

**STAFF REPORT:** 12/13/2023 REGULAR MEETING

**PREPARED BY:** D. RIEDEN

**APPLICATION NUMBER:** HDC2023-00144

**ADDRESS:** 2485 BURNS

**HISTORIC DISTRICT:** INDIAN VILLAGE

**APPLICANT:** TERRY SWAFFORD

**PROPERTY OWNER:** JARED STASIK

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION:** 11/20/2023

**DATES OF STAFF SITE VISITS:** 1/25/2022, 7/19/2022, 7/20/2023, 9/12/2023, 11/28/2023

**SCOPE:** REPAIR AND ENLARGE FRONT PORCH AND WALKWAY

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1930, the property at 2485 Burns is a 2 ½ story, Georgian Revival home that sits on the northern side of a vast, one-acre property in the middle of the block. The hip roof features two dormers symmetrically located over the shuttered windows below. The building is clad in red brick with limestone detailing around the windows. Patinated copper downspouts line each front elevation edge and is visible around the north side of the front entrance porch balcony. This central balcony protrudes from the arching window and side lights and is supported by highly detailed column supports that frame the front entrance with a similar palladium transom. The front yard is minimally landscaped with an evergreen hedgerow that embraces the front concrete walkway. The grand yard is surrounded by an iron wrought fence with brick column posts capped by matching limestone. From the southeast side of the house, the rear sunporch, now enclosed is publicly visible.



*Site Photo 1, by Staff July 20, 2023: (East) front elevation, showing the existing front porch.*



*Site Photo 2, by Staff July 20, 2023: (East) front elevation, showing the existing front porch.*

This property has the following former HDC approvals and violation on Detroit Property Information System (DPI):

- July 2017, HDC Certificate of Appropriateness (COA): Replace rear, screened porch per approved drawings.
- Feb. 2022, HDC Denial: redesign of the front porch as proposed
- Feb. 2022, HDC COA: Replacement of wood siding, replacement of casement windows of the rear sleeping porch, enclosure of the rear screen-in porch.
- Aug. 2023, HDC Denial: Alter front porch, expand walkway
- Sept. 2023, Staff COA: Removal of storm-damaged tree
- Nov. 2023, Staff COA: Repair existing gutter system with new copper gutters, repair slate roof tiles



Sanborn V8, P065.



Aerial 1 of Parcel # 17006629 by Detroit Parcel Viewer, highlighting property with adjacent lot (not highlighted).

## PROPOSAL

Staff initially received an application which contains elements that have already been previously approved by the Commission: repair of the front porch columns, capitals and bases; repair of the front porch balcony/ceiling; paint door and surround paneling and side lights. This proposal addresses a previous application that received the Commission’s Denial for the redesign of the front porch. A year has not yet passed since the Denial, however elements of the proposal for the front porch has changed, giving the applicant the right to resubmit the proposal per the Commission’s Rules of Procedure. This proposal is focused on an adaptation of the previous application of the front porch deck and walkway with some key changes to the design: the location and scale of the proposed porch deck and change of materials used. Here is a detail of the proposal:

### Repair Front Porch

- Repair 2 columns
  - Remove, prop balcony, strip all paint layers, repair surface, repair columns, prime and paint color white, reinstall.
- Repair 2 pilasters
  - Strip all paint layers, repair surface in kind, prime and paint color white.
- Repair 4 capitals and repair 4 bases
  - Remove, strip, rebuild/ repair in kinds as needed, prime, paint color white, reinstall.
- Repair Porch Roof/Ceiling/Balcony
  - Position balcony into proper position after columns have been removed.
  - Remove bead board ceiling, remove rotten structure, rebuild all, reset roof structure back into original position in the wall, install new bead board ceiling, prime and paint color white.
  - Remove inset ceiling panels, remove/replace rotten structural wood, replace wood panels with matching wood panels, prime and paint color white.



Site Photo 3, by Applicant: (East) front porch existing conditions, showing the original dimensions of the threshold, upper landing, and the lower step.



- Remove existing roof and decking, replace wooden decking and install new copper roof (fabricated by 3rd party), insert into cut brick line, mortar in, ensure proper slope and draining to downspout, solder outlet. No changes in the original design.
- Repair Front Door and Surrounding Sidelights
  - Repair-in-kind any rotten wood for the lower panels on sidelights and frame returns
  - Seal prime and paint all remaining parts of the front porch, color white.

Expand Front Porch

- Expand Porch:
  - Demolish, excavate and haul away existing front porch decking, setting aside the columns their bases for replacement upon completion.
  - Compact infill
  - Install clay-fired brick pavers and limestone perimeter with sand infill at two levels:
    - Expand first step level in a rectangular form, 27'6" x 7'. This lower step area would extend 9' into the walkway and have flanking limestone arches that are at the base of the protruding "tongue" into the walkway. This area would have a 1' limestone perimeter and infill brick with brick lining the side of this steps riser.
    - Expand the second step/landing, which supports balcony columns, into a in a rectangular form, 11' 6" x 5'. This area would change from a solid limestone surface to a limestone perimeter with brick infill and brick lining the riser of this step.
    - All brick is Whitacre Greer clay-fired brick pavers, in a mix of #32 and #33 Antique and Antique Dark Reds
  - Install extended limestone threshold from door's existing threshold to the external plane of the front face of the house (see drawings).

Expand front walkway

- Demolish existing concrete walkway.
- Install 6' wide walkway with clay-fired brick, sand infill and limestone perimeter. All brick is Whitacre Greer clay-fired brick pavers, in a mix of #32 and #33 Antique and Antique Dark Reds

**STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH**

- Indian Village Historic District was established in 1970. Its Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-103) provide the following guidance:

- *"Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections. In those examples of classical inspiration, entrances and porches, if any, tend to be centered on the front façade..."*
- *"Relationship of architectural details.*

*These generally relate to style. Neo-Georgian buildings display classic details, mostly in wood, and sometimes in stone. Areas commonly, but not always, treated are porches, shutters, window frames, cornices, and dormer windows..."*

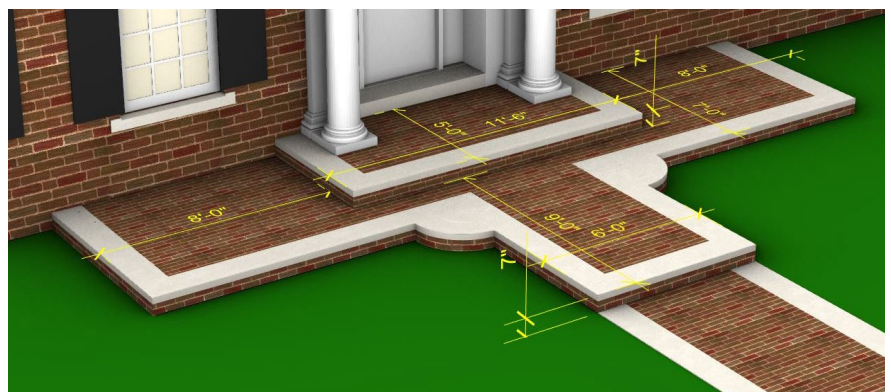


Figure 1, by Applicant: proposed front porch, showing the expansion of the threshold, the top step landing, the porch and the width of the sidewalk.

- *“Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatment. The typical treatment of individual properties is a flat front lawn area in grass turf, often subdivided by a walk leading to the front entrance, and sometimes with a walk at the side leading to the rear. Materials for such walks are concrete, brick, or stone, or combinations of those materials...Foundation plantings, often of a deciduous character, characteristic of the period 1895 to 1930, are present virtually without exception...”*
- *“Scale of façades and façade elements. There is a variety in scale from block to block and style to style; most houses have a large and substantial appearance. 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...”*
- *“Degree of complexity within the façade. The degree of complexity has been determined by what is typical and appropriate for a given style. The classically inspired buildings usually have simple, rectangular façades with varying amounts of ornamentation...”*

- The existing front porch features cast stone capping and matching brick underlay detailing that matches the material, scale and color of the house (See photos 1-3). Staff offers the opinion that the rectangular shape and material of the porch, especially the top step that supports the columns, is a character defining feature that supports the symmetry and geometry of this Georgian Revival architecture.



*Site Photo 4, by Applicant: (East) front porch existing conditions, showing the original dimensions of the threshold, upper landing, and the lower step.*

- Staff reviewed the repair work and noticed how the porch roof/balcony has slightly separated from the house due to wear from the columns resulting in water damage to the porch ceiling and doorway. The proposed repair work is in alignment with the Secretary of Interior Standards and is appropriate. (See Site Photo 5.)

- The Commission’s denial of the August 2023 application was for the following reasons:

- The proposed replacement of cast stone and limestone stone decking of the porch, by introducing concrete pavers and new limestone in a circular form destroys historic distinctive character defining features of the classically inspired building.
- The introduction of wingwalls adds a new element that obscures and diminishes the distinctive, character-defining features of the Georgian Revival architecture.
- The expansion of the scale of the



*Site Photo 5, by Applicant: (East) front porch existing conditions, showing the original capitals and water damage over the doorway.*

lower step and sidewalk are at a scale and width that diminishes the proportions of the approach and entrance to the building, thereby breaking the composition and complexity of the façade



elements by over-extending the modest foundation that supports these character-defining features of the entrance.

- Concrete pavers are not an appropriate substitute to clay-fired brick pavers in the Indian Village Historic District.
- However, the Commissioners also offered suggestions during the August 2023 meeting that suggested the following guidelines for any changes to the front porch:

- The rectilinear geometry of the front porch be maintained, rather than a circular form introduced.
- The lower step could be expanded, but the upper step (porch decking) be maintained.
- Limestone and brick would be appropriate materials, rather than concrete pavers.
- The balustrade (or wingwalls) added to the porch interrupts the architecture of the house and is not appropriate.

- Turning to the current application, it is staff's opinion that the proposed extension of the threshold stone to meet the exterior façade of the doorway is appropriate. However, staff has the opinion that two additional proposed features greatly alter the historic, character-defining features of the front porch:

- The introduction of brick pavers on the top level of the porch, which greatly alters the simplicity and uniformity of the upper threshold of the porch that supports the columns both physically and visually as one architectural unit. Staff does not have an issue with the expansion of its dimension as proposed if it maintains the limestone surface at this location.
- While the expansion of the lower area of the porch with a brick interior and limestone exterior is appropriate in staff's opinion, the introduction of a "tongue" that extends out into the walkway, alters the character defining feature of the front elevation critical to an understanding of the building's style by introducing a new design element that is historically not appropriate. Staff offers the opinion that the porch expansion maintain a simple rectangular form or, if the

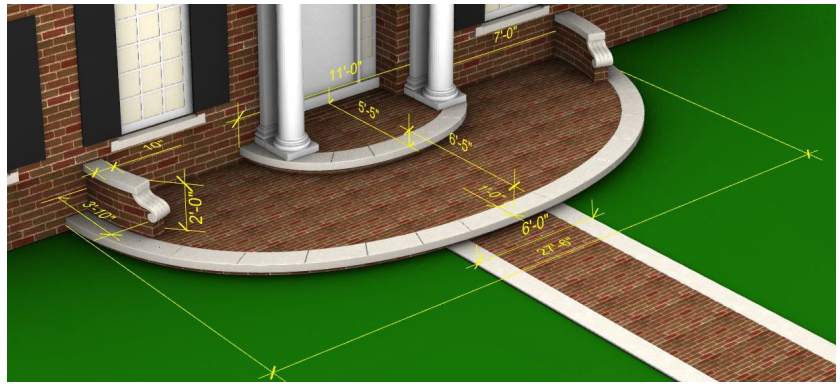


Figure 2, by the Applicant, showing the previously submitted concept design, which was denied by the Commission on August 2023.

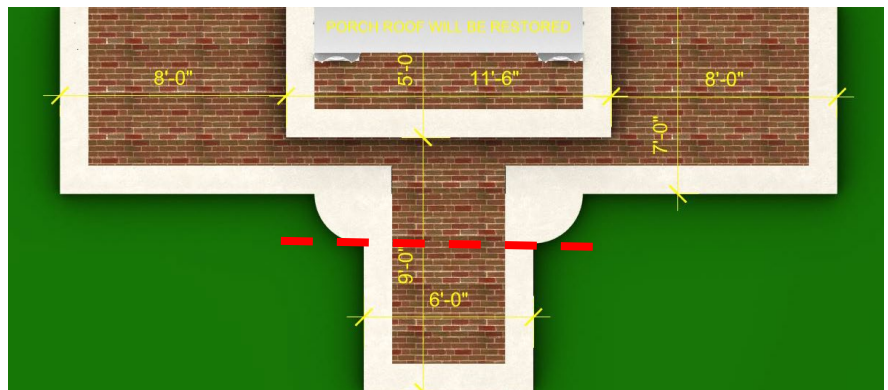


Figure 3, by Applicant: proposed front porch, showing the expansion of the threshold, the top step landing, the porch, and the width of the sidewalk. Note staff's red dashed line, which is the recommendation for the limits of the lower porch expansion.

Commission consents to the introduction of the two quarter-round limestone blocks, that this point is the terminus of the porch extension. (See staff's drawn red line in Figure 2).

- Staff reviewed the Whitacre Greer brick paver material as proposed by looking at the companies supply materials and the proposed material in this application. Staff confirmed that the material is clay-fired brick and is of an appropriate color range and dimensions that complement the colonial architecture of the property. While the brick material, interrupts the limestone surface of the top step that supports the columns, it is staff's opinion the use of infill brick for the lower porch expansion area and for the replacement of the concrete walkway is an appropriate material.
- Staff offers the opinion that the expansion of the existing concrete walkway from a 4' approximate width to a 6' width, with a white limestone (1' foot on either side) is another expansion of scale that reduces the significance of the front porch by calling more attention to the expansive walkway and therefore is not appropriate. A modest increase in width, by 1 foot (5' maximum), with brick or concrete and without the limestone edge, could be appropriate.
- Staff observed other colonial-style homes in Indian Village and recognize that while there were some incidents of expansion in some of the steps and porches, most held to a rectangular form and all were at a modest scale that supported the architecture and scale of the house, rather than call undue attention to itself. Sidewalks to the main entrance, for example, remained 4-5' in width, with one material type, concrete or brick, and no outlining the walkway with additional materials, such as limestone. (See images below).



Site Photo 6, by Google Street May, 2019: 1745 Iroquois showing rectilinear modest porch steps and deck.



Site Photo 7, by Google Street May, 2019: 2211 Burns showing rectilinear modest porch steps and deck.



Site Photo 8, by Google Street May, 2019: 2239 Burns showing rectilinear porch expanding to the window line.

## ISSUES

- The Elements of Design for Indian Village states in the “rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections” that the “entrances and porches, if any, tend to be centered on the front façade” for the houses that are of classical inspiration. Also, “most houses have a large and substantial appearance. The size and complexity of façade elements and details either accentuate or subdue the scale of the façades”. It is staff's opinion that some elements of this proposal conflict with and alter the scale of the relationship of the walkway and front porch with the front façade of the house: the introduction of the projected “tongue” from the front porch into the walkway, and the expanded walkway from a simple 4' wide concrete walkway to a 6' wide brick walkway with limestone edges. These features, in staff's opinion, creates a break from the house's historic elements

supporting the complexity and scale of the front entrance, by reducing their importance, and call more attention the porch steps and sidewalk themselves. This extensive expansion alters historic character defining features and is not compatible in scale that characterize this property and therefore does not meet the Standards. Staff offers the opinion that a modest expansion of the walkway from 4' to 5' and use of one material, concrete or brick, would be appropriate, as well as the expansion of the rectangular lower porch area as proposed, but without the extension of the porch into the walkway.

- It is staff's opinion that the proposal to replace the front porch's top step material from cast stone and limestone to brick pavers diminishes the front elevation the house's Georgian Revival architecture and would destroy the original scale, design, and materiality of this historic property, and therefore does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
- Staff has no issue with the proposed repair work, nor the expansion of the threshold stone step.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

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

#### Recommendation: Repair and Enlarge Front Porch and Walkway

It is staff's opinion that the proposed repair and expansion of the front porch and walkway is appropriate. Staff therefore recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed because it meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Indian Village Historic District Elements of Design.

*Staff recommends the COA be issued with following conditions:*

- The upper step consists only limestone capping, as historically shown.
- The applicant provides HDC staff with an updated site plan that shows the front porch lower deck has a rectangular shape or projects no further than the outer edge of the proposed quarter-round limestone blocks, not protruded out into the sidewalk.
- The applicant provides HDC staff with an updated site plan that shows the walkway is expanded no more than 5' and consists of one material, such as clay-fired brick or concrete.