

STAFF REPORT: AUGUST 10, 2022 MEETING
APPLICATION NUMBER: #22-7936 & #22-7938
ADDRESS: 3746-3752 SECOND AVENUE
HISTORIC DISTRICT: WILLIS-SELDEN
APPLICANT: NAJIM SAYMUAH
PROPERTY OWNER: GRAND DETROIT HOLDINGS LLC & DETROIT LAND BANK AUTHORITY
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: JULY 17, 2022
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JUNE 29, 2022

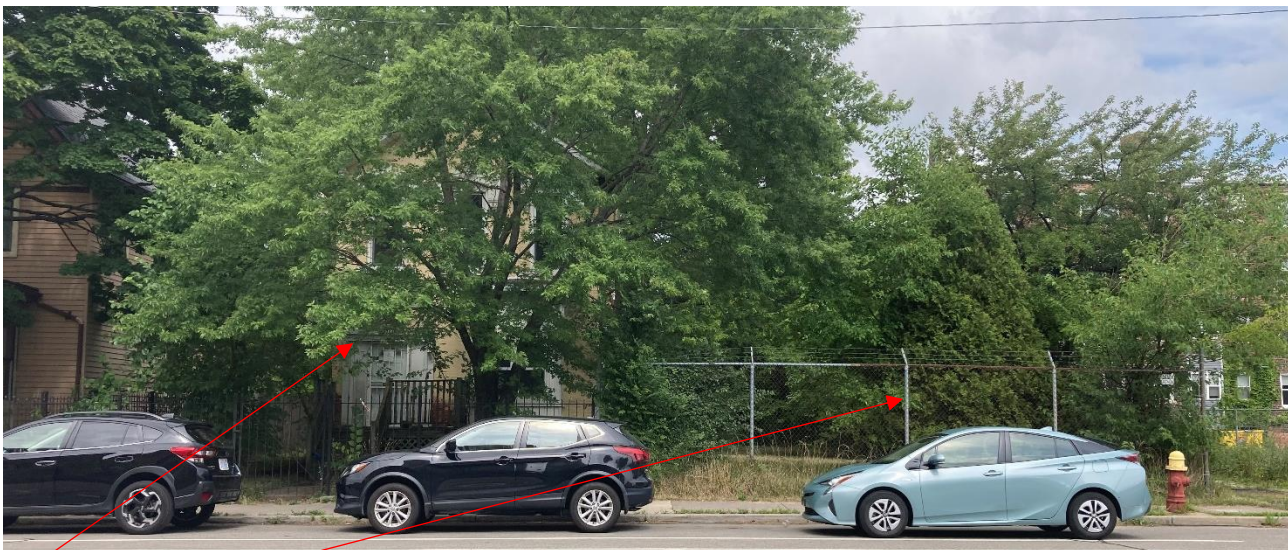
PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

SCOPE: ERECT MULTI-UNIT TOWNHOUSE BUILDING AND REHABILITATE EXISTING BUILDING

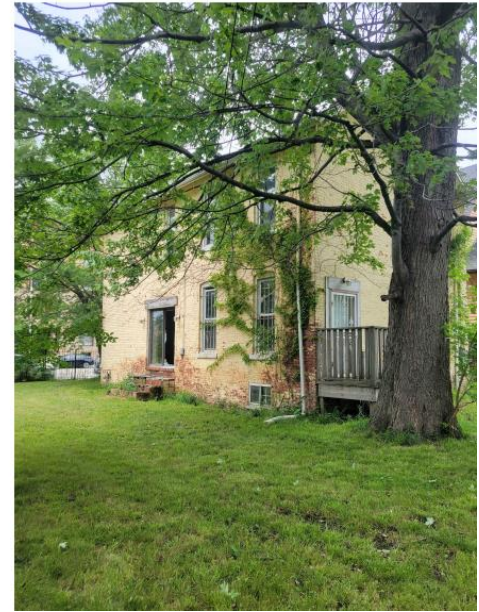
EXISTING CONDITIONS

The project area includes two adjacent parcels addressed as 3746 and 3752 Second Avenue. A brick single-family home is located at 3752 Second Avenue. The building was erected ca. 1905 and is two stories in height. The home’s front-gabled roof features decorative jigsawn wood brackets at the eaves. The soffits have been wrapped with vinyl. The primary/west elevation features a projecting bay which has been clad with vinyl siding. A flat roof with decorative jigsawn wood brackets at the eaves tops this bay. A non-historic wood porch leads to a non-historic steel primary entry door. Plywood has been installed at the entry’s sidelites and transom. A set of non-historic, sliding glass doors is located at the side/south elevation while a single, non-historic steel door is at the rear elevation. Non-historic wood steps lead to each secondary entry. All windows are non-historic 1/1 vinyl units. Decorative stone lintels top the second-story windows at the building’s front/west elevation. A 6’-0” tall aluminum fence is located to the north and west of the building. The parcel directly to the south of 3752 Second Avenue, 3746 Second Avenue, is vacant and enclosed with 8’-0” high, chain link and barbed wire fencing.

The general vicinity within which the project area is located is dominated by multiple-story, flat-roofed early 20th-century apartment buildings, vacant lots, and one-story, ca. 1950s commercial store fronts. A ca. 1905, 2 ½-story, single-family dwelling is to the north of the project area while a 3-story, ca. 1900 single-family dwelling is to the west of the property.



3752 and 3746 Second Avenue, current appearance (staff site visit, 7/29/2022)



3752 Second Avenue, current appearance (photos submitted by applicant)



3752 Second Avenue, current appearance (staff site visit, 7/29/2022)

PROPOSAL

With the current submission, the applicant is proposing to rehabilitate the building at 3752 Second Avenue and erection of a building at 3746 Second Avenue. Specifically, per the submitted documentation, the proposed project includes the following:

3752 Second Avenue

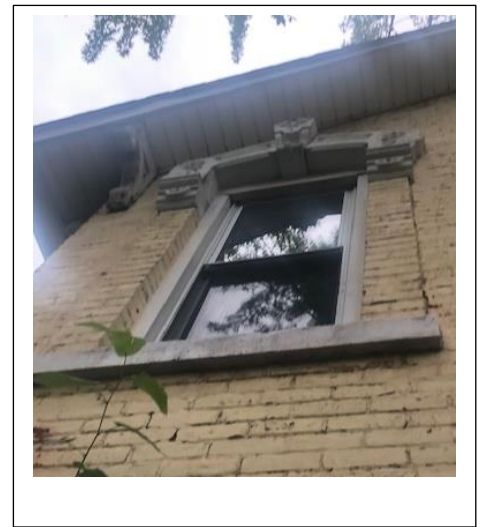
- *Front/West Elevation*
 - At first-story projecting bay, paint existing vinyl cladding (color not specified)
 - At first-story projecting bay, replace existing flat roof and aluminum gutter with new (new gutter and roof type not specified)
 - Replace existing wood front porch with new synthetic steps, decking, and railing (drawings of new porch not provided)
 - Replace front door and sidelites to rough opening with new wood door and sidelites
 - Remove plywood from front door transom and install a new decorative synthetic (Fipon) cornice
 - At second story decorative lintels, clean and repaint (cleaning method and color not specified)
- *Side/South Elevation*
 - Remove non-historic sliding door and wood stairs. Install new Anderson 400 windows with sill in opening. Infill brick below window. Dimensioned details for the new windows and opening have not been provided
 - Replace existing aluminum downspout with new (type, size, and material of new downspout not specified)
- *Rear/East Elevation*
 - Remove existing non-historic steel door and wood steps. Install new door (style and material not specified) and new composite steps and deck (drawings of new steps/deck not provided)
- *Windows*
 - All windows are non-historic vinyl units with aluminum coilstock trim which were present at the time of the district's designation. See the below for the three different window opening types at the property. Repair windows if possible. If deteriorated beyond repair, install new 1/1, double-hung Anderson 400 series window units (trim and sash). Per the submitted specs, these windows feature wood trim which is clad with composite and a wood sill which is clad with Fibrex (composite). The sash is wood at the interior and Fibrex (composite) at the exterior.



Arched opening



Rectangular opening



Rectangular opening with decorative lintel

- *Roof*
 - Replace existing asphalt shingle roof with new dimensional asphalt shingle roof
- *All Exterior Walls/Remove Paint*
 - Powerwash/sandblast existing brick walls to remove paint
- *Site*
 - At rear yard, add four new 9'-0"x20'-0" concrete parking spots
 - At north/side yard, add three new 10'-0"-wide concrete driveway with concrete approach to accommodate three parking spaces
 - Add new concrete walkway in rear yard
 - Add new landscaping at front yard (species not specified)
 - Remove existing non-historic aluminum fencing at front and side yards

3746 Second Avenue

- Remove existing fencing and vegetation to accommodate the construction of a new two-story, 4 unit townhouse building. The new building shall measure 27'-2" in height and will have a 79'x29' footprint. Exterior walls will be clad with fiber cement, synthetic wood, and brick veneer. Windows will be aluminum and the building will be topped with a flat roof. Landscaping shall be installed at the parcels front yard (species not specified) and a new single concrete parking spot to the rear yard. New concrete sidewalks will be added to the side and rear yards. Please see the submitted drawing specific details.

As noted above, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval submitted proposal. Also, please note that the applicant is currently in the process of purchasing 3746 Second Avenue from the Detroit Land Bank Authority. As such, per Sec. 21-2-5 of the Detroit City Code, the Commission must also provide comment re: the demonstrable effects that the project may have on the district to the Detroit City Council and Mayor. The intent of this section is to provide guidance to city government prior to committing to a particular course of action/selling the property, under the following requirement:

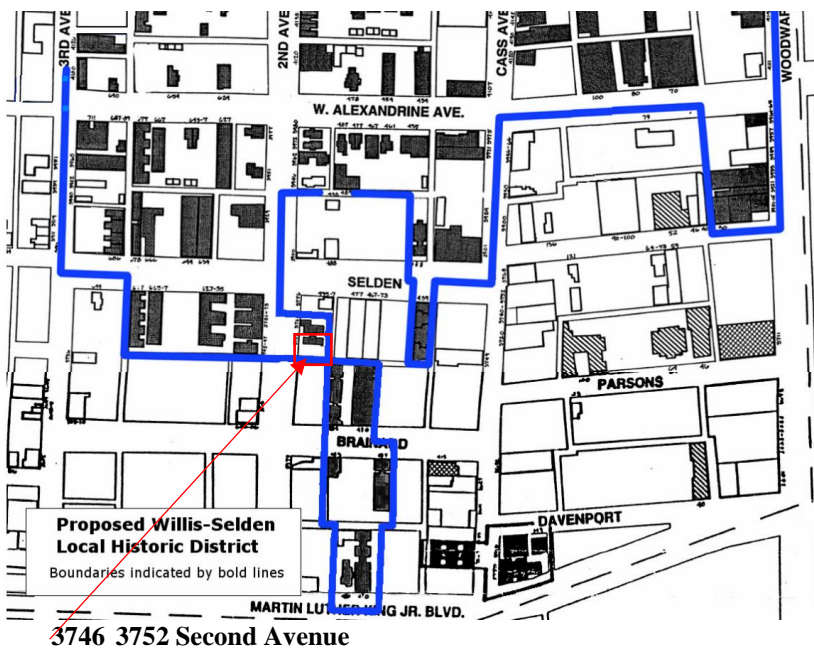
A City-financed, licensed, permitted, authorized or contracted physical development project shall be considered to have a demonstrable effect on a designated or proposed historic district when any condition of the project creates a change, beneficial or adverse, in the quality of the historical, architectural, archeological, engineering, social or cultural significance that qualified the property for designation as an historic district or that may qualify the property for designation as an historic district. Generally, adverse effects occur under conditions, which include:

- (1) Destruction or alteration of all or part of a resource;*
- (2) Isolation from or alteration of the surrounding environment of a resource;*
- (3) Introduction of visual, audible, or atmospheric elements that are out of character with the resource and its setting;*
- (4) Transfer or sale of a City-owned resource without adequate conditions or restrictions regarding preservation, maintenance, or use; and*
- (5) Neglect of a resource resulting in its deterioration or destruction*

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Willis-Selden Historic District was designated in 2010. A review of Google Streetview images confirmed that the vinyl windows, siding and soffits in addition to the non-historic front, side, and rear wood porches/decks were present at the date of the district's designation

- As stated above, the applicant is proposing to add a 10'-0"-wide concrete driveway to the side/north of the historic home. This driveway will accommodate three parking spots. Staff does not think that historic driveways are typically 9'-0" wide. It is also noted that the four parking spots proposed for the rear yard are 9'-0" wide.
- The project area sits within the southwest edge of the district (see below). As noted above, the general vicinity within which the project area is located is dominated by multiple-story, flat-roofed early 20th-century apartment buildings, vacant lots, and one-story, ca. 1950s commercial storefronts. A ca. 1905, 2 ½-story, single-family dwelling is to the north of the project area while a 3-story, ca. 1900 single-family dwelling is to the west of the property. An assessment of the portion of Second Avenue within the district, to the north of the project area, revealed a largely commercial corridor which includes an eclectic mix of buildings such as early 20th century, 2 ½ and 3-story detached single family homes, one-story early to mid-20th century commercial storefronts and 3-story, apartment buildings.



Per the Willis-Selden History District Element of Designs, element #22) *General environmental character.*

The general character of the district is that of a medium-density, mixed-use, urban neighborhood of small to large apartment buildings interspersed with other building types. The district maintains a sense of vitality as a result of its mixture of uses and the correspondingly diverse physical appearance of its buildings.

It is staff's opinion that the proposed new building is compatible with its historic surrounds/environs.

- The new building will have a setback which is similar to the existing historic home at 3752 Second Avenue and the height will be lower than the height of the adjacent historic home. Along Second Avenue, the several early 20th-century, detached single-family homes feature projecting bays with tall windows, and all commercial buildings in the general areas feature flat roofs and expansive storefront windows. Exteriors walls are typically masonry and display a range of textures. Finish

colors are generally neutral. Although the new building is decidedly modern in appearance, it is staff's opinion that it does successfully employ a number of design elements which abstractly refer to the district's historic fabric, to include the building's roof form, materiality, scale, massing, and proportion of openings within the façades.

- Note that Planning and Development (PDD) design staff provided comment to the applicant at several points during the development of the design in an effort to ensure that the new building would present an appearance that would be compatible with its immediate surrounds. Please see the attached document which outline PDD staff concerns, comment, etc. for the most part, the applicant did revise their original design to accommodate PDD design staff's concerns.

ISSUES

- As noted in staff's description of the proposal, a small number of outstanding items have not been clearly outlined/specified in the current application to include the following:
 - Color, size, and material of a new gutters and downspouts at the historic house
 - Paint color for the vinyl siding at the front elevation projecting bay and the front elevation, second-story decorative window lintels at the historic house
 - Drawings for new front and rear porches at the historic house
 - Drawing for new side/south elevation window (to replace existing sliding glass doors) at the historic house
 - Landscaping/specific species at both parcels

If this body approves the application as submitted, staff recommends that the Commission do so with the condition that the applicant provide detailed information around the above-listed item to HDC staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of the project's permit.

- The applicant is proposing to "sandblast" the brick at the historic building in order to remove the paint. Please note that this method of cleaning is highly inappropriate and will likely permanently damage the building's brick exterior walls. See the National Park Service's Preservation Brief #6 [Preservation Brief 6: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings \(nps.gov\)](#) for additional information. Per the Secretary of the Interior, "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." Staff recommends that the applicant identify a more appropriate method for removing the existing paint from the building's brick exterior walls and decorative front elevation window lintels or that the building's exterior walls simply be cleaned and repainted an appropriate color
- The eaves at the main roof and the front elevation projecting bay include decorative brackets. Also, the soffits are currently wrapped with aluminum. The application proposes to replace both roofs. Staff recommends that the decorative wood brackets be retained and, if the aluminum wrapping at the soffit is to be removed, that the existing wood underneath be retained any deteriorated areas be repaired in kind
- The applicant is seeking to install a decorative Fipon/synthetic cornice in the transom area at the primary/west elevation, above the entry door. It is staff's opinion that the element would present a false historical appearance and would compete with the existing historic decorative window lintels at the front elevation's second-story windows. Staff recommends that a simple fixed, wood-frame glass transom be installed at that location.
- The applicant is seeking to replace the existing non-historic wood porches/steps at the front and rear elevation with new synthetic/composite porches. Staff supports the proposed treatment at the rear elevation as it a secondary entrance and will not be visible from the right-of-way. However, it is staff's opinion that this treatment is not appropriate for the front elevation as the porch will be

highly visible and will not present an appearance that is appropriate to an early 20th century masonry residence. Also, more appropriate materials are readily available to the applicant. Staff recommends that the applicant refer to existing porches at nearby contemporaneous buildings to support the development of a new design for a simple masonry or wood porch which is more compatible with the existing residence.

- The application has stated that an effort will be made to repair the existing non-historic vinyl windows and trim at 3752 Second Avenue. If these windows cannot be repaired, the applicant proposes to replace them with Anderson 400 Series “Woodwright” double-hung, 1/1 windows. Staff has reviewed the submitted cutsheets/specs for the Anderson windows and have determined that the proposed sash are an appropriate replacement for/improvement on the non-historic, incompatible vinyl units which were installed prior to the district’s designation. However, please note that the submitted manufacturer specs are typical window details for installation within a building with wood siding. Also, the specs do not include details for brickmould. The current application does not provide installation details which speak to the manner in which the new windows units and associated brickmould will fit into the openings at 3752 Second Avenue. Staff therefore recommends the applicant provide staff with dimensioned drawings that indicate how the new units will be installed within the openings at both the masonry building and the primary elevation projecting bay (depth, dimensions of brickmould, etc) should they determine that the existing vinyl windows cannot be repaired. This information should be submitted to staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of the project’s permit. Also, staff recommends that the associated brickmould/exterior trim be made of versus aluminum coilstock, fibrex, or vinyl.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation # 1: Section 21-2-78, Determination of Historic District Commission

Staff recommends that issue a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for the project because it generally meets the meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Elements of Design for the historic district. However staff does recommend that the COA be issued with the following conditions:

- The applicant shall provide the following items to HDC staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of the project’s permit:
 - Color, size, and material of a new gutters and downspouts at the historic building
 - Paint color for the vinyl siding at the front elevation projecting bay and the front elevation, second-story decorative window lintels at the historic house
 - Drawings for new front and rear porches at the historic house
 - Drawing for new side/south elevation window (to replace existing sliding glass doors) at the historic house
 - Landscaping/specific species at both parcels
- Abrasive methods, to include sandblasting, shall not be employed to clean the historic building’s exterior. Rather, the applicant shall identify a more appropriate method for removing the existing paint from the building’s exterior walls and decorative front elevation window lintels or that the building’s exterior walls be cleaned and repainted an appropriate color. HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the new proposal to clean and/or paint the building’s exterior walls prior to the issuance of the project’s permit
- The decorative brackets at eaves at the main roof and the front elevation projecting bay shall be retained. If the aluminum wrapping at these soffits is to be removed, the remaining wood soffit underneath shall be retained and any deteriorated areas shall be repaired in kind

- The decorative Fipon/synthetic cornice shall not be installed in the transom area at the primary/west elevation, above the entry door. Rather a simple fixed, wood-frame glass transom shall be installed at that location.
- The applicant shall refer to existing porches at nearby contemporaneous buildings to support the development of a new design for a simple masonry or wood porch which is more compatible with the existing residence. HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the new front porch design prior to the issuance of the project's permit.
- The applicant shall provide HDC staff with dimensioned drawings that indicate how the new units will be installed within the openings at both the masonry building and the primary elevation projecting bay (depth, dimensions of brickmould, etc) should they determine that the existing vinyl windows cannot be repaired. This information shall be submitted to staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of the project's permit.
- New windows shall feature clear glass/the glass cannot be tinted, the associated brickmould/trim must be made of wood, and the units shall display an appropriate finish color (cannot be bright white or tan). Also, any new windows and associated trim/brickmould installed in the masonry building must be inset at least 2" within the opening/wall.

Recommendation #2: Section 21-2-5, Effects of projects on districts

It is staff's opinion that the project will have a beneficial effect on the Willis-Selden Historic District.