

STAFF REPORT: 09/10/2025 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: L. SAINT JAMES

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00511

ADDRESS: 19545 SHREWSBURY

HISTORIC DISTRICT: SHERWOOD FOREST

APPLICANT / PROPERTY OWNER: JAMES DUNN / MICHAEL BAKER

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 08/18/2025

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 08/28/2025

SCOPE: ALTER/REHABILITATE FRONT PATIO AND REPLACE WALKWAY

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The house at 19545 Shrewsbury in Detroit, built in 1928, was designed and constructed by the Schowalter Brothers for Norbert H. Weisler. It is a distinguished example of the Tudor Revival style, characterized by its steeply pitched gable roofs, decorative half-timbering, leaded glass windows, and masonry veneer. The exterior showcases a combination of red brick and stone, particularly notable in the rounded turret entrance with a conical roof and the large, prominently featured chimney.

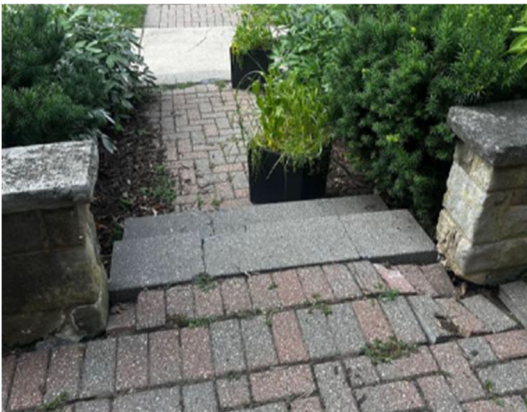
The current patio and walkway are comprised of a herringbone-patterned paver design. While the individual pavers appear generally in good condition, there are signs of aging such as cracks, large chips to the steps, and uneven sections.



Staff photo, 08/28/2025



Staff photo, 08/28/2025



Photos from application

PROPOSAL

- Alter/rehabilitate front patio
 - Remove pavers
 - Fix patio foundation
 - Install brick for steps to match historic brick on house, limestone steps, and bluestone
- Replace walkway with bluestone

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

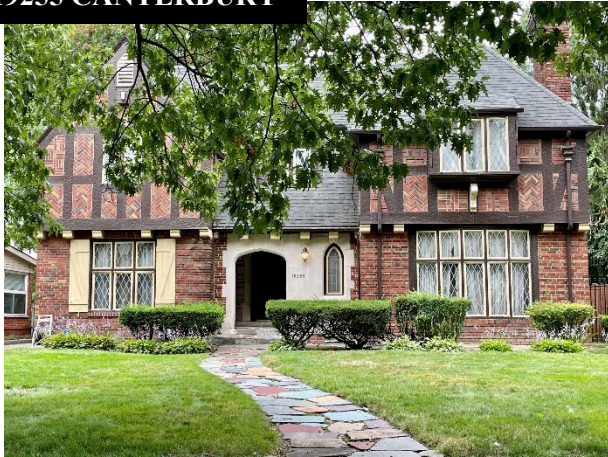
- The Sherwood Forest Historic District was enacted in 2001.



HDAB designation photo, 2002

- Flagstone is not a specific type of rock, but rather a term for thin, layered, natural stones, such as sandstone, **bluestone**, and slate, that have been split into flat slabs for common use like patios, walkways, and driveways.
- During field observations in the Sherwood Forest Historic District and neighboring University District, staff identified other Tudor Revival homes with flagstone walkways similar in style to the proposed design.

19255 CANTERBURY



19540 SHREWSBURY



18024 PARKSIDE UNIVERSITY DIST.



Staff photos, 08/28/2025

History of Flagstone

Irregularly shaped flagstones were the standard for most of history, driven by practicality and necessity.

- **Pre-modern applications:** Irregular flagstone has been a common material for centuries. Medieval European castles and monastery gardens frequently used irregular cobblestones. Many traditional villages throughout history have also used local irregular stones for streets and floors.
- **Improvements over time:** By the early 1900s, flagstone was seen as an improvement over the rougher cobblestone. Stonemasons and quarries developed new techniques to chisel and cut stones, creating cleaner surfaces for walkways and roadways.
- **Mid-20th century onwards:** The rise of saw-cutting technology enabled quarries to mass-produce flagstone cut into perfect squares and rectangles. This created the modern "patterned" flagstone, which provides a cleaner, more formal, or contemporary look.

Today, the choice between irregular and patterned flagstone is primarily a design decision, influenced by the desired aesthetic and project budget.

IRREGULAR



PATTERNED



PROPOSED

- **Irregular:** The natural, organic shape is often preferred for rustic or informal garden paths, walkways, and patios.
- **Patterned:** Uniform, modular pieces create a linear, modern, or formal aesthetic, often used in contemporary designs.

Elements of Design: Sherwood Forest Historic District

Emphasis by staff

- **(13) Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments:** The typical treatment of individual properties is that of a dwelling erected on a grade of approximately 15 to 20 inches above the inner grade line of the public sidewalk. *The front lawn area is generally covered with grass turf, subdivided by a straight or curving concrete, stone, or brick walk leading to the front entrance* and a single width side driveway leading to a garage, which is most often located at the rear of the lot but sometimes attached to the rear, side, or, less frequently, the front of the main dwelling. On corner lots, garages are located on the side streets and the width of the driveway corresponds to the width of the garage. A single storage building, including garden and tool sheds, shall be permitted, provided, that it is placed at the rear of the property, is harmonious in color and design to the contiguous property, does not exceed six feet by ten feet in length and width, and six feet in height. Foundation plantings, often of a deciduous nature and characteristic of the period between 1920 and 1960, are present virtually without exception. Large trees of many varieties shield some houses from view. There is variety in the landscape treatment of individual properties. Generally, boundary lines between lots forward of the building line are not marked with fences of any kind, but may have hedges no greater than two feet in height. Hedges and fences of up to four feet in height generally extend along boundary lines beyond the building line. On lots abutting the alley behind Warrington Drive and Livernois Avenue, a tight board fence or masonry wall of a uniform height of five feet must be constructed on rear lot lines. The placement of trees on the tree lawn between the concrete public sidewalk and masonry curb varies from block to block or street to street. Replacement trees should be characteristic of the area and period. If an American elm is planted, it should be disease resistant. Original street lighting throughout the district is of the tall fluted standard with crane neck pendant variety.

Compatibility

- Staff notes that natural stone patios and walkways, particularly those constructed of bluestone or similar materials, are broadly compatible with the historic character of Sherwood Forest, which is defined in part by its substantial lots and early 20th-century English-inspired design. The proposed use of bluestone is consistent with traditional materials; however, staff finds that the proposed uniform patterning lacks the organic quality necessary for compatibility with the district's established character.
- As noted earlier in this report, patterned or regular-cut flagstone did not become popular until the mid-20th century, well after this house's 1928 construction date. As such, staff recommends irregular bluestone, which would better reflect the naturalistic design tendencies often associated with period landscapes and ensure compatibility with the district's architectural and landscape context.

ISSUES

- Patterned flagstone creates a modern, or formal aesthetic, often used in contemporary designs, and is thus incompatible with the districts historic character. An irregular, naturalistic design should be specified.
- More specificity or documentation concerning the brick match is needed.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

Recommendation 1 of 1 – Certificate of Appropriateness – Alter/Rehabilitate Front Patio & Replace Walkway

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Sherwood Forest Historic District's Elements of Design, with the condition(s) that:

- Irregular bluestone be installed as opposed to patterned bluestone
- A photo sample of the new proposed brick next to the historic brick used on the house shall be provided to staff for review and approval to ensure that it is compatible in texture, color, and dimension with existing historic brick.