many were likely originally shingled in wood. Only two apartment buildings on Broadstreet Boulevard and the Broadstreet Presbyterian Church retain their slate roofs.*
 - Per the National Parks Service (NPS) Document entitled Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards - Historic Preservation Tax Incentives (U.S. National Park Service)
 - ***Replacement windows on primary, street-facing or any highly visible elevations of buildings of three stories or less must match the historic windows in all their details and in material (wood for wood and metal for metal).***
 - Upon site visit, staff identified other work being done (in violation). First, at the front porch where the porch ceiling has been reconstructed and adjusted. And second, at the second story balcony, where the wrought iron railing was removed and replaced with a wood railing (see next page).
 - Prior to construction, the porch ceiling was caved in and in need of repair. It does not appear that the materials of the porch were not historically significant. Yet it is a concern to staff that the historic railing was removed without HDC staff approval. The second story balcony railing has been replaced with wood, which is not consistent with the house's original design and not consistent with the front porch railing, which retains its original wrought iron railing.
 - The Commission was not given the opportunity to discern whether the balcony railing was beyond repair.
 - It is staff's opinion that the original wrought iron balcony railing is a distinctive, character-defining feature and was replaced without documentation confirming that they were beyond feasible repair, as required by Secretary of the Interior Standards #5 and #6. As such, it should be restored to its pre-violation condition, that of a wrought iron style railing.



*Photo taken by staff on 06/24/24,
for a violation for roof rehabilitation.*

Photo taken by staff on 11/03/24



Photo taken by staff on 11/03/24

ISSUES

- Should the Commission find the existing historic windows to be beyond repair, vinyl windows will not be an appropriate replacement window type. The historic steel windows, per NPS Standards (#6) and related Guidelines, may only be replaced by a window that "shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials." Vinyl windows are not good matches for historic prototypes, for the following several reasons:
 - Vinyl windows and poly-products offer a plasticity and flat/thick appearance that does not adequately match the profile/dimensionality and appearance of historic windows
 - Consumer-grade vinyl windows weather poorly, deteriorate rapidly and exhibit poor detailing and detracting "bright white" color/sheen.
 - The framing material, glazing, and seals break down more quickly in ultraviolet light than higher quality materials, introducing condensation and other degradation to the insulated glass unit in a few years' time.
 - Vinyl also lacks rigidity and can expand and contract more than wood and steel during exposure to weather. This can result in discoloration and warping of the frames and failure of window elements.
- The historic metal railing that was removed without HDC approval was a distinctive, character-defining feature to the building. Therefore, if the railing was deteriorated beyond repair, any new replacement railing should have matched the existing, per the Standards. As the current wood railing does not match the historic, it does not meet the Standards.

- The current application does not provide documentation that the historic, character-defining metal railing that was removed without HDC approval was deteriorated to an extent which merited its removal.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Recommendation 1 of 1 – Denial – Replace historic steel casement windows with vinyl windows, replace historic metal railing with wood railing

Staff recommend 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* #:

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 #: 7

For the following reasons:

- While the existing historic steel casement windows appear to be deteriorated beyond feasible repair, the proposed windows are not in-kind matches to the historic windows at this property. The historic steel windows, per NPS Standards (#6) and related Guidelines, may only be replaced by a window that "shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials." Vinyl windows are not good matches for historic prototypes.
 - Vinyl windows and poly-products offer a plasticity and flat/thick appearance that does not adequately match the profile/dimensionality and appearance of historic windows
 - Consumer-grade vinyl windows weather poorly, deteriorate rapidly and exhibit poor detailing and detracting "bright white" color/sheen.
 - The framing material, glazing, and seals break down more quickly in ultraviolet light than higher quality materials, introducing condensation and other degradation to the insulated glass unit in a few years' time.
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- The historic metal railing that was removed without HDC approval was a distinctive, character-defining feature to the building. Therefore, if the railing was deteriorated beyond repair, any new replacement railing should have matched the existing, per the Standards. As the current wood railing does not match the historic, it does not meet the Standards.
- The current application does not provide documentation that the historic, character-defining metal railing that was removed without HDC approval was deteriorated to an extent which merited its removal.