



**PLANNING AND  
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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**SR-2 – ADVISORY STAFF REPORT (03-06-2026)**

*This advisory report, prepared by staff, represents the opinion and advice of professional staff, and does not represent nor direct the separate review and decision of the Historic District Commission. This report serves as an addendum to SR-1, an objective staff summary of the proposal and property.*

**ADDRESS:** 1616 CHICAGO

**MEETING DATE:** 03-06-2026

**APPLICATION NUMBER:** HDC2025-00753

**SCOPE:** DEMOLISH GARAGE (WORK COMPLETED), DEMOLISH REAR WING (WORK COMPLETED), REHABILITATE HOUSE

**ADVISORY STAFF REPORT PREPARED BY:** J. ROSS

**STAFF OBJECTIONS TO APPROVAL:**

*This first section describes itemized conclusions/concerns, which, in staff's professional opinion, would prevent the issue of an unconditional Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). "None" means staff has no objections and believes a COA is warranted, with no conditions. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.*

1. The rear, two-story sunroom wing that was demolished without HDC approval was an historic distinctive character-defining feature of the building. The proposed permanent removal of this character-defining feature alters the historic character of the property.
2. While the design of the new rear deck appears to be compatible with the building's historic character, its location is not appropriate because it is proposed to be erected within the footprint of the former two-story sunroom wing that was demolished without HDC approval.
3. The vinyl siding and window proposed for installation at the location of the former two-story rear sunroom wing are incompatible with the building's historic character
4. The stucco at the rear, one-story wing which was removed without HDC approval was a distinctive finish that characterized the property. Its proposed replacement with lapped wood siding/siding that does not match the original.
5. The milk/ice doors at the rear wall are historic distinctive character-defining features of the building. The proposed permanent removal of these character-defining features alters the historic character of the property.
6. The vinyl slider window which was installed at the building rear wall, second story without HDC approval are not compatible with the building's historic character

**STAFF ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:**

*This second section expands on the reasoning and analysis leading to staff's conclusions given in the first section above. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.*



**1616 Chicago. Staff photo taken 2/19/2026. Facing northwest**



**1616 Chicago. Staff photo taken 2/19/2026. Facing northeast**



**1616 Chicago. Designation photo, taken in 1980 by HDAB**

- Staff notes that the initial application submission proposed to replace the building’s exterior doors. However, in their “Additional Information Request” form, the applicant revised their scope to note that the exterior doors will not be replaced/will be retained. Staff supports the retaining and repair of the building’s exterior doors. Staff also supports the proposed repair of the building’s historic windows and front porch as the work is seeking to retain these historic, character-defining features.
- An historic-age garage which was located within the property’s rear yard was demolished without HDC approval. The current application is therefore seeking the Commission’s “after-the-fact” approval of the demolition. A review of the below images of the garage, which were taken prior to its unapproved demolition, revealed the following to staff:
  - The building was a two-car, masonry flat-roofed garage that was one story in height
  - At the time of the garage’s unapproved demolition, the exterior walls at the front and west side were clad with stucco and vinyl siding was located at the rear wall. The east wall appeared to have been recently constructed of concrete blocks and was unfinished.
  - A comparison of the images of the garage indicates that the front wall had been greatly altered from its original appearance
  - Although the garage appeared to date from the property’s original construction, it had suffered from numerous unsympathetic alterations which had been undertaken after the district’s period of significance to include the recladding of the rear wall with vinyl, the altering of the front façade to include the removal of the historic garage doors, and the reconstruction of the east wall. For those reasons, the garage had lost

its historic integrity and was not a contributing element to the district at the time of its unapproved demolition, in staff's opinion. Staff therefore supports its demolition.



Detroit Free Press, 1915. Original appearance. Yellow arrow indicates the garage



Google Streetview, 2012. Facing northwest towards the garage's front façade



**Detroit Mapillary, 2019. Facing southwest towards the garage's vinyl clad rear wall**



**Detroit Mapillary, 2019. Facing southeast towards the garage's west/side and rear walls**



**Connect Explorer, 2022 birdseye image of the garage. Facing northeast**



**Connect Explorer, 2022 birdseye image of the garage. Facing northwest. Note that the east wall has been constructed from concrete blocks (see yellow arrow)**



**Photo of garage rubble after its unapproved demolition. Photo from See Click Fix/Improve Detroit**

- Applicable Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Standard for Rehabilitation include the following:
  - 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.*
  - 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.*
- Applicable Elements of Design include the following:
  - (3). ***Proportion of openings within the façade.*** *Windows openings are virtually always taller than wide; however, several windows are sometimes grouped into a combination that is wider than tall. Window openings are always subdivided. The most common window type is double-hung with sashes that are generally further subdivided by muntins or leaded glass. Façades have approximately 15 percent to 35 percent of their area glazed. Sun porches, with a very high proportion of window openings subdivided by mullions and muntins, are common.*
  - (6). ***Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections.*** *In those examples derived from Classical precedents, entrances and porches, if any, tend to be centered on the front façade. Other examples display more freedom with entrance and porch placement.*

*Porches and permanently enclosed sun porches are often placed at the side and, sometimes, at the rear of the building.*

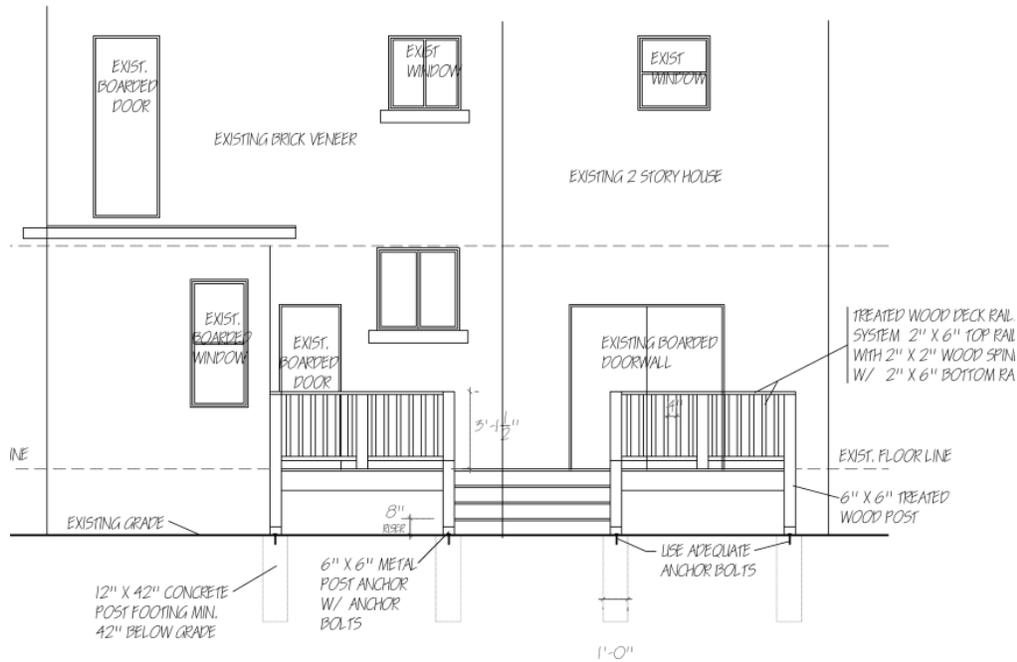
- (7). **Relationship of materials.** *The majority of houses are faced with brick, while many are partially or totally stucco. There are some stone buildings, sometimes combined with stucco; clapboard is rare and is extremely rare as the sole material. Roofing includes slate, tile, and asphalt shingles. 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.*
- The above-listed SOI Standards speak to the requirement to preserve distinctive character-defining feature, materials, and finishes of a building. If deteriorated, such elements are required to be retained and repaired using in-kind materials. If deteriorated beyond the point of reasonable repair, then such features are required to be replaced to match the existing. The above-listed Elements of Design speak to the fact that most houses are clad with brick and/or stucco and windows are typically made of wood. It is staff's opinion that the scope items related to the removal of the rear, two-story sunroom wing and erection of the new rear yard deck do not conform to the Standards and/or Elements of Design for the district for the following reasons (see below photos):
  - The wing that was removed without HDC approval was two-stories in height and was clad with stucco. Windows at the first story were historic wood casement units with wood transoms while the second story windows were wood casement units. Consistent with the house's main roof, the eaves at the wing's flat roof displayed decorative rafter tails. The doors were the historic wood French doors. Also, the projection and massing of the original wing is lost in the truncated replacement. It is staff's opinion that this wing was a distinctive, historic character-defining feature of the building.
  - Therefore, per the Standards, the wing should have been retained and repaired using in-kind materials. If repair was not possible, then the wing should have been rebuilt to match the original. The current application does not meet the Standards because it proposes not to rebuild the wing which was demolished without HDC approval.
  - Furthermore, the application is seeking to retain the vinyl siding and vinyl window that was installed at the rear wall/the location of the former wing without HDC approval. These work items do not conform to the Elements of Design for the district because, as noted above, most houses are clad with brick and/or stucco and windows are typically made of wood. Also, vinyl siding does not adequately reproduce a historic wall surface and the proposed/extant vinyl window at this location does not mimic the dimensionality, texture, and finish of historic window sash.
  - Finally, while the design of the new rear yard deck would not detract from the building's historic appearance, staff does not recommend approval of this scope item as proposed because it will be erected within the footprint of the former rear two-story sunroom wing that was removed without HDC approval.



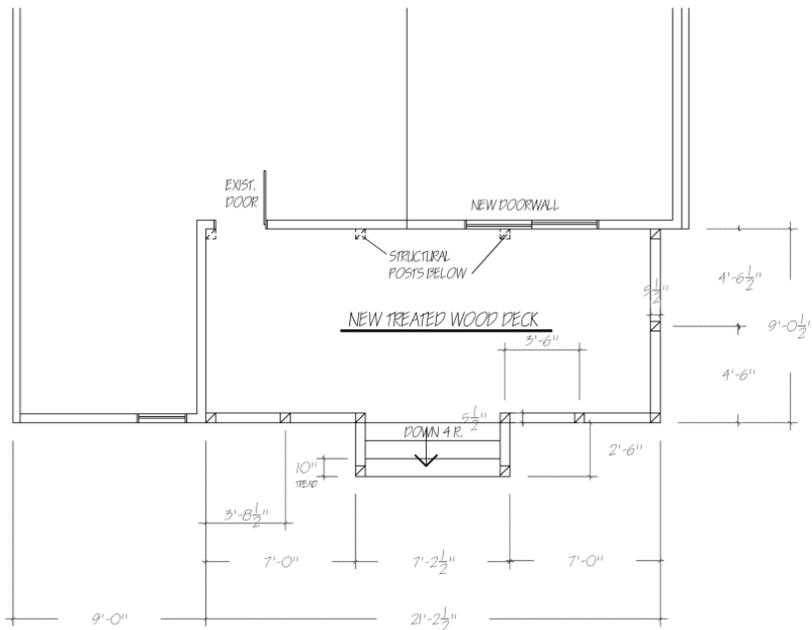
**Rear wall prior to unapproved work. Yellow arrow indicates that former, two-story sunporch which was recently removed without HDC approval. Note wood windows and decorative rafter tails at roof eaves, the massing and form of the wing, and the overall building footprint. Photo by applicant**



**Current Appearance of the rear wall after the unapproved work. Note that vinyl siding and a vinyl window has been installed at the wall surface/the location of the former two-story sunroom wing (red arrow). Also, the building footprint has been significantly reduced and the former substantial massing and projection of the wing has been lost. Photo by applicant**



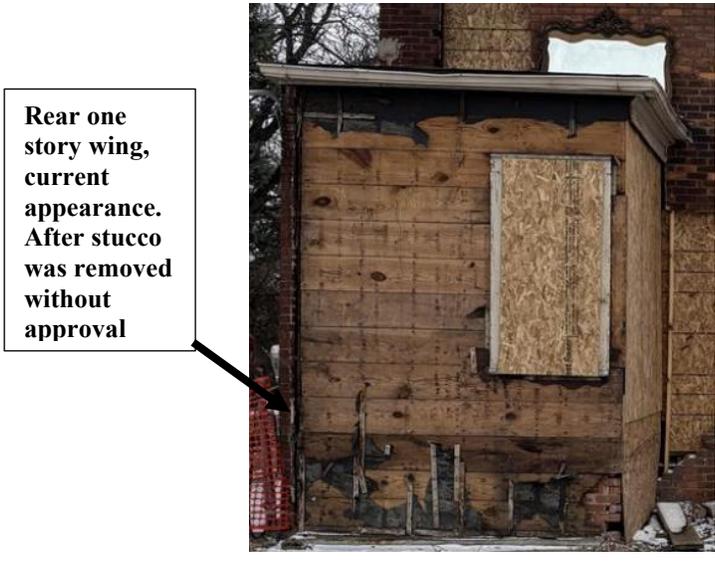
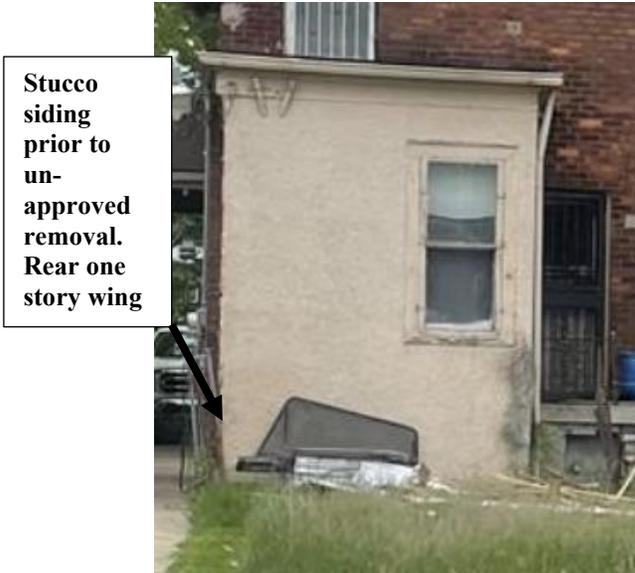
**Proposed rear wall and deck (elevation), by applicant**



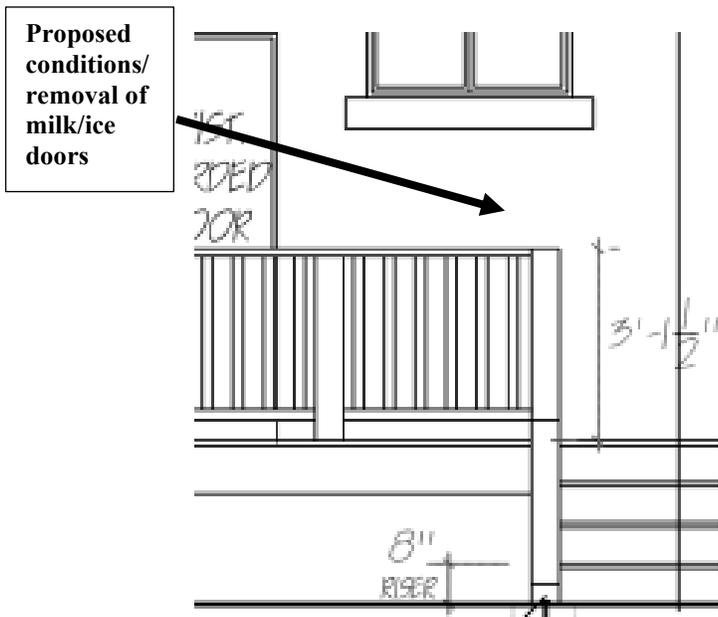
**Proposed rear wall and deck (in plan), by applicant**

- The stucco cladding that was at the rear, one-story wing’s side and rear walls was historic and was consistent with the stucco cladding that was at the former rear, two-story wing (see the below images). The siding was a distinctive finish that characterized the property and conformed to above-listed Element of Design #7, which notes that stucco is commonly found within the district. The proposed replacement of the siding with lapped wood siding does not conform to the

Standards, which require that the replacement siding match the original. Also, Element of Design #7 states that wood "...clapboard is rare" within the district. Staff therefore recommends against the approval of this work item.



- See the below images. The rear elevation drawing which was submitted with the application indicates that the existing milk/ice doors and the stone sill beneath at the rear wall, first story will be removed and the opening infilled (material not specified). These elements date from the period of significance and speak to the house's appearance prior to the development of widespread/modern refrigeration. The proposed removal of such a feature that characterizes the property does not meet the Standards. Staff therefore recommends against its removal.



- The existing vinyl sliding window at the rear façade, second story was recently installed

without HDC approval. Per the above proposed elevation drawing, the applicant is seeking to retain these windows. It is staff's opinion that these windows are not appropriate/incompatible with the building's historic character because the Elements of Design for the district note that windows are typically made of wood. Also, the vinyl siding windows do not adequately reproduce the dimensionality, operation, texture, and finish of historic window sash.



**Rear wall, vinyl sliding window installed without HDC approval (yellow arrow). Photo by applicant**



**Rear wall, vinyl sliding window installed without HDC approval. Also, note that the window opening has been improperly "stepped down" with dimensional lumber to accommodate the manufactured window. Detail. Photo by applicant**

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

*This third and final section takes staff's itemized "objections" identified in the first section, and presents them in the form of "conditions" in support of a proposed approval recommendation or "reasons" in support of a proposed denial recommendation, in the form required by Section 21-2-78 of the City Code. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.*

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

**Recommendation 1 of 2, Denial – Remove rear, two-story sunroom wing; install vinyl siding and vinyl window at location of the former rear, two-story sunroom wing; remove rear, first-story ice/milk door and masonry sill, infill opening; replace stucco siding at rear one-story wing with lapped wood siding; install a vinyl slider window at the rear wall, second story**

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.*
  - 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, & 8

For the following reasons;

1. The rear, two-story sunroom wing was an historic distinctive character-defining feature of the building. The proposal to demolish it, not rebuild the feature to match, and clad the area where it was formerly located with vinyl and install a vinyl window has resulted in the removal of historic materials and the alteration of features and spaces that characterize the property. Specifically, the work incompatibly alters the historic footprint and massing of the building, destroys important historic finishes and architectural elements, and introduces new materials that are incompatible with the building's historic character.
2. The Elements of Design for the district note that windows are typically made of wood. Also, the proposed vinyl windows/vinyl windows installed without HDC approval do not adequately reproduce the dimensionality, operation, texture, and finish of historic window sash. The

windows are therefore not compatible with the building's historic character/are not appropriate for installation at the property.

3. The Elements of Design for the district note that exterior walls are typically clad with brick or stucco. Also, the proposed vinyl siding/vinyl siding that was installed at the rear wall without HDC approval does not adequately reproduce a historic wall surface. The siding is therefore incompatible with the building's historic character/is not appropriate for installation at the property.
4. The stucco cladding that was at the rear, one-story wing's side and rear walls was a distinctive finish that characterized the property. The proposed replacement of the stucco with lapped wood siding/siding that does not match is not appropriate. Also, the district's Element of Design state that wood siding is not common within the district.
5. The milk/ice doors at the rear wall, first story are distinctive character-defining historic features and should be preserved.

**Recommendation 2 of 2, Certificate of Appropriateness: Repair historic wood windows; repair front porch deck; replace front porch guardrails and handrails; demolish garage; and install a new rear yard deck**

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 that:

1. The proposed rear deck shall not extend into the footprint of the former two-story rear sunroom wing. The new design shall be submitted to staff prior to the issuance of the permit for review and approval.