

RE: [HDC Board Item 23-8405](#) - Longfellow Project Request

Supplemental Project Justification in Response to the Staff Response and Recommendations

CONTRIBUTING VS. NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCE

In reviewing the National Registry of Historic Places nomination form for the Boston Edison District, I would conclude that the subject home located at 950 Longfellow is NOT a contributing resource.

Reference: [Boston-Edison Historic District 09/05/1975](#)

Justification:

A historic building must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places or be certified as contributing to the significance of a "registered historic district." Buildings may be listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places or as a part of a historic district.

If a property is located in a National Register district or a certified state or local district, it still must be designated by the National Park Service as a structure that retains historic integrity and contributes to the historic character of the district, thus qualifying as a "certified historic structure." Not every building in a district is contributing. When historic districts are designated, they are usually associated with a particular time period or "period of significance," such as "mid-1800s to 1935."

The National Register of Historic Places Nomination form for the Boston-Edison District indicated that 929 homes are located within the specified boundary.

Within the boundaries, 900 homes built between 1900 and 1930 serves as the period of historical significance that forms the basis for the nomination.

The cited homes show influence from many different styles and therefore were classified on the basis of recurring architectural features. The 900 homes were subdivided into four categories:

1. Large Palatial
2. Brick homes with plain facades
3. English style homes
4. Early 20th Century Residential Homes

The nomination form goes on to state that the last group of homes (early 20th century homes) can be termed early twentieth century residential. They are large and comfortable and almost **totally lacking in architectural significance.**

An amendment to the district description further clarifies, of the 929 homes within the District boundaries, 29 were built after 1925. Of those 29, the greatest number were built before 1930 **with less than 10 built after 1950.**

Additionally, per the national register nomination, the Boston-Edison Historic District's historic significance is based upon large, substantial architecture of the first quarter the 20th century and

associations with a number of persons important in the industrial, religious and cultural development of Detroit and the nation in the period between 1900 and 1930.

Based upon these findings, it is fair to conclude that the 10 homes built after 1950 are non-contributing resources.

Hence, the subject home located at 950 Longfellow, determined to have been constructed between 1952 and 1956 would be a non-contributing resource (i.e. non-historic).

As a result, it is further concluded that the project would be classified and subject to review as a *non-historic window replacement project request*.

Appropriateness of Proposed Work

Section 50 of the Detroit City Codes states “Where buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places as **historically significant buildings** or have been recommended to be on the National Register, it is encouraged that all rehabilitation, repair and maintenance be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards identifies four (4) treatment standards for historic properties: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction.

1. **Preservation** is defined as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a preservation project. However, new exterior additions are not within the scope of this treatment. The Standards for Preservation require retention of the greatest amount of historic fabric along with the building’s historic form.
2. **Rehabilitation** is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. The Rehabilitation Standards acknowledge the need to alter or add to a historic building to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the building’s historic character.
3. **Restoration** is defined as the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a restoration project. The Restoration Standards allow for the depiction of a building at a particular time in its history by preserving materials, features, finishes, and spaces from its period of significance and removing those from other periods.
4. **Reconstruction** is defined as the act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location. The

Reconstruction Standards establish a limited framework for recreating a vanished or non-surviving building with new materials, primarily for interpretive purposes.

PRESERVATION is the only Secretary of the Interior *treatment standard* that advocates ongoing maintenance and repair of historic **materials** and **features** rather than replacement and/or new construction.

In 2016, the Detroit City Code repealed the designated design treatment designations for historic districts within the City of Detroit. Prior to that time, the Boston Edison Historical District ‘Treatment Standard’ was classified as: **Rehabilitation**.

Commission staff noted and acknowledged that the **most common** types of windows are double hung and **almost universally wood**.

The commission staff recommendation is predicated upon an assessment that the subject property windows appear original to the structure and have been assessed to be an important and character-defining feature.

The glass block window on the west elevation (interior stairwell landing) also appears to be original to the building yet was excluded as a ‘character defining feature’.

RECOMMENDED HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION PROJECT REQUEST CONSIDERATIONS

- The property is a non-contributing resource.
- Therefore, the windows proposed for removal are not ‘historic’.
- The proposed project is not a certified rehabilitation and is not eligible to receive any corresponding preservation funds.
- The proposed replacement windows would result in a modest visual difference and increase the value of the subject property.
- Per the Secretary of the Interior, the standards are to be applied to *specific* rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner
- ‘Historic character’ and ‘historic features’ do not appear to be applicable to non-contributing resource.

SUMMARY

Sec. 50-14-447 of the Detroit City Code cites the following”

(2) Where, in accordance with Chapter 21, Article II, of this Code, Historic Districts and Landmarks, a building or buildings are designated as a local historic district, or are recommended to be designated as a local historic district, all rehabilitation, repair, and maintenance shall be reviewed and approved by the Historic District Commission; and

*(3) Where buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places as historically significant buildings, or have been recommended to be on the National Register, it is **encouraged that all rehabilitation,***

repair and maintenance be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and reviewed by the Historic District Commission.

- This project request is for a non-contributing resource within a historic district and is subject to review of the Historic District Commission;
- The subject property is not historically significant, therefore, there is no basis for requiring consistency with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation when reviewed by the Historic District Commission.

It is requested that the Historic District Commission approve issuance of a certificate of appropriateness and/or a notice to proceed.