

**STAFF REPORT: FEBRUARY 7, 2024 MEETING**

**PREPARED BY: B. BUCKLEY**

**APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00023**

**ADDRESS: INDIAN VILLAGE BRICK ALLEYS (BETWEEN SEMINOLE AND IROQUOIS FROM E. JEFFERSON TO ST. PAUL**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT: INDIAN VILLAGE**

**APPLICANT: CHRISTINE NEAL, MAJOR CONSTRUCTION GROUP**

**PROPERTY OWNER: CITY OF DETROIT**

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: JANUARY 12, 2024**

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JANUARY 17, 2024, JANUARY 31, 2024**

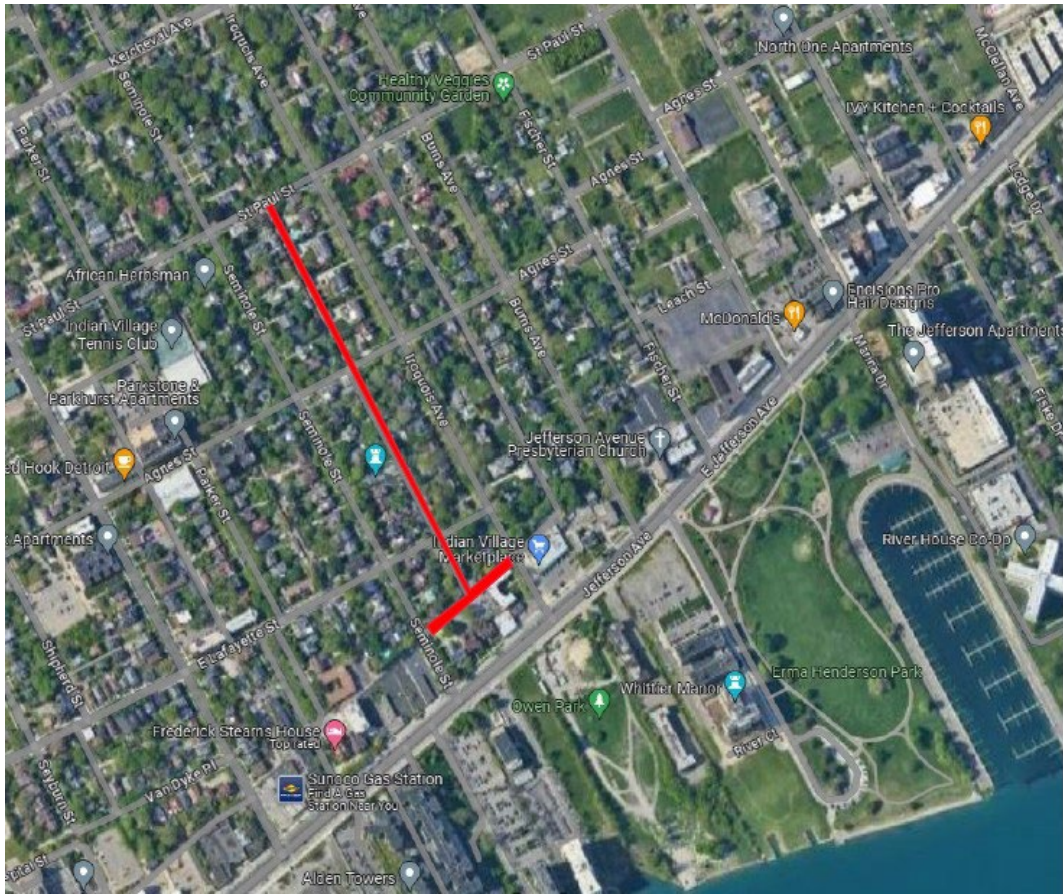
**SCOPE: REPAIR BRICK ALLEYWAYS**

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The geographic scope of this project, as received from the applicant, encompasses the brick paved alleyways between Seminole and Iroquois Streets from Jefferson Avenue to St. Paul Streets. The alleyways are paved with gray, vitrified brick pavers south of Lafayette, and red vitrified brick pavers between Lafayette and St. Paul. HDC staff could not locate records indicating when the existing brick pavers were laid, but proprietary markings visible on paving units indicate they were produced around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and are likely the original paving material. Numerous infrastructure repairs conducted over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, have introduced patches of concrete, asphalt, and dissimilar bricks to the alleys.



**Figure 1: Current view looking east down the alley between Seminole and Iroquois (left), and the same view from ca. 1970. (right, HDAB)**



**Figure 2: Map showing the extent of the alley restoration project (red lines).**

**PROPOSAL**

The applicant proposes to reinstall brick pavers in alleyways located between Seminole and Iroquois, from E. Jefferson Ave. to St. Paul Street. The repair includes the removal of bituminous patching materials installed by the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) when conducting repairs of water infrastructure in the alleys and laying of new brick pavers on a concrete bed.

A number of brick pavers were left behind in the alleys after the completion of the DWSD projects, and the applicant has indicated some area homeowners are also in possession of pavers. The applicant proposes to reuse the original paving blocks when restoring the alleys. However, there is not a sufficient quantity of original units to complete the work and new or reclaimed pavers will be required. The applicant indicated the original units will be patched into the new work to create a more cohesive aesthetic with the undisturbed paving.

The table below indicates approximately where the repairs are proposed to take place. The work will take place behind the addresses listed.

	Length	WIDTH	SQFT
<b>748 SEMINOLE</b>	8	8	64
	9	7	63
	8	8	64
	15	9	135
	25	10	250
<b>790 SEMINOLE</b>	7	7	49
<b>1090 SEMINOLE</b>	12	7	84
	15	12	180
<b>1120 SEMINOLE</b>	6	6	36
<b>1476 SEMINOLE</b>	15	5	75
<b>853 IROQUOIS</b>	8	8	64
	20	10	200
	15	11	165
<b>873 IROQUOIS</b>	7	7	49

Figure 3: Table showing repair locations.



Figure 4: Examples of typical repair locations provided by the applicant.

#### STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Indian Village Historic District was established in 1970.
- Brick paving at alleyways are noted in the District’s Elements of Design #13 *Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatment*; “alleys are frequently paved with brick, particularly where alley-facing garages are common”.
- HDC staff observed a number of paving bricks that were left in the alley after the DWSD repair work. The units are vitrified brick paving block. These blocks are taller than standard architectural bricks (generally 4 inches tall instead of 2), and contain various indentations or protrusions (lugs) on the sides and bottom of the brick to allow for them to be evenly spaced and key into the bedding material (paving sand, mortar, or concrete). Staff observed concrete and/or mortar remaining on the displaced brick.
- As of the date of this report, the applicant has not yet sourced the replacement brick pavers.
- Staff visited the project location and observed the following conditions.

- The alleys running south of Lafayette are paved primarily with gray colored vitrified paving block measuring approximately 8 inches long, 3.75 inches wide, and 3.75 inches tall. However, numerous bricks of different sizes and colors have been used as replacement for the repairs over time, giving the paving a patchwork appearance in some locations. In addition to municipal and utility repairs, adjacent property owners have also replaced or covered the paving materials in order to address water infiltration concerns or grade approaches to alley facing garages.



**Figure 5: Images showing the dimensions and conditions of the paving in the alleys south of Lafayette.**

- The alleys north of Lafayette are paved primarily with red colored vitrified paving block measuring approximately 8 inches long, 3.75 inches wide, and 3.75 inches tall. The blocks in this area of the project are more uniform in color than the southern alleys, but still display a slight variation in edge treatment and color.



**Figure 6: Images showing the dimensions and conditions of the paving in the alleys north of Lafayette.**

## ISSUES

- Throughout the Indian Village Historic District, most of the remaining brick alleys are located south of St. Paul. North of St. Paul, the alleys are paved in concrete, or have been vacated by the city. The remaining brick paved alleys are distinctive character defining features of the original built environment in Indian Village.
- HDC staff finds that replacing the displaced pavers with new or reclaimed brick pavers that match the original units is the appropriate treatment for the restoration of the alleyways. However, staff acknowledges that the companies that produced these pavers are no longer in existence, and sourcing exact matches in terms of color, edge treatment, and dimension will be challenging.

- Many areas of these alleys have been repaired with different bricks over time. Additionally, the paving blocks as originally produced have slight differences in size and color due to inconsistent kiln temperatures, clay composition, and other factors in the production process. It is staff's opinion that appropriate replacement pavers need not be precise matches but be comparable enough in size and color that the resulting repair work, when interspersed with the retained original units given a chance to weather, creates a minimally observable patch in the alley paving.
- Staff recognizes that not all brick alley locations in Indian Village needing restoration are included in this scope of work. The current application is a welcome first step in addressing this long-term neighborhood concern, and staff anticipates the opportunity to work further with DPW, DWSD, DTE, and/or their contractors to facilitate appropriate repairs and maintenance for these historic paved areas. Staff greatly appreciates the vigilance and concern of adjacent property owners in keeping attention focused on this issue, and individual efforts to salvage and store disturbed pavers.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Recommendation – COA – Repair Brick Alleyways**

Staff finds that the proposed repair of the brick alleys meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and therefore recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work, with the condition that,

- The applicant submits photographs and dimensions of newly sourced brick pavers that are of a sufficient match to the existing paving in the areas in which they are to be installed, to be approved by staff.