



**SR-2 – STAFF ADVISORY REPORT (Rev. 03-11-2026)**

*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:** 2050 ATKINSON

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

**APPLICATION NUMBER:** HDC2026-00729

**VIOLATION NUMBER:** 1116

**SCOPE:** REMOVE WOOD WINDOWS, INSTALL VINYL WINDOWS, REHABILITATE HOUSE  
(WORK STARTED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

**ADVISORY STAFF REPORT PREPARED BY:** A. DYE

**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 original wood windows and wood mullions, French Doors, exterior cladding on all walls (variegated reddish-brown brick, wood shake siding and stucco), and rear two-story wing's first and second floor doors/porches, were distinctive, historic character-defining features that date to the resource's Period of Significance.
2. The removal of the historic windows, French doors, stucco wall surface and dormer walls' wood siding was completed without demonstration that the distinctive, character-defining components and materials were beyond reasonable repair.
3. Furthermore, the installation of: vinyl windows with grilles between the glass and window patterns and window operation that do not match the historic windows, vinyl double-hung windows and EIFS panels within the French Door openings, vinyl siding on the dormer walls and replacement of the rear wing's stucco walls with EIFS, altered the features and spaces that characterize this property and changed the visual and historical relationship between the dwelling and the other historic structures within the district.
  - Vinyl products offer a plasticity, flat/thick appearance, and edge profiles which do not adequately match the profile/dimensionality and appearance of wood windows or wood siding.
  - The installation of new wood mullions create a flat plane across the entire window opening, altering the historic design, profiles/dimensionality and proportions of the window openings as well as their relationship to the masonry walls
  - The replacement of the French doors at the front-facing side wall with windows and small EIFS panels altered the house's historic character and relationship to the site, as

the raised yard extending the width of the house no longer relates to the historic door openings and the indoor-outdoor concept at this primary wall is gone.

- The wall materials and primary features of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century rear wing, creating its historic character, were intact and could have been repaired to meet Standard 6.
  - The stucco cladding on the two walls of the rear wing was a character-defining feature and the scored EIFS presents a contemporary expression of “stucco” which is not compatible with an early 20<sup>th</sup> century house.
  - The single door openings and service/dust porches at the first and second floor, were a physical record of its time of construction and historic use. The removal of the second story door and porch and replacement with a smaller window, altered the features and spaces of this rear wing.
4. The aforementioned work was completed without HDC approval. The scope of work that would meet the requirements of the historic ordinance (Section 21-2-59(e)) is the installation of new components that match the operation, dimension, materiality, dimensionality and texture of the components that were removed or replaced.

**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.*



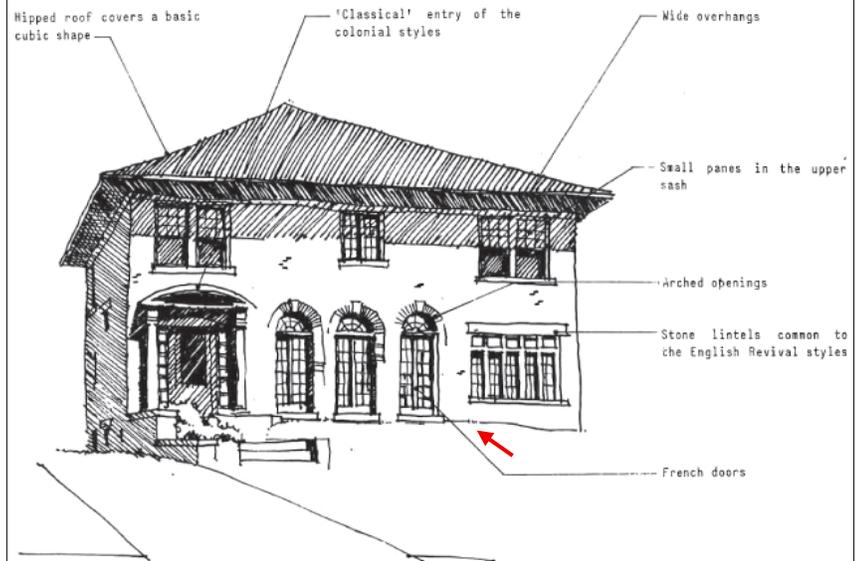
*Left: Designation photo, 1984. HDAB.*

*Below: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Composite page from the HDC’s study of 23 architectural styles, developed in coordination with the HDC’s Individual Color Systems, 1986.*

- “20<sup>th</sup> Century Composite” is the style that describes the dwelling within this application, as the identified features called out on the architectural description page (with exception of arched openings and stone lintels) were components of the original design.
- The raised lawn visible in the designation photo remains intact and is also depicted at the bottom of the French doors in the house sketch at right (from the HDC Architectural Styles-Color Guide). This landscape element is a distinctive character-defining feature of the property, equal in importance to the house’s distinctive features.

**22 20TH CENTURY COMPOSITE**  
1900 - 1940

The eclecticism of the Victorian period did not end at the turn of the century. Even though Arts and Crafts was primarily an English movement, Detroit architects tended to combine it with German, Dutch Colonial, Classical, Neo-Georgian, Mediterranean and Prairie influences. Many of these styles were added to the basic hip roof box, sometimes called the 4-Square Vernacular or Neo-Georgian Vernacular. Those examples where one style dominates will be found under the dominating type, otherwise, it will be considered a composite style. Boston Edison, Arden Park and Indian Village contain many composite dwellings from the early 20th Century.



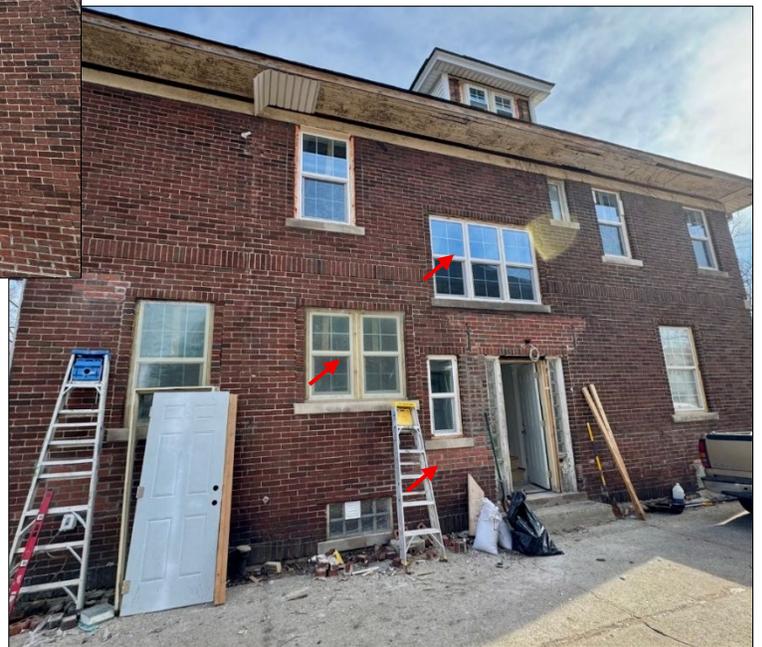


Above: The 1984 designation photo of the neighboring dwelling, 2056 Atkinson, offers a view of the portico (called a 'classical entry' on the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Composite drawing) at 2050 Atkinson. This distinctive character-defining feature was removed prior to 2007 without HDC approval. The outline and massing of the roof structure is visible on the masonry wall offering clear evidence as to the portico's location, width, and height.



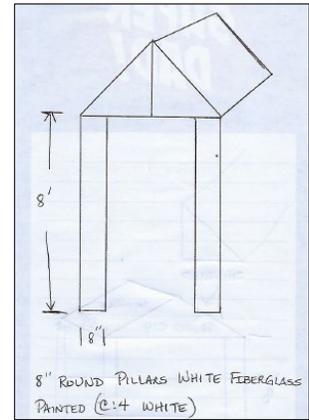
Left: Undated applicant photo, submitted to staff on 1/15/2026.

Below: Staff photo, 2/26/2026.



- Comparing the applicant's photo of the west wall and the photo staff took during the recent site visit, it is apparent that additional alterations were completed during the HDC review cycles and are not called out in the applicant's scope of work, specifically the reduction of the window opening adjacent to the front entrance, and removal of wood mullions in the 2- and 3-unit window openings.

The depth of the historic mullions created a distinct separation between the multiple windows, whereas the new mullions are narrow and in plane with the windows, contemporizing the openings. It appears similar mullion replacement has been completed at window openings on other walls of the dwelling.



Above, Staff photo, 2/26/2026 showing current condition of entry door.

Above right and right: Applicant door photo and drawings.

Bottom right: Close-up of designation photo.

- Where the window was reduced in height, red brick was added to fill the remaining area of the original opening; the brick does not match the variegated brown and dark red colors of the historic brick. The original sidelights and panels of the main entry remain in place; however, the sidelight glass was replaced (at an unknown time) with glass block.
- The applicant's scope of work proposes replacing the non-historic door and historic sidelights with a factory mulled door and single sidelight.
- The roof structure for the portico is proposed to be a pitched roof (unspecified pitch), and the drawing suggests the columns will rest directly against the roof structure. This does not match the flat roof of the original design which replicated a Roman order, complete with frieze and cornice. Staff suggested the applicant use the designation photo and add dimensions for each component, as staff stated the requirement will likely be to match the components that were removed without approval.
- Cut sheets for DuraCast fiberglass round smooth columns were submitted (Cycle 4), including pages for tapered and nontapered columns. The drawing suggests nontapered columns and specify an eight-inch diameter and an eight-foot height.

- The west-side wall of the two-story rear wing is a continuous extension of the house’s masonry wall; the other walls were covered with stucco. The hip roof with deeply overhanging closed eaves matches the body of the house. The applicant’s photo shows the wing retained its historic character, materials and primary features of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century rear wing with service porches.



*Aerial view of 2050 Atkinson; ConnectExplorer, 2024.*



*Undated photo of rear wing submitted with the initial HDC application (received by staff on 11/26/25). The deteriorated later applied paint finish exposed the original stucco finish and color.*

*Below: Staff photo documenting existing conditions on 2/26/2026.*

- The applicant’s photo demonstrates repair of the stucco and rebuilding of the porches was needed and could have been completed to meet Standard 6.
- Rather, the applicant removed the second floor door and porch and installed a small window. The stucco was covered with EIFS (Exterior Insulation Finish System), which has a polymer-based exterior coating that contains plastic resin. It presents a contemporary expression of “stucco” which is not compatible with an early 20<sup>th</sup> century house. Additionally, EIFS is prone to moisture infiltration and is highly susceptible to impact damage.

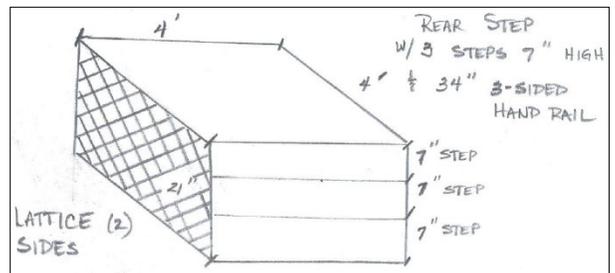




Above: Staff photo, 02/26/26.

Bottom right: Applicant drawing.

- The removal of the second story door and porch and replacement with a smaller window altered the features of this wing and removed the physical record of its time of construction and historic use.
- The drawing of a proposed first floor landing and stairs submitted by the applicant (Cycle 4) shows that it was to consist of a three step, 4'x4' landing and a “3-sided handrail”. Staff requested a drawing or photo of the proposed railing, but it has not been received. The landing under construction doesn't match the dimensions in the drawing, therefore a new



drawing must be submitted to reflect the current dimensions, design (including railing) and finishes – the applicant stated in one of the cycles the porch would be painted Yellowish-White (C:4). Additionally, diagonal lattice is a contemporary material and not compatible for use at a porch landing located at an entrance to an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century structure. Square lattice was used at this time, remains readily available, and would be a compatible material at this location.



*Designation photo, 1984*



*Comparison of southeast corner of house*

*Staff photo, 02/26/2026*

- The angled view of this designation photo documents the original pattern of the double hung windows (4-over-1), depth of the original wood mullions, and design/operation of the French doors. At the dormer, wood shake siding covers the walls, and two square mullioned windows are in place.
- The 2026 photo shows the loss of depth/dimension at the mullioned window openings, altered pattern of window sashes (and between the glass grids), and double-hung windows in place of the French doors. At the dormer, wood shake siding was replaced with vinyl (although no siding appears at the front wall), and the mullioned windows have been replaced with a single wider than tall fixed or awning window.

### **Comprehensive analysis of historic features and proposed work items**

1. The original wood windows and wood mullions, French Doors, exterior cladding on all walls (variegated reddish-brown brick, wood shake siding and stucco), and rear two-story wing's first and second floor doors/porches, were distinctive, historic character-defining features that date to the resource's Period of Significance.
2. The removal of the historic windows, French doors, stucco wall surface and dormer walls' wood siding was completed without demonstration that the distinctive, character-defining components and materials were beyond reasonable repair.
3. Furthermore, the installation of: vinyl windows with grilles between the glass and window patterns and window operation that do not match the historic windows, vinyl double-hung

windows and EIFS panels within the French Door openings, vinyl siding on the dormer walls and replacement of the rear wing's stucco walls with EIFS, altered the features and spaces that characterize this property and changed the visual and historical relationship between the dwelling and the other historic structures within the district.

4. For features and components removed and/or altered without HDC approval, the scope of work that would meet the requirements of the historic ordinance (Section 21-2-59(e)) is the installation of new components that match the operation, dimension, materiality, dimensionality and texture of the components that were removed or replaced.

#### Windows and door openings

##### *Vinyl Windows*

- a. Vinyl windows offer a plasticity and flat/thick appearance that does not adequately match the profile/dimensionality and appearance of historic windows, such as wood.
- b. Consumer grade vinyl windows weather poorly, deteriorate rapidly, and exhibit poor detailing and detracting color/sheen.
- c. The framing material, glazing, and seals (which keeps the argon gas intact between the insulated glass) of vinyl windows break down more quickly in ultraviolet light than wood or steel-framed windows.
- d. Vinyl also lacks rigidity and can expand and contract more greatly than wood and steel. This can result in discoloration and warping of the vinyl frames, as well as condensation between the glass layers.
- e. Vinyl windows have "grilles" between the glass, which means the dimensionality of historic windows, which have thick highly profiled muntin bars separating the panes of glass, is lost.

##### *New wood mullions*

- The original grouped window openings included structural wood mullions that framed, along with the wood brickmold, the individual windows within the larger openings.
- The installation of new wood mullions, which are significantly thinner and shallower, create a flat plane across the entire window opening, altering the historic design, profiles/dimensionality and proportions of the window openings as well as their relationship to the masonry walls

#### Double-hung windows with EIFS panels in French door openings

- The replacement of the French doors at the front-facing side wall with windows and small EIFS panels altered the house's historic character and relationship to the site, as the raised yard extending the width of the house no longer relates to the historic door openings and the indoor-outdoor concept at this primary wall is gone.

#### Walls – dormers and rear wing

##### *Dormers*

- Vinyl siding has a reflectivity, curved edge profile and vertical joints that do not match the surface texture finish, pattern and edge details of the wood shake siding that was present and visible in the designation photo. Should the historic wood shake siding no longer be present below the vinyl siding, new wood shake siding is readily available and offers a matching texture, pattern exposure and edge profile to the historic wood siding.

##### *Rear Wing*

- The wall materials and primary features of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century rear wing, creating its historic character, were intact and could have been repaired to meet Standard 6.
- The stucco cladding on the two walls of the rear wing was a character-defining feature. The scored EIFS presents an expression of stucco which is not compatible with an

early 20<sup>th</sup> century house. Additionally, EIFS is prone to moisture infiltration and is highly susceptible to impact damage.

- The single door openings and service/dust porches at the first and second floor, were a physical record of its time of construction and historic use. The removal of the second story door and porch and replacement with a smaller window, altered the features and spaces of this dwelling.
- The following excerpts from the Atkinson Avenue Historic District's Elements of Design discuss materials and components that relate to the resource that is the focus of this application:
  - 6) Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections.** *Most buildings in the district have entrance and/or porch projections facing the street, creating a rhythm where they exist in numbers. In those buildings of classical inspiration, porches and entrances tend to be centered on the front façades. Other stylistic examples display more freedom in entrance and front-porch placement. A few houses have front porches extending to the sides of the building; some houses have their major entrances on the side of the building.*
  - 7) Relationship of materials.** *The major building materials in the district are brick and stucco, sometimes used in combination, wooden functional trim and window frames and sash are common, and wood is used in many examples as decorative trim as well. Wood sheathing is occasionally used on the attic story and/or dormers. Stone is occasionally used as a material for window sills, porch trim, and other functional trim. Rough-cut stone is the main material used on a rustic porch in the district. Roofing materials include asphalt shingles, slate, and Mediterranean tiles, asphalt shingles being by far the primary roofing material in the district.*
  - 8) Relationship of textures.** *The most common relationship of textures in the district is that of low-relief pattern of mortar joints in brick contrasted with the smooth surface of wood or stone trim. Stuccoed surfaces contrast with brick when used in combination and with wood or stone trim.*
  - 9) Relationship of colors.** *Natural brick colors (red, yellow, brown, buff) predominate on wall surfaces. Where stucco and concrete exists, it is usually left in its natural state or painted in a shade of cream.*
  - (13) Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments.** *The typical treatment of individual properties is a flat or slightly graded front lawn area in grass turf.*
  - (15) Scale of façades and façade elements.** *The scale of houses remains fairly constant throughout Atkinson Avenue due to the consistency of the lot sizes. Houses are modest in scale; houses facing the north-south streets appear more substantial in character. The size and complexity of façade elements and details either accentuate or subdue the scale of the façades. Façade elements have been determined by what is appropriate for the style. Window sashes are usually subdivided by the muntins or leaded glass, which effects the apparent scale of the windows within the façades.*
  - (20) Orientation, vistas, overviews.** *Most of the houses in the district have front entrances oriented towards Atkinson Avenue. Houses on LaSalle Boulevard at Atkinson face LaSalle. At 14th and Atkinson, the house on the southeast corner faces towards the corner and the house on the northeast corner is oriented towards Atkinson. Garages are frequently oriented towards the alley and the front drive, or side street in the case of corner lots where driveways exist. Almost all garages are detached and at the rear of the lot. A few houses have side or corner entrances as their major entrance.*

**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, Certificate of Appropriateness: Wood soffit repair/painting; masonry cleaning; rear wing at-grade porch/stairs/railing; single entry doors at rear wing (2); gutters/downspouts**

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District's Elements of Design, with the condition that:

1. The masonry cleaning will be comprised of a low-pressure hot water method (no chemicals), per the HDC's Masonry Cleaning Guidelines .
2. A photo of the selected design of the wood stair railing, along with a revised drawing of the porch and stairs accurate to the platform that is under construction, listing dimensions, materials and painted finish will be submitted for staff review.
3. Cut sheets for the gutters and downspouts, rear wing entry doors, and security doors will be submitted for staff review.

**Recommendation 2 of 2, Denial: Remaining work items**

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District's Elements of Design, specifically:

- *Standard 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.*
  - *Standard 5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a 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.*
  - ~~*Standard 7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*~~
  - *Standard 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: 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 15 and 20.

For the following reasons;

1. The original wood windows and wood mullions, French Doors, exterior cladding on all walls (variegated reddish-brown brick, wood shake siding and stucco), and rear two-story wing's first and second floor doors/porches, were distinctive, historic character-defining features that date to the resource's Period of Significance.
2. The removal of the historic windows, French doors, stucco wall surface and dormer walls' wood siding was completed without demonstration that the distinctive, character-defining components and materials were beyond reasonable repair.
3. The installation of: vinyl windows with grilles between the glass and window patterns and window operation that do not match the historic windows, vinyl double-hung windows and EIFS panels within the French Door openings, vinyl siding on the dormer walls and replacement of the rear wing's stucco walls with EIFS, altered the features and spaces that characterize this property and changed the visual and historical relationship between the dwelling and the other historic structures within the district.
4. The aforementioned work was completed without HDC approval. The scope of work that would meet the requirements of the historic ordinance (Section 21-2-59(e)) is the installation of new components that match the operation, dimension, materiality, dimensionality and texture of the components that were removed or replaced.