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April 4, 2026

Jennifer Ross, Assistant Director
City of Detroit Historic Commission
Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 808
Detroit, Michigan 48226

RE: Supplemental Window Repair Feasibility Memorandum
264 Watson of the Brush Park Historic District
HDC2026-00106

Dear Jennifer:

I have prepared this memorandum of additional information submitted in response to staff comments "SR-2 Advisory Staff Report (04-03-2026)" indicating that the proposed replacement of selected existing wood windows has not been adequately substantiated as necessary due to deterioration beyond reasonable repair.

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify the technical feasibility of repair for the specific wood windows proposed for replacement and to distinguish between:

1. Ordinary repair and stabilization of a historic feature,

versus
2. Substantial reconstruction of a failed window assembly.

This memorandum is intended to supplement the previously submitted application materials to the Historic Commission, including:

- Window condition assessment documentation
- Numbered window photographs
- Existing and proposed window details
- Window schedule
- Exterior elevations identifying window locations
- Contractor / consultant observations regarding existing conditions

The applicant acknowledges and understands that the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation prioritize repair over replacement of historic materials wherever feasible. The applicant also recognizes that the existing historic wood windows are important architectural features of the house.

Standards do not, however, require indefinite retention of severely deteriorated material where the remaining historic fabric is no longer materially viable, durable, or reasonably repairable.

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In several of the windows proposed for replacement, deterioration is not limited to minor or isolated issues caused by deferred maintenance such as:

- failed glazing putty,
- paint failure,
- weatherstripping replacement,
- isolated dutchman repairs,
- or minor component stabilization.

Instead, these windows exhibit failure of primary structural and weathering components, including combinations of:

- severely rotted or missing sills,
- deteriorated jambs and exterior casing,
- failed sash members,
- missing sash,
- broken glazing,
- failed joinery,
- advanced moisture damage,
- and evidence of prior unsuccessful repair efforts.

In these cases, the required work would exceed ordinary repair and would instead constitute partial or near-total reconstruction of the window assembly.

REPAIR VS. RECONSTRUCTION

A key issue we have used in evaluating the windows proposed for replacement is whether the work required constitutes:

A. Repair of an existing historic feature,

Or

B. Reconstruction of a failed assembly using substantial new material

The applicant's position is that a number of the existing windows proposed for replacement have deteriorated to a condition where meaningful preservation of the original assembly is no longer technically practical.

Where repair would require replacement of major portions of:

- sill,
- jamb,
- casing,
- sash rails,
- sash stiles,

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- muntin members,
- and/or complete sash units,

the resulting work is no longer a limited repair of a historic window but instead becomes reconstruction of a failed component assembly.

This distinction is important in evaluating whether continued insistence on “repair” is consistent with the practical intent of preservation standards.

TECHNICAL BASIS FOR REPLACEMENT REQUEST

The request to replace the windows identified herein is based on one or both of the following findings:

- Repair is not technically feasible as ordinary preservation work

This includes windows where deterioration has compromised the essential structural or weather-resistive function of the assembly to such an extent that repair would require extensive rebuilding of original components.

- Repair is not economically reasonable in relation to the amount of historic fabric remaining

This includes windows where the extent of required dismantling, rebuilding, and material replacement would result in disproportionately high repair costs while yielding limited retention of original material.

This request is therefore not based on convenience, nor is it a request for wholesale modernization. It is limited to the windows documented as materially failed and beyond reasonable repair.

WINDOW-BY-WINDOW REPAIR FEASIBILITY SUMMARY

The following windows are proposed for replacement based on documented deterioration and loss of material viability:

SUMMARY TABLE – WINDOWS PROPOSED FOR REPLACEMENT

Window No.	Existing Condition Summary	Repair Feasibility Classification	Recommended Treatment
7	Opening lacks existing sash; frame and exterior casing significantly deteriorated; adjacent conditions indicate severe exposure and long-term failure	Not technically feasible as ordinary repair	Replace window assembly
8	Opening lacks existing sash; frame and casing deterioration severe; existing opening substantially compromised	Not technically feasible as ordinary repair	Replace window assembly
9	Opening lacks existing sash; adjacent opening boarded; assembly substantially incomplete and deteriorated	Not technically feasible as ordinary repair	Replace window assembly
14	Sill substantially deteriorated / missing; lower portions of frame and sash materially compromised	Substantial reconstruction required	Replace window assembly
15	Sill substantially deteriorated / missing; lower frame and sash members compromised by long-term moisture damage	Substantial reconstruction required	Replace window assembly
16	Rot at lower corners and frame; evidence of prior attempted repair; deterioration advanced and not expected to yield durable repair	Repair not durable or economically reasonable	Replace window assembly
17	Rot at lower corners and frame; evidence of prior attempted repair; deterioration advanced and not expected to yield durable repair	Repair not durable or economically reasonable	Replace window assembly
18	Deteriorated frame and/or sill conditions; broken glazing / failed sash components; assembly materially compromised	Substantial reconstruction required	Replace window assembly
19	Frame and exterior casing rotted; sill reportedly gone; sash has lost structural integrity	Not technically feasible as ordinary repair	Replace window assembly

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Window No.	Existing Condition Summary	Repair Feasibility Classification	Recommended Treatment
20	Frame and exterior casing rotted; sill reportedly gone; sash has lost structural integrity	Not technically feasible as ordinary repair	Replace window assembly
21	Frame and exterior casing rotted; sill deteriorated / missing; lower assembly materially compromised	Repair not durable or economically reasonable	Replace window assembly
23	Window badly damaged; frame/casing deterioration; structural integrity of sash lost; associated assembly partially missing or altered	Not technically feasible as ordinary repair	Replace window assembly
24	Severe deterioration at lower and/or corner components; assembly no longer materially sound	Substantial reconstruction required	Replace window assembly
30	Sill deterioration / loss documented; lower assembly materially failed	Not technically feasible as ordinary repair	Replace window assembly
31	Similar severe deterioration to adjacent units; assembly materially compromised	Substantial reconstruction required	Replace window assembly

The classifications above are based on the previously submitted field observations and photographic documentation showing conditions such as:

- missing sash and incomplete assemblies
- rotted sill and frame members
- failed or broken glazing
- advanced wood deterioration at sill/jamb interfaces
- loss of section and profile at critical weathering points
- evidence of long-term moisture infiltration
- missing brickmould
- evidence of prior failed patching or attempted repair

Several of the submitted photographs document severe lower-frame and sill deterioration, including:

- rotted and eroded sill conditions,
- deterioration at frame corners,
- failed wood section at primary weather exposure points,
- and incomplete or missing sash assemblies.

These conditions are not consistent with isolated maintenance needs. They indicate material failure of the window assembly itself.

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PROPOSED REPLACEMENT WINDOWS

The proposed replacement windows are intended to match the historic units in all key visible respects, including:

- operation,
- general proportion,
- lite / sash configuration,
- depth and profile,
- and overall architectural relationship to the wall plane.

The proposed replacement window product is an aluminum-clad wood window, selected to provide a durable exterior while maintaining a wood interior and an appearance compatible with the historic character of the structure. The proposed units are intended to replicate the visual character of the historic windows as closely as practicable.

Based on the submitted documentation and field observations, the windows identified for replacement are not merely in need of ordinary maintenance or limited repair.

Rather, they exhibit deterioration of such extent that preservation would require substantial reconstruction of primary components, with limited durable historic material remaining in several assemblies.

For that reason, the applicant respectfully requests that the Commission recognize the subject windows as beyond reasonable repair and approve their replacement with appropriately detailed and visually compatible new aluminum-clad wood windows.

The applicant remains committed to preserving the architectural character of the building and has limited the replacement request only to those windows that have been documented as materially failed and no longer reasonably repairable.

The applicant would welcome any window-specific direction from staff identifying which of the above assemblies are believed to remain reasonably repairable and what specific repair scope staff believes would preserve those units without requiring substantial reconstruction.

Sincerely,

John P. Biggar, PA, AIA, NCARB
studiozONE, llc Architect