

STAFF REPORT: 02/11/2026 MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

ADDRESS: 1676 CHICAGO

APPLICATION NO: HDC2026-00021

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT/ARCHITECT: ALISSA JACOBS/4545 ARCHITECTURE

OWNER: GCG CLB 28 LLC

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 1/27/2026

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 1/20/2026

SCOPE: REHABILITATE EXTERIOR (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The building located at 1676 Chicago is two-story, single-family masonry dwelling that was designed by Charles N. Agree, architect of the Vanity Ballroom and Whittier Hotel, and erected in 1921. The house displays features associated with the Neo-Georgian style of architecture to include the following:

- Red brick exterior cladding which is laid in an English bond pattern
- An elaborate, classically-inspired wood door surround with non-historic fluted aluminum columns and historic-age Ionic fluted pilasters at the primary entrance (recently partially replaced without HDC approval)
- Dentiled wood soffit (recently replaced without HDC approval)
- Stone lintels which feature flat arches with keystones
- At the roof, dentiled wood soffits (recently replaced without HDC approval) and arched and Palladian dormers

The building retains the majority of its original wood windows.

A historic-age, two-car garage remains in the property's rear yard. Exterior walls are red brick to match the cladding at the house's exterior walls. The building is one-story in height and is topped with a hipped roof which is covered with green clay tiles. Exterior doors are non-historic metal overhead doors and windows are historic-age wood units.

- Windows are historic 6/1, double hung units.



1676 Chicago, current conditions. Photo by staff on 1/27/2026. Facing northwest



1676 Chicago, current conditions. Photo by staff on 1/27/2026. Facing north



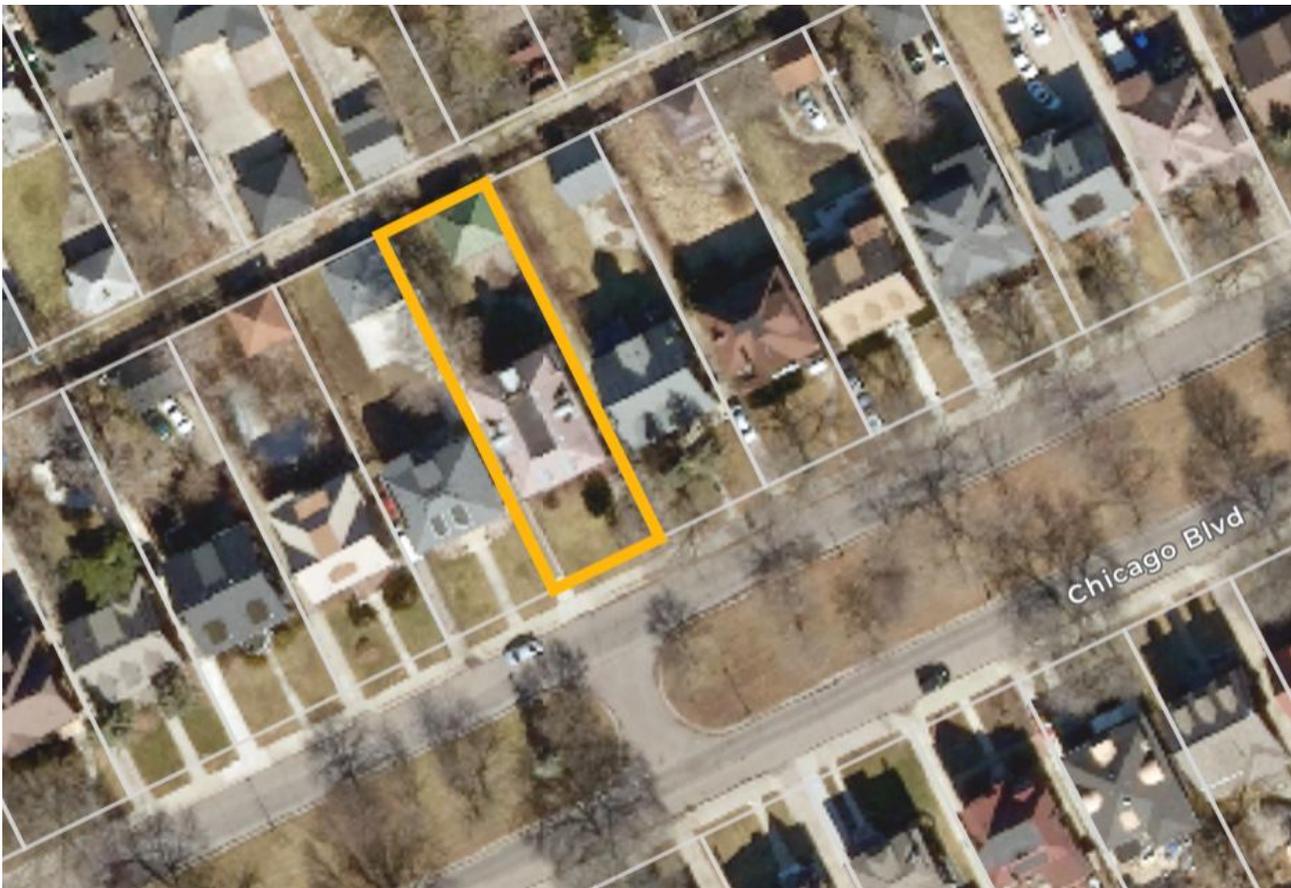
1676 Chicago, garage. Photo by applicant. Facing northeast



1676 Chicago. Designation slide, photo taken by HDAB in 1974



9602 E. Jefferson outlined in red, 1991 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. Note that the building's bold outline indicates that the exterior walls are built of structural brick/the exterior brick is not a veneer. This is characteristic of higher quality buildings.



1676 Chicago, outlined in yellow. Detroit Parcel Viewer

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston Edison Historic District was designated in 1973
- Please note that the district does not have a designation report because it was not common practice at that time to prepare an accompanying report. Staff has therefore referred to the district's 1975 National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination to ascertain the district's period of significance, as in previous Boston-Edison reviews.
- The NRHP nomination for the district states that the period of significance is 1900-1930. The main building and garage at 1676 Chicago were erected in 1921 and, as they retain much of their original exterior detailing, it is staff's opinion that the buildings contribute to the district
- In 1985, the Commission approved the replacement of the original wrought iron guardrails at the front porch with new wrought iron guardrails to match
- In 1986, the Commission approved the installation of two (2) new aluminum round white fluted 8'-0" columns at front porch
- In 2002, the Commission issued a Notice to Proceed (NTP) for the replacement of the historic clay tile roof with asphalt shingles. The project also included the removal of the internal gutter system as well as the in-kind repair of the soffit/eave area. The NTP was issued due to the extremely poor condition of the roof, which resulted in severe water damage to the building's interior space.
- Please see the below photos to note the condition of the house through time:



Photo taken in 1922/1922, soon after the completion of the building's construction. Note the tile roof, many complex details rendered in wood, and two saplings flanking the front walk.



Photo taken by HDAB in 1980



Google Streetview image, 2014. Note the poor conditions at the roof's fascia/soffit area. As noted above, the fascia/soffit area was repaired in 2002.



Conditions in 2015. Note the poor conditions at the roof's fascia/soffit area, ie the fascia is heavily rotted and the soffits area almost completely deteriorated



Google Streetview, 2019. The house appears vacant. Note rot/deterioration at roof dormer windows and worsening conditions at the eaves/fascia/soffit area



Conditions in 2023, prior to the current unapproved work. Vegetation has overtaken the façade



Conditions in 2023, prior to the current unapproved work



Conditions in 2023, prior to the current unapproved work. Vegetation has been removed from the façade. Note condition of the front porch railing, dormer windows, fascia/soffit/eaves, and the front door surround.

- In February 2024, HDC staff received a report that exterior work was underway at the property. Staff subsequently visited the site and reported the violation to the building department
- In July 2025, the Commission reviewed an application (HDC2025-00292) for work items which had been completed at the property without approval. Specifically, the application included the following:
 - Replace asphalt shingles at the main roof surface with new asphalt shingles
 - Replace membrane roofing at dormer roofs with asphalt shingles
 - Install new wood fascia and soffit

The Commission issued a COA for the asphalt shingles at the main roof surface with new asphalt shingles. However, the Commission denied the replacement of the membrane roofing at dormer roofs because the asphalt shingles did not provide a good match to the flat roofing that had been previously present at that location. The newly installed wood fascia and soffit were also denied because the number of dentils at the soffit area did not match those which were originally present. Specifically, historically, the building displayed 22 dentils at the façade's soffit area. The unapproved work completed in 2024 resulted in the installation of 15 dentils at that location (see below photos). Although the soffit/fascia had rotted away by 2015, they were distinctive-character-defining features of the building, thus requiring that the new elements match original.



Staff photo taken in 2025, after the unapproved installation of new soffit/eaves



Eaves in 1922 (left) and 2025 (right). Note the different spacing and few number of dentils in 2025.



Eaves in 1922 (left) and 2025 (right). Note the different spacing and few number of dentils in 2025.

- In the interim between the July 2025 HDC meeting and the submission of the current application, the property owner undertook additional work at the roof's soffit to remove the dentils that had been installed without approval in 2005 and replace them with dentils which more closely approximate the dimensions, number and spacing of the original soffit dentils. The work was also undertaken without review and approval. The applicant is therefore seeking the Commission's "after the fact" approval of the work with the current submission. See below photos.



Showing condition of the soffit after dentils were installed without HDC approval sometime after the July 2025 meeting (left) and original soffit (right)

- The applicant is also seeking the Commission's approval to retain the existing door surround which was recently installed to replace the original without HDC approval. It is staff's opinion that the surround is a distinctive character-defining feature of the building. See the below photos which indicate that the newly installed surround is not an exact match to the original:



Appearance in 2026 (right) and 1922 (left). Note that original capital (see red arrows). Also, the entablature of the new do red).

- With respect to the work which has been undertaken without HDC approval, it is staff's opinion that the items related to the soffit/eaves/fascia repair/replacement meets the Standards as they represent an adequate match to the original elements. However, the newly installed door surround does not adequately match the original, in staff's opinion. Specifically, the newly installed pilasters, pilaster capitals, and entablature do not match the original.
- The application includes a number of items which have yet to be undertaken that appear to be consistent with the district's Elements of Design as the few replacement windows and areas of trim will be rendered in wood, the proposed new paint colors are appropriate to the building's historic character, and the new dormer roof will be flat to match the historic. Specific relevant Elements include:
 - (7) *Relationship of materials*. The majority of houses are faced with brick, while many are partially or totally stucco. There are some stone buildings, sometimes combined with stucco; clapboard is rare and is extremely rare as the sole material. Roofing includes slate, tile, and asphalt shingles. Wood shingle roofs were once common and have generally been replaced with asphalt. Wood shake does not exist and there is no known evidence that it was ever used in the district. Stone trim is common. Wood is almost universally used for window frames and other functional trim and is used in many examples for all trim
 - (8) *Relationship of textures*. The most common relationship of textures in the district is that of a low-relief pattern of mortar joints in brick contrasted with the smooth surface of wood or stone trim. There are a few houses with rough or rusticated stone surfaces. The use of stucco or concrete, with or without half-timbering, as a contrast to brick surfaces, is not unusual. Tile, slate, or wood shingle roofs have particular textural values where they exist. Asphalt shingles generally have little textural interest, even in those types which purport to imitate some other variety.
 - (9) *Relationship of colors*. Natural brick colors, such as red, yellow, brown, and buff, predominate in wall surfaces. Natural stone colors also exist. Where stucco or concrete exists, it usually remains in its natural state, or is painted in a shade of cream. Roofs are in natural colors (tile and slate colors, natural and stained wood colors), and asphalt shingles are predominantly within this same dark color range. Paint colors often relate to style. The buildings derived from Classical precedents, particularly those of Neo-Georgian style, generally have woodwork painted white, cream, or in the range of those colors including "putty;" doors and shutters are frequently dark green or black.
 - (10) *Relationship of architectural details*. Architectural details generally relate to style. Neo-Georgian buildings display classic details, mostly in wood, and sometimes in stone. Porches, shutters, window frames, cornices, and dormer windows are commonly, although not always, treated. Details on "Mediterranean" style or vernacular buildings, including arched windows, door openings and porches, are often done in stone, brick, tile, and sometimes in stucco. Buildings of Medieval inspiration tend to have details in the form of carved wood or carved stone ornaments on window frames, door frames, and eaves. In general, the various styles are rich in architectural details.
- Staff also notes that most of items which have yet to be undertaken also appear to be meet the Standards as they propose to repair distinctive character-defining elements or match those which are missing or deteriorated beyond repair. However, staff does note that the few following items will not match the original as required by the Standards:
 - The front porch guardrails were originally wrought iron (see below photos). The proposed replacement railing is wood.
 - The application proposes to remove two front yard trees that were present at the time of the house's original construction. It is not clear from the application that the two trees are dead, diseased, or dying. Also, these trees would not be replaced. Staff

considers the original landscape design to be a distinctive character-defining historic feature of the property.



Front yard trees in 1922 (right) and 2026 (left)
Also, see original metal railing.

ISSUES

- The newly installed elements at the distinctive character-defining front door surround do not adequately match the original
- The front porch replacement railing should be wrought iron or steel to match the original, not wood
- The two front yard trees flanking the walkway are significant landscape features that should not be removed,

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Recommendation - Section 21-2-78 -Certificate of Appropriateness – Rehabilitate exterior

It is staff's opinion that the proposed project is generally compatible with the building's historic character and therefore meets the Standards and is in keeping the district's Elements of Design. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application with the following conditions:

- The newly installed front door surround shall be replaced with a new wood surround that better matches the original. The final design shall be reviewed and approved by staff prior to the issuance of the project's permit
- The front porch guardrails shall be made of wrought iron or steel to match to material of the original. Also, the height and design shall be consistent with the original railing. The final design shall be reviewed and approved by staff prior to the issuance of the project's permit
- The applicant shall provide staff documentation of the condition of the two front yard trees proposed for removal. Should the trees be in good condition, they shall be retained. If they are shown to be dead, diseased, or dying, they shall be replaced with two trees at the same location and of a similar species.