

771 Seminole
Detroit, MI 48214

March 19, 2021

City of Detroit
Historic District Commission
2 Woodward Ave.
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Commissioners and Staff,

I am writing with regards to the pending application before you for 791 Seminole St., which is separated on this street from my home of 33+ years by one property.

The subject property is one that I am very familiar with, having once been one of the most well maintained properties on this block. Over time, family displacement left its single owner unprepared and unqualified to provide basic property maintenance. The individual's untimely major illness and temporary relocation led to a lack of direct attention to protection of the property which as you know suffered a major structural fire while unoccupied, arguably the worst in Indian Village for a property still standing.

Delays in the most immediate efforts to protect the integrity of the structure after the fire led to a nearly two year period during which most of the main roof was widely open to the elements. Other points of access to wildlife, passers-by or vehicle traffic along adjacent busy Lafayette St. created ongoing opportunities for further destruction of subsequent fires; thankfully, the latter did not occur. Loss of this structure at its significant location which many of us describe as one of the "entryways" to Historic Indian Village would be a traumatizing conclusion to the story with long term significant negative impact on the surrounding block and properties.

A series of unauthorized, unqualified contractor work on the property has led it to its current state, likely more cost burdensome to appropriately rehabilitate than at every earlier stage. As a result, most persons interested in acquiring the property including its most recent owners have had no intent other than flipping for a short-term profit.

The history of neglect described above does not lend itself to an easy response. Hence, I am extremely excited to learn about the application submitted currently for this property which attests to a family with the resources and responsibility to fully restore the home to its significant former state, with the purpose and intent of making it their personal residence. From both a historic preservation and community standpoint, this is potentially an exceptionally positive outcome not likely to be matched by any other proposals, if there were any.

The application's attention to detailed rehabilitation is testament to their intentions. This includes appropriate windows and also a removal of the very thick, heavy coating of failing stucco material that is neither contributing to the property not protecting it. Restoration and repair of the original clapboard is an exceptional positive option that I strongly encourage you to endorse. There are numerous examples

of exterior wood clad homes in this district, including the cedar shingle treatment above the belt on my 1899 English Arts and Crafts Cottage home two doors away.

Respectfully,

Steve Wasko