

STAFF REPORT: 11/12/2025 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: L. SAINT JAMES

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00639

ADDRESS: 949 CHICAGO

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT / PROPERTY OWNER: ANDRE WILLIAMS

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 10/19/2025

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 10/24/2025, 10/29/2025

SCOPE: DEMOLISH TWO-STORY REAR WING, ERECT TWO-STORY REAR WING (WORK STARTED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The dwelling located at 949 Chicago is a two-and-a-half-story, stucco-clad house erected in 1916. Designed in the Colonial Revival style, it features an entry portico with a curved underside, semicircular dormer windows, a dentil cornice along the eaves, and brickwork accenting the foundation, chimney, doorway surround, and windowsills. The property also includes a detached garage, approved by the Historic District Commission (HDC) in 2023, in the rear yard which is in the process of being built.



Staff photo, 10/24/2025



Staff photo, 10/24/2025



Staff photo, 10/29/2025

PROPOSAL

- Demolish two-story rear wing (work completed without approval)
- Erect two-story rear wing (work started without approval)

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

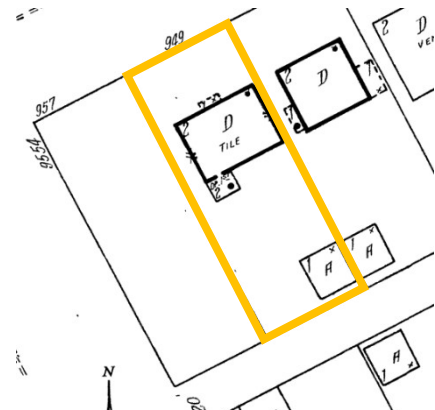
- The Boston-Edison Historic District was enacted in 1974.



HDAB designation photo, 1974

949	
Chicago Blvd.	
7781	LOT NO
	9-14-16
	DAT
USE	Dwelling
CONS.	Tile Stucco

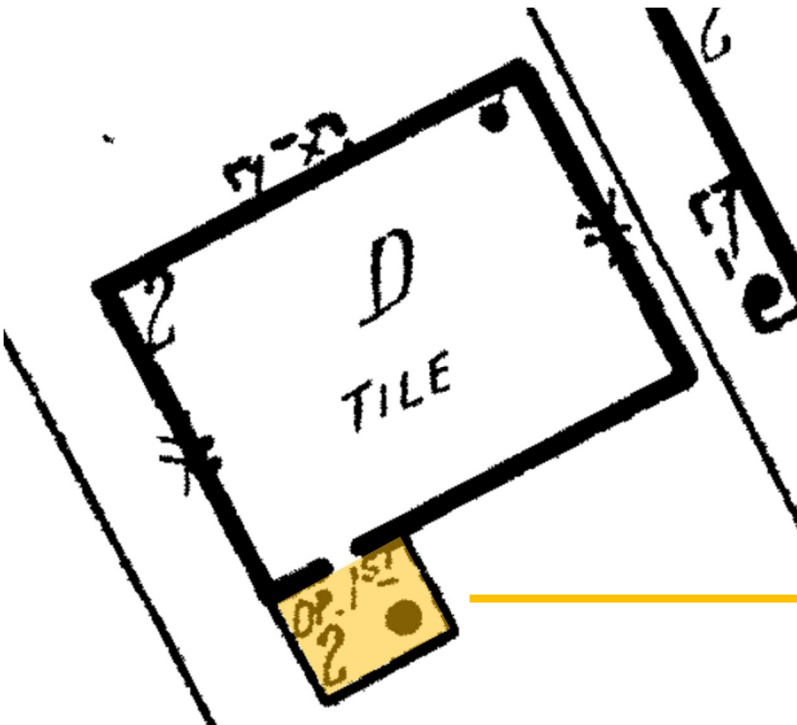
BSEED permit card, 09/14/1916



Sanborn map, 1970



HDAB designation photo, 1980



Sanborn map, 1970



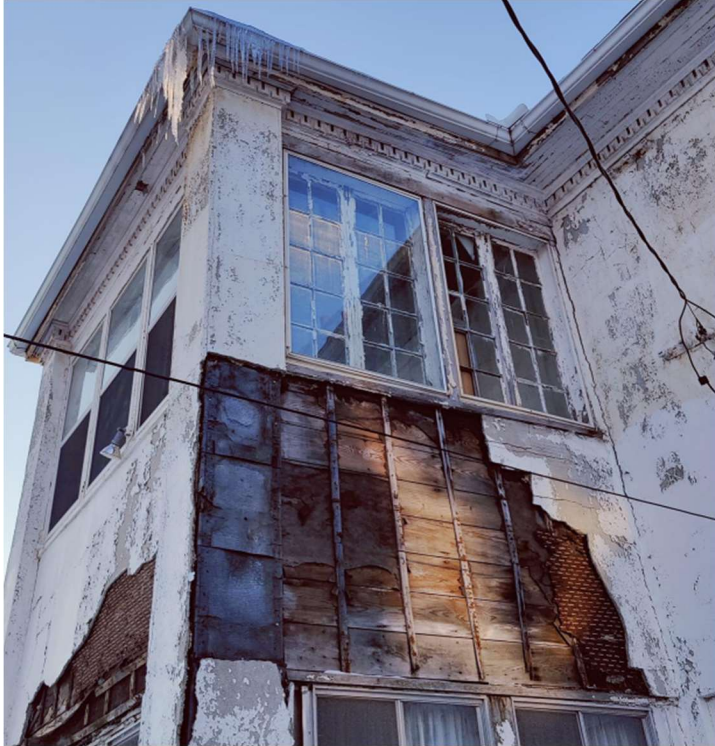
- The property already received a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) on 08/15/2025 for the following work via application 23-8476:
 - Demolish garage
 - Replace concrete slab and driveway
 - Construct garage
 - Repair house exterior with matching materials
 - Paint house
- In an application letter to the HDC from the owner on 07/17/2023, the applicant states “Over the years due to many factors, death, illness, economics, the residence has suffered from deferred maintenance. After my grandmother passed away in 2018 ownership of the house came to me, as I have the means and skills to restore the structure to its former glory.” and “The garage is one of the primary components of the first phase of several phases necessary to the restore of the property. Other items of deferred maintenance must also be addressed at this time. ...Future appeals will be made for work relating to the stabilization of the rear of the house and restoration of a two-story rear porch that was removed in the past.”

The applicant goes on to describe their future plans for the house as “In Phases II and III, the rear of the house will be restored, and the former two-story porch replaced.”

This correspondence demonstrates that the applicant has been aware of the property’s deferred maintenance issues since at least assuming ownership in 2018. Furthermore, the applicant’s 2023 statements clearly indicate an intention to demolish and erect the rear two-story wing as part of the planned work.

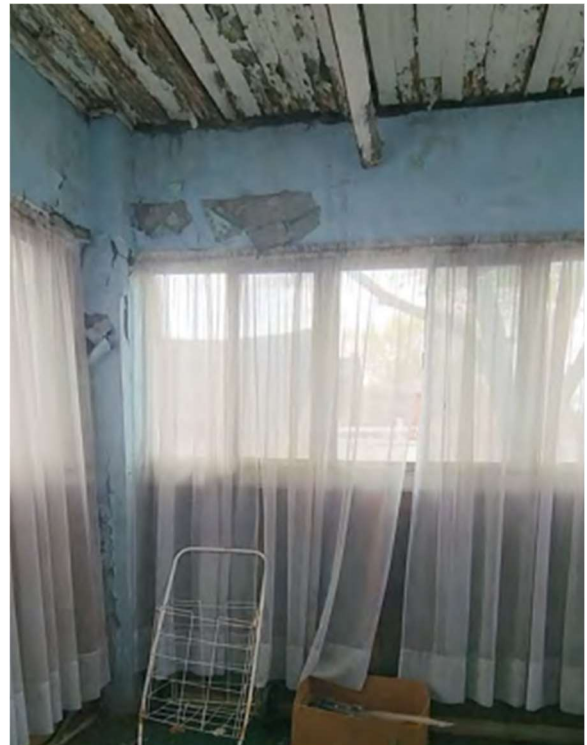
Conditions Analysis

- Although the photos show that the rear wing obviously suffered water damage, it has not been proven to be unsalvageable, in staff’s opinion. Per the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation:
 - ***Standard #5:*** *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
 - ***Standard #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.*
- The applicant states “The structure has sustained significant water and weather-related deterioration, particularly in the lower wall framing, sheathing, and exterior finishes below the upper roof eave.”



Photos from application

- In the documentary photographs submitted by the applicant, there are obvious areas of decay that need renewal and repair. However, professional staff is not convinced from the evidence presented that the wing required wholesale demolition and reconstruction.



Photos from applicant

- Additional photos show deterioration, but not conditions compelling demolition/removal of all historic materials, including the historic windows.

- Although water infiltration can be a leading factor in the decay of historic buildings, “because the source of moisture can be elusive, it may be necessary to consult with historic preservation professionals prior to starting work that would affect historic materials. Architects, engineers, conservators, preservation contractors, and staff of State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) can provide such advice.” Specifically, continuing to reference the National Park Service’s ‘Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings’ brief (excerpts and emphasis by staff):
 - ***Remedial Actions within a Historic Preservation Context***
 - *Regardless of who does the work, however, these are the principles that should guide treatment decisions:*
 - *Avoid remedial treatments without prior careful diagnosis.*
 - *Undertake treatments that protect the historical significance of the resource.*
 - *Address issues of ground-related moisture and rain runoff thoroughly.*
 - *Implement a program of ongoing monitoring and maintenance once moisture is controlled or managed.*
 - ***How and Where to Look for Damaging Moisture***
 - *For more complicated problems, it may take several months or up to four seasons of monitoring and evaluation to complete a full diagnosis. Rushing to a solution without adequate documentation can often result in the unnecessary removal of historic material.*
 - ***Selecting an Appropriate Level of Treatment*** (see below)
 - *Caution should always be exercised when selecting a treatment. The treatments listed are a guide and not intended to be recommendations for specific projects as the key is always proper diagnosis.*
 - *Start with the repair of any obvious deficiencies using sound preservation maintenance. If moisture cannot be managed by maintenance alone, it is important to reduce it by mitigating problems before deteriorated historic materials are replaced. Treatments should not remove materials that can be preserved; should not involve extensive excavation unless there is a documented need.*
 - ***Conclusion***
 - *Moisture in old and historic buildings, though difficult to evaluate, can be systematically studied and the appropriate protective measures taken. Much of the documentation and evaluation is based on common sense combined with an understanding of historic building materials, construction technology, and the basics of moisture and air movement. Variables can be evaluated step by step and situations creating direct or secondary moisture damage can generally be corrected. The majority of moisture problems can be mitigated with maintenance, repair, control of ground and roof moisture, and improved ventilation. For more complex situations, however, a thorough diagnosis and an understanding of how the building handles moisture at present, can lead to a treatment that solves the problem without damaging the historic resource.*
 - *The owner working with properly trained staff, contractors and consultants can monitor, select, and implement treatments within a preservation context in order to manage moisture and to protect the historic resource.*

- On 10/07/2025, the Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department (BSEED) did an inspection and noted that the demolition of the rear wing was not permitted. The inspector spoke with the applicant and issued them a violation.



BSEED staff photo, 10/07/2025

10/07/2025

**Demolition already completed,
BSEED staff spoke with applicant
and issued a violation**

- On 10/24/2025, HDC staff visited the site for the first time and noticed that not only was the rear wing already demolished without approval, but the applicant started construction of the new rear wing. The applicant was on site during this visit and staff spoke with the applicant informing them that they needed to stop work. HDC staff notified BSEED and requested an inspection and stop work order.
- On 10/29/2025, HDC staff visited the site a second time and noted ongoing unapproved work at the property. At this point, the second story and roof framing of the new rear wing construction had been added. HDC staff updated BSEED about the continued unapproved work.
- The following photos illustrate conditions on the site visits, only five days apart from each other.



10/24/2025

HDC staff informed applicant to stop work



10/29/2025

New construction continued

Proposal Analysis



Photo from application from an appraisal, 1959

- The following photos illustrate the significant, character-defining elements which were demolished without approval:

Flat/slightly hipped roof



Stucco-cladding

Wood lap siding

Wing recessed from West elevation

Dentil cornice



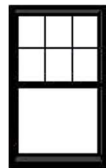
Wood casement windows

Corner pilasters

*Photos from application,
staff notes added*



*IKO Cambridge
in Charcoal Grey*

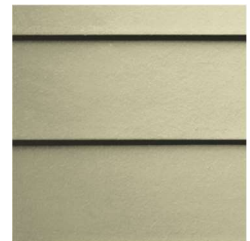


*Lincoln Windows
Aluminum-Clad Wood
7/8" SDL in Black*



*Pella Lifestyle
Aluminum-Clad in Black*

Material from applicant and online



*Hardie Plank
Fiber-Cement Lap Siding
4" Exposure, Smooth
painted C:4 Yellowish White*

- The existing house was a complete 360 degrees of authentic Colonial Revival expression; the two-story rear wing, including the recessed location, low-sloped roof, stucco-cladding, wood lap siding, dentil cornice, corner pilasters, and multi-lite wood casement windows, were distinctive character-defining features.
- The Elements of Design states that “sun porches, with a very high proportion of window openings subdivided by mullions and muntins, are common.” and that “porches and permanently enclosed sun porches are often placed at the side and, sometimes, at the rear of the building.” Additionally, “flat roofs are present only as subsidiary roofs on residential structures.”

- The original rear wing, characterized by its recessed west wall and low-sloped roof, was visually subordinate to the main body of the house. The proposed replacement, however, introduces a steeply pitched gabled roof with a large pediment and aligns the rear wall flush with the main side elevation. These changes alter the building's historic hierarchy, making the rear wing a dominant visual element rather than a secondary one, and creates a false sense of historical development.
- According to the National Register Bulletin 'How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,' "Integrity is sometimes a subjective judgment, but it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance." The Bulletin continues by providing several steps, including "define the essential physical features that must be present" and "determine whether the essential physical features are visible." As mentioned above, the "essential physical features" of the rear wing were visible and still present before the demolition.
- The demolition, and subsequent replacement, of the South rear wing's distinctive and character-defining elements "has the potential to change its historic character as well as to damage and destroy significant historic materials and features." Specifically, continuing to reference the National Park Service's 'New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns' brief:
 - **Preserve Significant Historic Materials, Features and Form**
 - *Damaging or destroying significant materials and craftsmanship should be avoided, as much as possible.*
 - *A new addition that will abut the historic building along an entire elevation ... will likely integrate the historic and the new interiors, and thus result in a high degree of loss of form and exterior walls, as well as significant alteration of interior spaces and features, and will not meet the Standards*
- Per [state statute guidance in MCL399.205\(12\)](#):
 - *(12) When work has been done upon a resource without a permit, and the commission finds that the work does not qualify for a certificate of appropriateness, the commission may require an owner to restore the resource to the condition the resource was in before the inappropriate work or to modify the work so that it qualifies for a certificate of appropriateness. If the owner does not comply with the restoration or modification requirement within a reasonable time, the commission may seek an order from the circuit court to require the owner to restore the resource to its former condition or to modify the work so that it qualifies for a certificate of appropriateness. If the owner does not comply or cannot comply with the order of the court, the commission or its agents may enter the property and conduct work necessary to restore the resource to its former condition or modify the work so that it qualifies for a certificate of appropriateness in accordance with the court's order. The costs of the work shall be charged to the owner, and may be levied by the local unit as a special assessment against the property. When acting pursuant to an order of the circuit court, a commission or its agents may enter a property for purposes of this section.*

ISSUES

- The rear wing, including the recessed location, low-sloped roof, stucco-cladding, wood lap siding, dentil cornice, corner pilasters, and multi-lite wood casement windows, was a distinguishing, character-defining feature of the property and not proven to be beyond repair.
- If replacement of the rear wing was warranted (that is, if it was demonstrated to be beyond repair), the new rear wing 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).
- Architectural features/elements copied from incompatible ornamental styles are not appropriate here and create a false sense of historic development.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

Recommendation 1 of 1 – Denial – Demolish two-story rear wing, erect two-story rear wing

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.

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

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.

Elements of Design #: 3, 6, 7, 10, 11

For the following reasons:

- The historic rear wing, including the recessed location, low-sloped roof, stucco-cladding, wood lap siding, dentil cornice, corner pilasters, and multi-lite wood casement windows, was a distinctive, character-defining feature and not proven to be beyond repair.
- The proposed rear wing is not an in-kind match to the historic rear wing at this property.
- Introducing features that are not based on documented historical evidence, including architectural elements copied from other buildings and styles, creates a false sense of history.