

STAFF REPORT: DECEMBER 10, 2025 REGULAR MEETING
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00657 & HDC2025-00689
ADDRESS: 1794 SEYBURN
HISTORIC DISTRICT: WEST VILLAGE
APPLICANT: DAVID JONES & NICHOLAS SEHY
PROPERTY OWNER: SEHY INVESTMENTS LLC
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 11/08/2025
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 11/21/2025

PREPARED BY: B. SALIE

SCOPE: INSTALL REAR DECK*, INSTALL CONCRETE DRIVEWAY AT REAR

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1913, 1794 Seyburn is a two-and-a-half story single-family residence, located in the West Village historic district. The house sits on a 0.093-acre lot, in the middle of the block, between Kercheval Avenue and St. Paul Street. Designed in the Prairie Architectural style, the house is characterized by its flat brick veneer, historic wood windows, and asymmetrical façade.

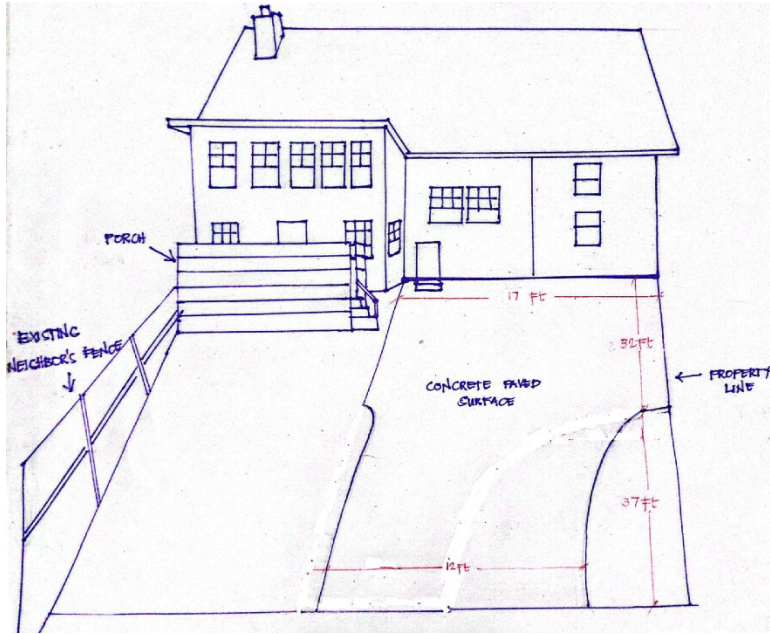


Detroit Parcel Viewer



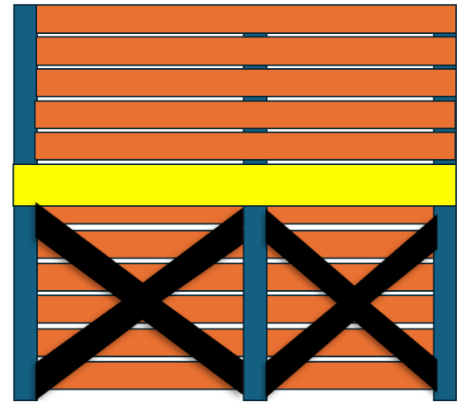
Photo taken by staff on 11/21/2025





Drawing provided by applicant, showing the proposed concrete driveway and deck addition.

Updated drawing of deck provided by applicant



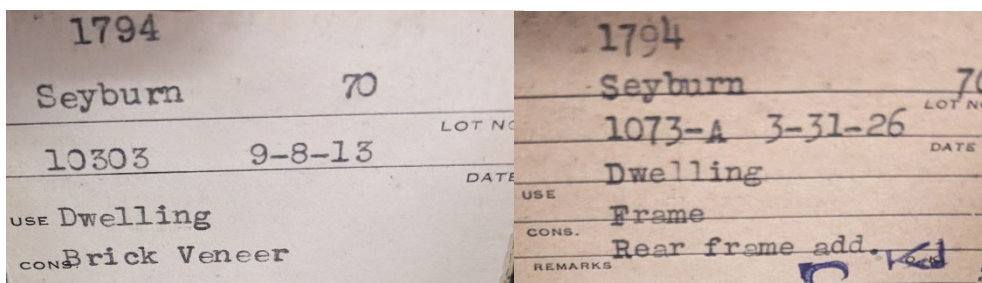
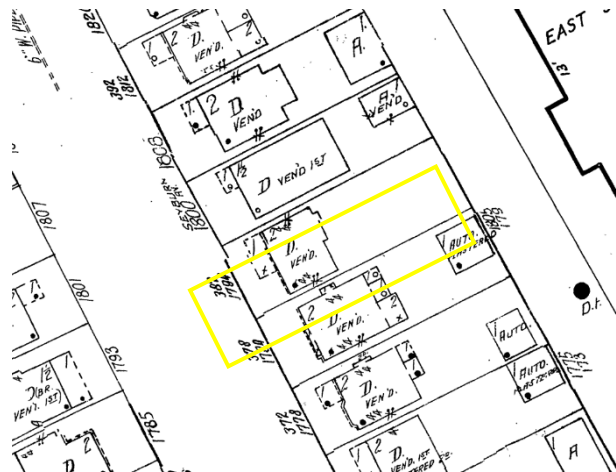
PROPOSAL

The scope of work is as follows:

- Install 12'-0" x 16'-0" rear deck at ground level
- Install concrete driveway at rear

STAFF RESEARCH & OBSERVATIONS

- West Village was designated as a historic district in 1983, approximately 70 years after the construction of 1794 Seyburn.
- The Building Cards show that the house was built in 1913, and the rear wing was added in 1926.
- According to the Sanborn Maps, 1794 Seyburn is one of the few in the neighborhood that was constructed without a garage. Staff was unable to find evidence of a garage ever being built on the property.



Building Permit Cards



Designation photo taken in March of 1983

- The house has maintained many of its original historic materials, including wood windows and the wood shake at the rear wing.



Google Street view image from July 2019



Photo taken by staff 12/02/2025

- Based on Google Street View images from July 2019, the wood shake has been repainted blue and some of the windows have been removed without HDC approval.
- Staff received a complaint about the construction of a new deck at the rear of the property. The addition of the wood deck is clearly visible from the Shipherd Street view.

- The deck addition exceeds the height of the 6'-0" neighboring fence. Its contemporary style, which has a continuous privacy wall, is inconsistent with the neighboring architectural styles. There are 2" gaps between the horizontal wood boards. Typically, contemporary wood decks will have a recessed the lower level as well as larger gaps between the wooden panels, to limit visual interference with the historic house.
- 1794 Seyburn follows a subtype of Colonial Revival architectural style, which is typically known for its symmetrical facades and proportions, as well as classical details such as columns and pediments. Decks for these houses often feature clean lines and traditional wood railings, as they are more versatile and complimentary to the historic style of the house.
 - Per the City of Detroit's Guidelines to 21 Architectural Styles found in the Historic Districts: *most examples of homes in Detroit that were influenced by the Prairie Style tended to retain the box-like shape of the 4-Square or Neo-Georgian Vernacular Style while exhibiting Prairie characteristics. Low hip or gable roofs with wide overhangs and flared eaves, ribbon windows and a change of materials from the first to the second floor suggest the horizontality of the Prairie Style. Shingles, brick (often Roman), and stucco were common materials. Large porches with heavily battered piers were characteristics shared with the Bungalow Style.*
 - Prairie style houses with decks often integrate the following: an emphasis on strong horizontal lines, natural materials (which are typically wood or stone), a seamless indoor-outdoor flow, and integration with the landscape.
- Per NPS Standards # 9 (see below), it is advised for new design to differentiate from the historic home but it must be compatible with the design.
- The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:
 - (9) *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. **The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.***
 - It is Staff's opinion that the current design of the deck is not appropriate for the historic character of the neighborhood.
 - (10) *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*
 - Although the deck can be detached at a later time without damaging the historic materials, it should not obscure or detract from the historic character defining features of the house.
- Per the district's Elements of Design:
 - (7) *Relationship of materials. The majority of the buildings in West Village have either common or pressed brick or clapboard sheathing as their principal exterior material. Stucco wall surfaces also exist as a principal material; some later replacement siding exists in the district, but much of such siding changes the visual relationship of the siding to the building. Masonry is used on the first story only on some houses, and wood shingles exist on some second stories. Most buildings have*

wood trim; a few more substantial houses and apartment buildings have stone trim. There are some tile roofs; some slate roofs still exist; asphalt replacement roofs are common. Porches are built of brick or wood.

- Staff recommends that the deck should be redesigned to be more transparent and with a recessed base, to eliminate its adverse impact on the historic property and district.
- Staff has authority to administratively approve decks that meet the Standards, and an acceptable redesign for this deck could therefore gain staff approval and would not require a second review at the Commission level.
- Staff has no objection to the addition of the proposed driveway at the rear of the house, as it does not affect any historic aged trees (trees over 50 years of age), landscape, or conceal any historic materials. The proposed driveway will provide parking spaces that the property does not currently have, due to the lack of a garage. Therefore, it is staff's opinion that the proposed driveway will be an appropriate addition to the rear of the property.
- In October of 2025, HDC staff received a complaint that work was being done without approval. On site, staff observed wood windows lying in the front yard (see below), having been recently removed. Staff has contacted the property owner regarding this violation, and the property owner has ensured that the windows will be replaced in-kind* (wood for wood).



Photo taken by Staff on 10/15/2025

- *"In-Kind" is defined as faithfully reproducing original, historic, or documented character defining features, elements, and assemblies with respect to design, color finish, texture, craftsmanship, materials, relationship to other elements or spaces, and other visual qualities.
- The property owner, however, will still need to make an additional application to HDC and provide product details for the replacement windows. Otherwise, the windows will remain in violation and will be subject to enforcement.

ISSUES

- The deck as built visually interferes with the historic house and should be redesigned to be more transparent and with a recessed base, to eliminate its adverse impact on the historic property and district.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Recommendation 1 of 2 – Denial – Install rear deck

Staff recommend that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the West Village Historic District's Elements of Design, specifically: *Standards* #:

9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic*

materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Elements of Design #: 7

For the following reasons:

- The deck as built visually interferes with the historic house and should be redesigned to be more transparent and with a recessed base, to eliminate its adverse impact on the historic property and district.

Recommendation 2 of 2 – COA – Install concrete driveway

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the West Village Historic District's Elements of Design.