

STAFF REPORT: SEPTEMBER 11, 2024, REGULAR MEETING PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00433
ADDRESS: 1710 VAN DYKE (ALSO KNOWN AS 8005-8025 ST. PAUL)
HISTORIC DISTRICT: WEST VILLAGE
APPLICANT: BRIAN REBAIN, KRAEMER DESIGN GROUP
PROPERTY OWNER: 1710 VAN DYKE LLC
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: AUGUST 2, 2024
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: AUGUST 24, 2024

SCOPE: ALTER ROOF



The subject property viewed from the corner of Van Dyke and St. Paul. August 2024 photo by staff.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

1710 Van Dyke is a five-unit, two-and-one-half-story townhouse building, built in 1915 and facing south onto St. Paul. Eave brackets and square porch piers show a Mission influence. Its form is rectangular and side-gabled in overall massing, with front-facing, gable-roofed wings, five entry porticoes on the St. Paul façade, and an irregular arrangement of gable and shed dormers and chimneys interrupting the roofline. A projecting sun porch at the west façade features a hip roof. The building is finished with stucco and wood trim and bears a conspicuous, bright-orange, clay-tile roof, subject of this application. Distinctive French-style clay tiles and feature prominent, round ridge caps terminating in highly distinctive pointed ridge terminals.



Dormer with distinctive ridge terminal. Photo from application materials.

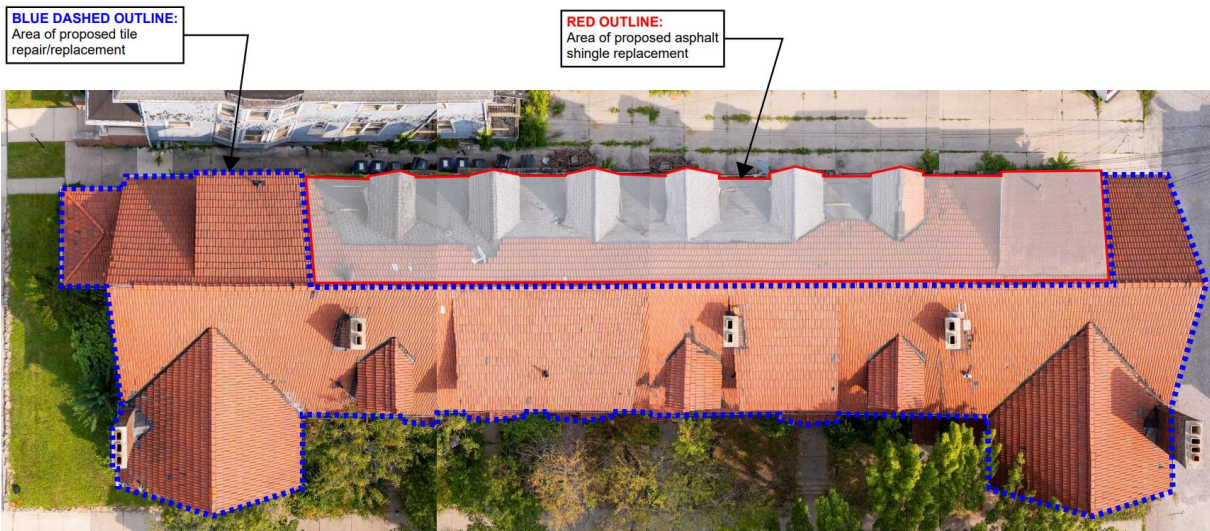
A relatively small section of historic clay tile has previously been replaced with non-matching, asphalt shingles. There is no record of Historic District Commission approval of this work. The area of asphalt shingles, comprising about 15% of the total roof area, is on the rear (north) plane of the roof. It is mostly hidden from view behind the ridge and between two flanking, shed-roof dormers.



Undated photo showing rear (north) asphalt section with arrows highlighting damaged areas. Image from application materials.

PROPOSAL

In general, the applicant proposes to reroof the building by removing and reinstalling the existing clay tiles, along with repair or replacement to underlayment, decking, flashing, fascia, gutters, and downspouts as needed. However, due to the rear section where clay tiles are already missing, and due to a number of broken or damaged tiles, there are not enough historic tiles to complete the roof. The applicant thus proposes replacement with asphalt shingles for an expanse of approximately 30% of the roof, as shown in the image below.



Sketch showing proposed repair and replacement areas. Note that the proposed work would approximately double the extent of the area currently finished with asphalt shingles, from about 15% of the total area to about 30%. Image from application materials.

As described in the submitted scope of work:

“The intent for clay tile salvage is to carefully remove each tile for reinstallation once the underlayment reconstruction is complete. Upon removal, each tile will be inspected for condition, cataloged, and stored for later reinstallation. Tiles too damaged to be reused will be discarded. It is anticipated that salvaged tiles from the rear portion of the roof will be relocated to primary facades to infill tiles that are missing or too damaged to be reused.”

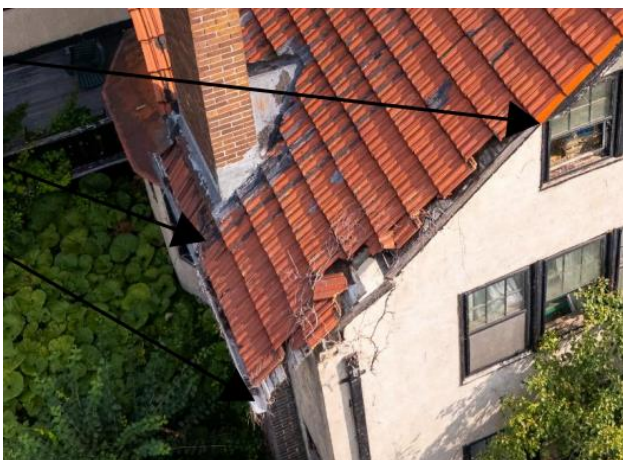
The application also states:

“Specialty tiles (ridge cap, drip edges and corner pieces) will be evaluated for size and shape once removed. It is assumed there will not be enough salvaged specialty pieces to infill all areas of the reinstalled roof. In these cases, [the project architect] will attempt to find a suitable replacement product once we have had the opportunity to evaluate the existing tiles for size and shape.”

Gutters and downspouts would be metal and fascia and soffits would be wood, to match existing conditions.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The West Village Historic District was established by Ordinance 547-H in 1983. The Final Report for the district states that it is “of historical importance as a benchmark to the growth of Detroit in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,” implying a Period of Significance.
- The Elements of Design for the West Village Historic District (Sec. 21-2-132) states that “there are some tile roofs ... slate and tile roofs provide textural interest whereas asphalt shingles usually do not.”
- A tile roof is almost invariably a character-defining feature of a building, as is the case with this property. This roof, as noted above, is particularly distinctive, and employs an uncommon type of clay tile not often seen in Detroit.
- It is not known, from City of Detroit records, when the clay tiles were removed from the rear (north) section. The work may predate the establishment of the West Village Historic District.
- The application describes and provides photos of “numerous areas of broken or missing tiles, notably at the different edge transitions of the roof, leading to several openings through the roof decking into the attic space below.” Staff stipulates that a comprehensive reroofing effort is thus necessary and appropriate.



Image, from application, showing area of broken and missing tiles.

- As the proposed scope would decrease the area of clay tile and increase the area of asphalt shingles, the proposed work would constitute, in part, the replacement of tile with asphalt. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, namely Standard #6, direct “deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, and where possible, materials. Replacement of a missing feature shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.”
- *Preservation Briefs: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Clay Tile Roofs* (National Park Service, 1993) provides the following guidance:

“When replacing hard-to-match historic tile, *and* if matching clay tile cannot be obtained, it may be possible to relocate some of the original tiles to the more prominent locations on the roof where the tile is damaged, and insert the new replacement tile in secondary or rear locations, or other areas where it will not show, such as behind chimney stacks, parapets, and dormer windows. Even though replacement tile may initially match the original historic tile when first installed, it is likely to weather or age to a somewhat different color or hue which will become more obvious with time.” (Page 12, emphasis added.)

In general, this *Preservation Brief* endorses the proposed scope of work, noting the appropriateness of moving intact tiles from less visible portions of the roof to replace damaged tiles in more prominent locations. However, the *Brief* clearly also recommends the use of new clay tile when needed, rather than a substitute material such as asphalt (see “Issues,” below). Further, the *Brief* states that even if the entire roof were to be beyond repair, replacement with new clay tile would still be the approach:

“When restoring or repairing a clay tile roof it is always recommended that as many of the original tiles be retained and reused as possible. ... But, in most cases, unless matching replacements can be obtained, if more than about 30 per cent of the roofing tiles are lost, broken, or irreparably damaged, it may be necessary to replace all of the historic tiles with new matching tiles.” (Page 13.)

- The Historic District Commission has occasionally issued a Certificate of Appropriateness for replacement of clay tile roofing with asphalt roofing for reasons of economic feasibility. In such cases, the applicant has typically provided cost estimates for in-kind replacement (staff has suggested that this applicant provide a cost estimate). However, staff opinion is that, considering to the overall size of this building and the relatively small area of clay tiles that would be needed, in-kind replacement is unlikely to be economically infeasible.

ISSUES

- Staff does not consider the use of asphalt shingles on this building to be appropriate, due to the following considerations:
 - Standard #6, quoted above, suggests that damaged areas of clay tile should be replaced with matching materials.
 - Asphalt shingles, in general, are not an appropriate intervention for this particular building due to its Mission-influenced style and the highly distinctive nature of the existing tiles.
- The application scope notes that some “specialty tiles” may need to be replaced, but it does not specify a particular product for replacement other than to state that the tiles “will be evaluated for size and shape once removed.”

RECOMMENDATION

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

Staff recommends that the Commission issue a *Certificate of Appropriateness* for the proposed work as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, with the following conditions:

- *Undamaged clay tiles will be salvaged and reused to the maximum extent possible, subject to review and approval by staff.*
- *New clay tile will match the historic clay tile as closely as possible, subject to review and approval by staff.*
- *Asphalt shingles will not be used.*