

**STAFF REPORT: JUNE 12, 2024 MEETING**  
**APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00273**  
**ADDRESS: 3417 SEMINOLE**

**PREPARED BY: A. DYE**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT: INDIAN VILLAGE**  
**APPLICANT: NICOLE RODRIGUEZ**  
**PROPERTY OWNER: NICOLE RODRIGUEZ**  
**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: MAY 20, 2024**  
**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: MAY 22, 2024**

**SCOPE: DEMOLISH GARAGE, ERECT GARAGE**

**EXISTING CONDITIONS**

3417 Seminole is located near the northwest corner of Seminole and Goethe, one lot north of the intersection. The 2-1/2 story structure, designed as a two-family home, was erected circa 1914. The width of the structure fills the majority of the lot – sitting at the north property line and setback only a few feet from the south property line.

The dwelling was erected with a raised foundation and the front, two-story porch is supported at-grade by walls faced with stone. Metal posts support the second floor porch, and it is partially covered by a flat roof, supported by large wood brackets. Low metal railings run the perimeter of the entry porch, and the upper porch is enclosed by a half-wall covered in vinyl siding. The adjacent two-story bay window culminates with a castellated roofline.

Vinyl siding covers the exterior walls and the historic wood windows, mostly comprised of double-hung sash with a nine-over-one or a six-over-one pattern, remain in the window openings. The chimney retains its historic stucco finish.

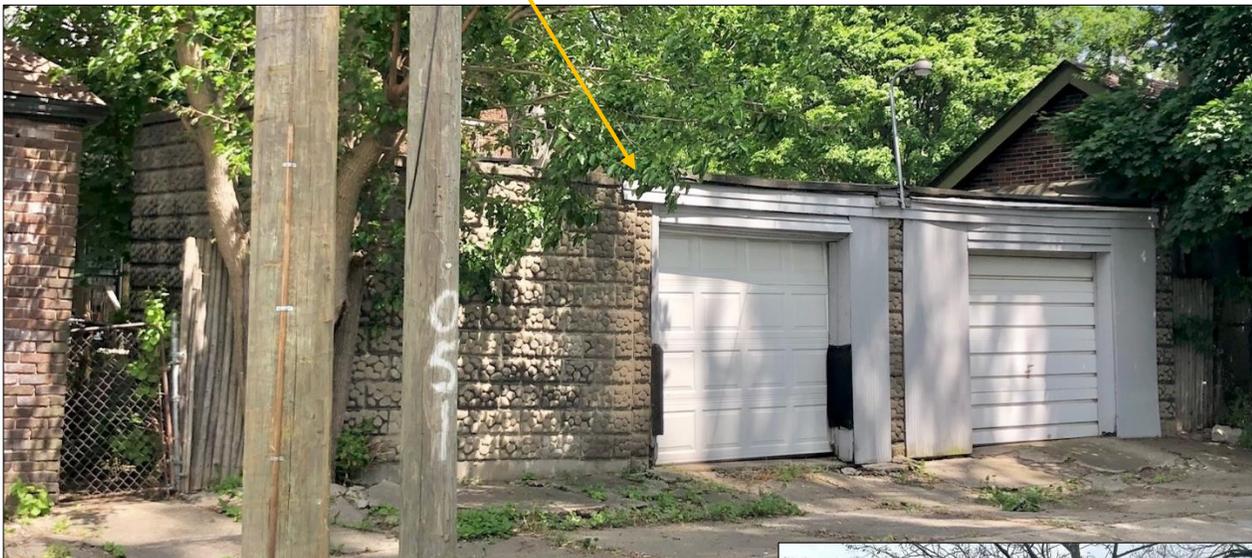


*Façade, east-facing wall. Staff photo, May 22, 2024.*

A one-story garage is located at the rear of the property and similarly fills the majority of the lot's width. The west and north walls give evidence of a three-bay structure; however, the applicant's photos show the roof and east wall of the northernmost bay are missing. The structure is constructed of cast-concrete blocks with a cobblestone pattern. The flat, minimally sloped roof is covered with rolled roofing material. Currently two single-opening overhead doors face Maxwell street, and two pedestrian doors and single-opening double-hung windows (six over-one pattern) are located on the east wall, facing the house. Due to the relatively narrow lot and the placement of the full width house, the garage is not visible from the sidewalk or front yard of the house.



*Aerial view, Detroit Parcel Viewer*



*Staff photo, May 24, 2024. The garage doors face west and open onto Maxwell street.*

*Right: Applicant photo. Partial view of east wall facing the rear yard and house.*



## PROPOSAL

- Demolish existing concrete block garage.
- Erect a three-car garage, 1-1/2 story garage.

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Indian Village Historic District was enacted on June 15, 1971.
- The current exterior materials were present at time of historic district designation.



*Above and right: Historic Designation Advisory Board photos, 1971. The front porch has been altered and vinyl siding was in place.*

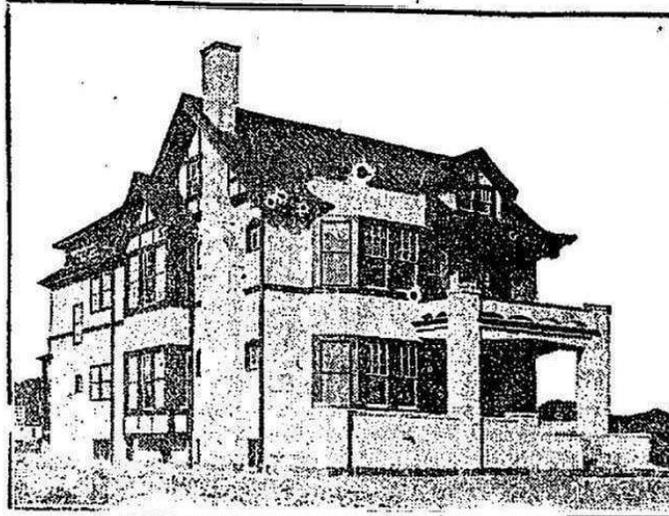
*Below: Staff photo, May 2024. There don't appear to be any visual alterations to the house, besides the color changes to the vinyl siding and asphalt roof.*



- This circa 1914 photo and *Detroit Free Press* article shows the historic house design included stucco walls, large square porch columns and half-timber detailing in the gables.

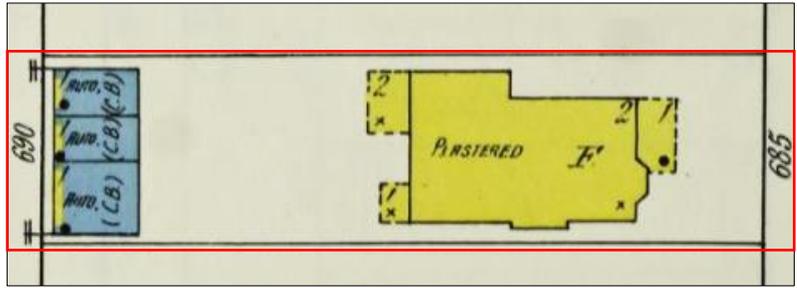


**STUCCO AND WOOD STAINED GREEN  
GIVE COLOR TO DUPLEX HOUSE**



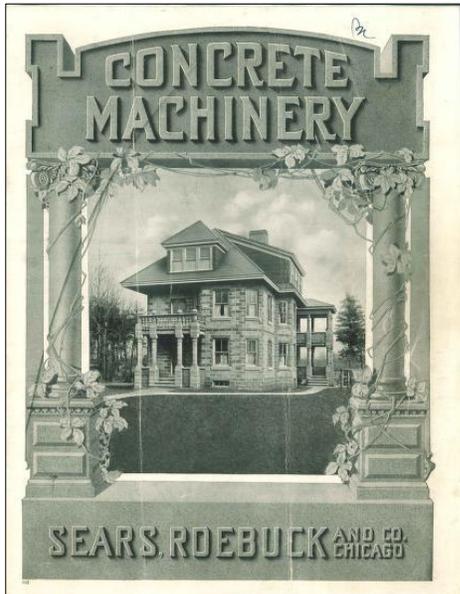
**BUILDING FOR MRS. H. R. KOEHLER.**

Stucco of a light shade, trimmed with wood, stained a dark green, add a pleasing color effect to the exterior of an artistic duplex residence recently completed for Mrs. H. R. Koehler on the west side of Seminole avenue, between Goethe and Mack avenues. J. H. Gustave Stefens was the architect and the Maclean Building company the general contractors. Careful study was made in arranging the interior plan. Each apartment includes a vestibule, reception hall, living room, dining room, three bedrooms, bath, kitchen and large pantry. The upper apartment has also a large music room. Interior finish of the principal rooms is oak. Gunwood, with white enamel finish, is used in the bedrooms and bathrooms and southern pine in the remaining rooms.



Sanborn map, Vol. 8, 1915, Image 51. The full view of this map, at left, confirms 3417 Seminole, 1915 address - 685 Seminole, was the only house erected on the west side of Seminole between Goethe and Mack (only three houses were erected on the east side of the same block). The garage is not visible in the photo on the previous page; therefore, it was erected after the house but in time to be included on the 1915 map. The blue color and "CB" identify the walls as concrete block. The dark circle identifies composite roofing, and yellow identifies wood doors. The yellow house identifies wood frame construction and stucco/plastered exterior finish, with a wood shingle roof ("x").

- Concrete block came onto the building scene in the late 1800s and became extremely popular after 1900, once concrete block machines were manufactured with adjustable sides to allow for a wide variety of dimensional surfaces. An inexpensive and practical building material, Sears, Roebuck & Co. offered a specialized catalog to sell the machines. The company's transportation network allowed people across the United States to easily purchase this equipment, giving individuals of varying income levels the opportunity to build their own structures.



Cover and inside page of a 1915 Sears, Roebuck & Co. catalog. The cobblestone pattern offer by Sears is very similar to the patterned blocks used to erect the garage at 3417 Seminole.

## **Review of Existing Garage**

- According to the National Park Service document, Evaluating Garages and Outbuildings in Historic Districts, a contributing structure adds to the historic associations and historic architectural qualities for which a property is significant because it was present during the period of significance, relates to the documented significance of the property, and possesses historic integrity. The NPS says the integrity of a historic structure relates directly to the qualities of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

It is staff's opinion the existing concrete block garage is a contributing structure to the property and district and retains its integrity:

- Concrete block identifies the garage as an early 20<sup>th</sup> century structure.
- Concrete block has a materiality and neutral color similar to the dwelling's original stucco finish (which is currently covered by vinyl siding),
- The cobblestone pattern offered an affordable decorative design that relates to the English revival details of the house, specifically the castellated roof line of the bay window and half-timber dormer details.
- The utilitarian form of the garage offered maximum space for a three-car structure on a relatively narrow neighborhood lot and emulated the relatively unadorned walls of the house.
- Two of the three bays remain intact, and the third bay retains two of its three walls. The pedestrian door and window openings contain historic components, and the overhead/auto doors also remain, however modern steel doors are in place.



*Viewing the historic house and current garage “side-by-side” allows the original relationship of the selected wall materials to be understood.*

- Staff research shows the existing garage is an appropriate design for the property. The installation of vinyl siding on the house altered the material and architectural relationship between the dwelling and garage. At some point in the future, the vinyl siding on the house will need to be replaced, giving the property owner the opportunity to repair the house's stucco finish as well as the decorative details within the gables that likely remain intact, thus reclaiming the historic cohesive design of the property.



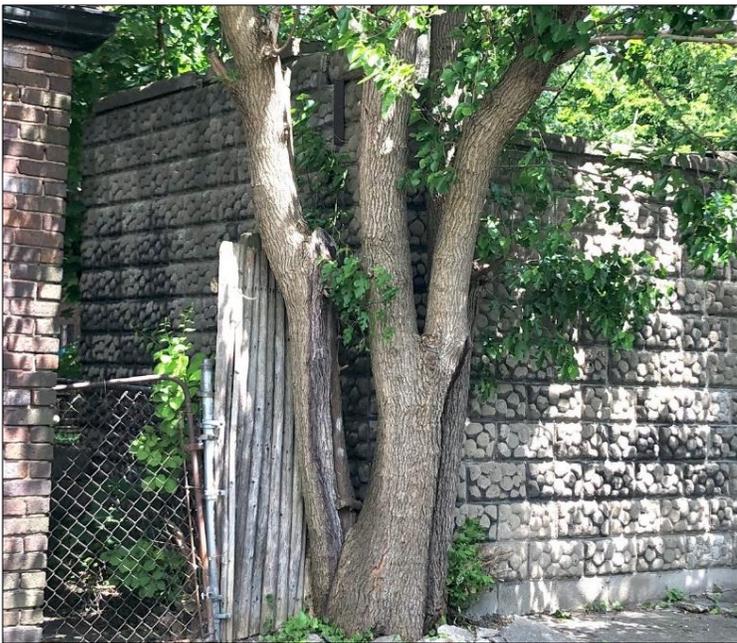
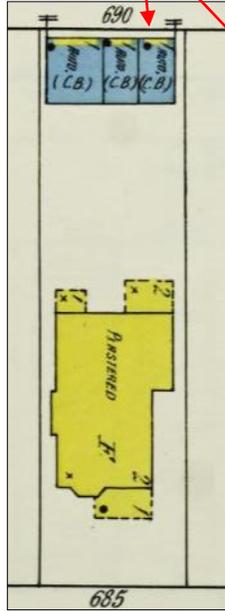
Above and right: Applicant photos.

As shown in the Sanborn map, the south bay (left side) was the largest of three bays; the middle and north were about the same size.

At an unknown time, the roof and east wall of the northern bay were removed, and the overhead door on the west wall was filled in with matching concrete block (likely reused from the now-demolished east wall). Staff didn't find Commission approval for this alteration.

Below: staff photos.

Staff is concerned about the tree growing at the northwest corner of the garage. Its removal is not mentioned in the application. Due to its location and impact on the structure, staff recommends, and has authority to approve, its removal.



NW corner of garage.



Views from Maxwell Street.

View of infilled wall.

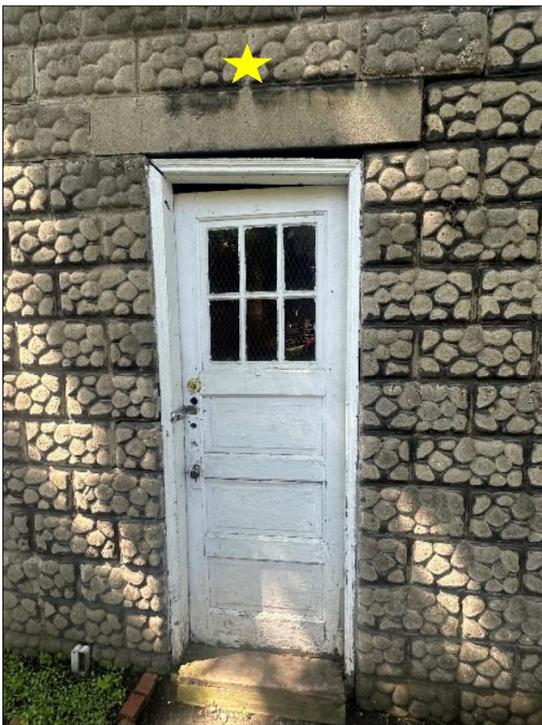
South bay

North bay

Missing Bay



East elevation – facing house.



*Applicant photos.*

*These photos show there may be a long-standing issue with settlement, causing the frames and lintels to become unlevel. There is one area where a crack occurred in the middle of a block (circled). The doors and window openings contain historic-age wood components that are in repairable condition.*

*Photo at right is an interior view of the same area.*



*North Bay*

*North wall (this interior wall is now the exterior southern wall of the missing bay).*



*Step crack and cracked block*

*Step cracks*

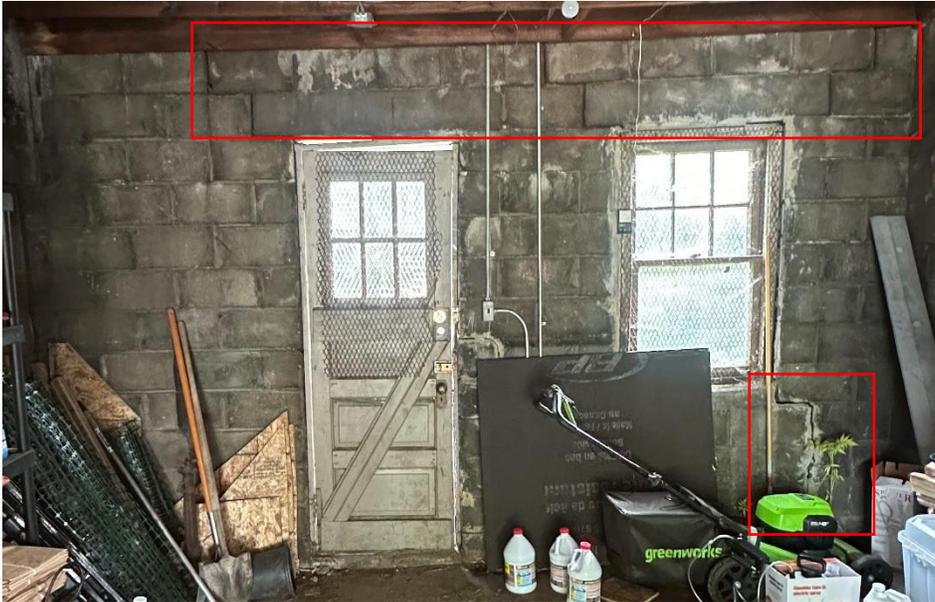
*South wall*



*Large step crack, broken block at top, near middle of box*

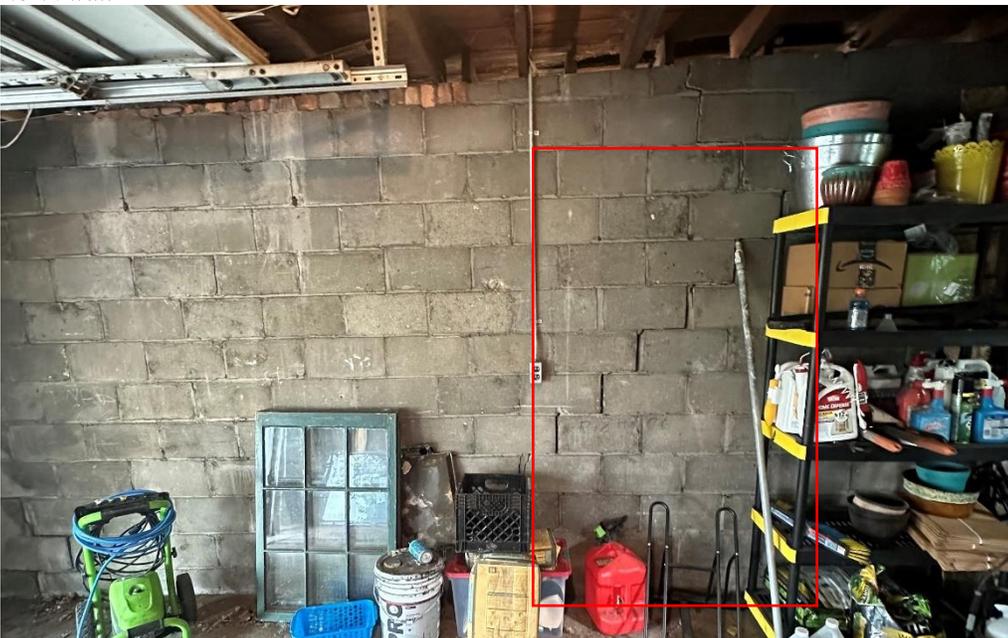
*Broken block*

South Bay  
East wall



Step cracks above window and door. Cracked tile below window.

North wall



Other side of step crack, shown on page 8.

- Based on the engineer’s review and the applicant’s photographs, it appears that it is possible the condition of the garage extends beyond in-situ repair, and would need to be deconstructed, a new foundation poured, and then rebuilt, reusing the historic concrete blocks (the majority of which appear to be in sound condition), wood pedestrian doors and double-hung windows. The remaining garage elements - concrete floors, flat roofing material and overhead doors can be replaced for the following reasons; the floors are interior components of the structure, and the rolled roofing and overhead metal doors are not historic age (and composite roofing was original to the structure).
- As this structure is a distinctive character-defining feature of the property and has a strong architectural connection to the house, staff believes this structure should remain and not be replaced with a new garage. However, it is staff’s opinion that this application should include a cost estimate outlining the repair/rebuilding of the garage and the cost estimate for the scope of work described in this application. It is only with all of that information together can the Commission consider the economic feasibility of retaining the contributing resource or approving its demolition.

### **Review of Proposed Garage**

- The applicant offered reasons to explain the proposed garage design and selection of materials, saying the new garage would be Victorian in styling creating “an affinity between the structures on the lot” and “making it cohesive with the constructions in Indian Village”. However, when considering design and materials for a new structure, the full reading of the architectural elements of the house should be considered, along with the district’s Elements of Design and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

### **Architectural Style of the House**

- In 1986, the [Detroit Historic Districts Style and Color Guide](#) was created and published. This began with a study of architecture styles in designated historic districts and the determination of historically accurate colors for those houses. A classification system was developed consisting of twenty-three architecturally stylistic classifications and six color systems. These twenty-three classifications include composite and miscellaneous categories so that every building receives a classification number and corresponding color system.
- The city’s Indian Village district database identifies the house at 3417 Seminole as “20<sup>th</sup> Century Composite”, which is described as:

*The eclecticism of the Victorian period did not end at the turn of the century. Even though Arts and Crafts was primarily an English movement, Detroit architects tended to combine it with German, Dutch Colonial, Classical, Neo-Georgian, Mediterranean and Prairie influences. Many of these styles were added to the basic hip roof box, sometimes called the 4-Square Vernacular or Neo-Georgian Vernacular. Those examples where one style dominates will be found under the dominating type, otherwise, it will be considered a composite style. Boston Edison, Arden Park and Indian Village contain many composite dwellings from the early 20th Century.*

The house at 3417 Seminole fits the above description well, and the minimal articulation firmly roots the building in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, decidedly apart from the ornate trim, multiple wood siding patterns and paint colors which are hallmark features of Victorian era houses.

### **Indian Village Elements of Design**

- Staff identified the following Elements to consider:

#### *7. Relationship of materials*

The majority of the buildings are faced with brick, while many are partially or totally stucco. There are some stone buildings; clapboard is rare, and almost never the sole material....Wood is almost universally used for window frames and other functional trim, and is used in many examples for all trim...

#### *8. Relationship of textures*

The most common relationship of textures in the district is that of the low-relief pattern of mortar joints in brick contrasted to the smooth surface of wood or stone trim. The use of stucco or concrete, with or without half-timbering, as a contrast to brick surfaces is not unusual....

### 9. Relationship of colors

Natural brick colors (red, yellow, brown, buff) predominate in wall surfaces. Natural stone colors also exist. Where stucco or concrete exists, it is usually left in its natural state, or painted in a shade of cream....Paint colors often relate to style. The classically inspired buildings, particularly Neo-Georgian generally have woodwork painted white, cream or in the range of those colors, including putty. Doors and shutters are frequently dark green or black. Colors known to have been in use on buildings of this type in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century or early 19<sup>th</sup> Century on similar buildings may be considered for suitability. Buildings of Medieval inspiration (notably Neo-Tudor) generally have painted woodwork and window frames of dark brown or cream color. Half-timbering is almost always stained dark brown. Queen Anne or Late Victorian examples may have several paint colors on a single façade. These tend to be dark in tone and frequently of the earth tone family....

### 10. Relationship of architectural details

These generally relate to style. Neo-Georgian buildings display classic details, mostly in wood, and sometimes in stone. Areas commonly, but not always, treated are porches, shutters, window frames, cornices, and dormer windows. Details on Mediterranean style or vernacular buildings are often done in stone, brick, tile, and sometimes in stucco. They include arched windows, door openings, and porches. Buildings of Medieval inspiration tend to have details in the form of carved wood or carved stone ornament on window frames, door frames, and eaves. Queen Anne or Late Victorian style buildings tend to have details in wood, stone, or molded brick commonly embellishing cornices, window frames and door frames. In general, the various styles are rich in architectural details.

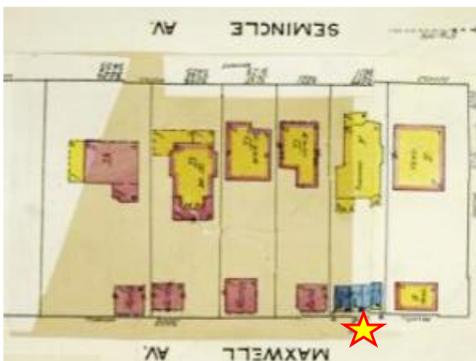
### Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation

- Listed below are the Standards staff finds application to this application:
  2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
  3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
  5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
  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.



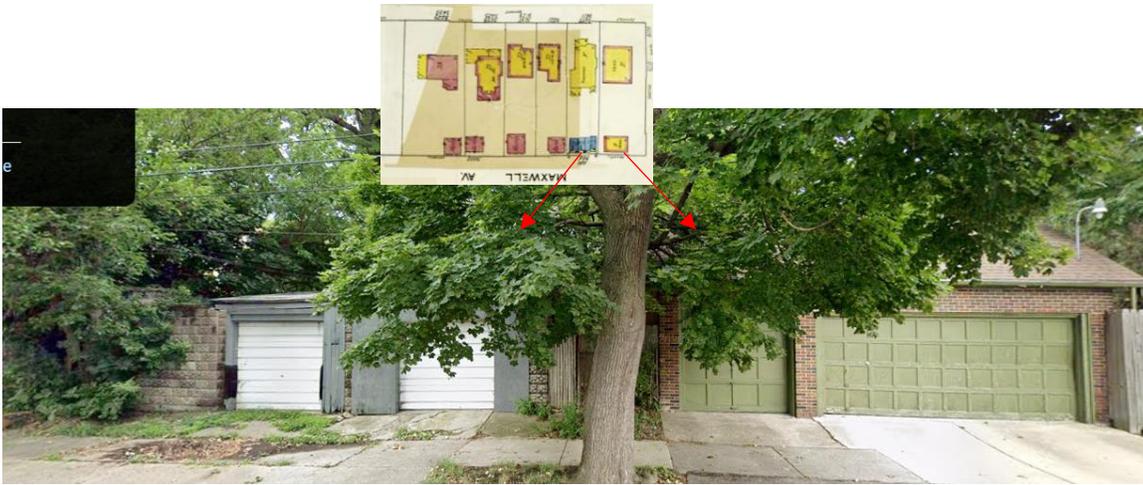
*Google street view, August 2018.  
View of the garages on the east side of Maxwell Street, looking northeast from the corner of Maxwell and Goethe.*

*The garage for 3417 Seminole is identified. The six garages adjacent each other are included in this photo survey; close-up images are on the following page.*



*Sanborn Map, Vol. 8 1915 - 1950.*

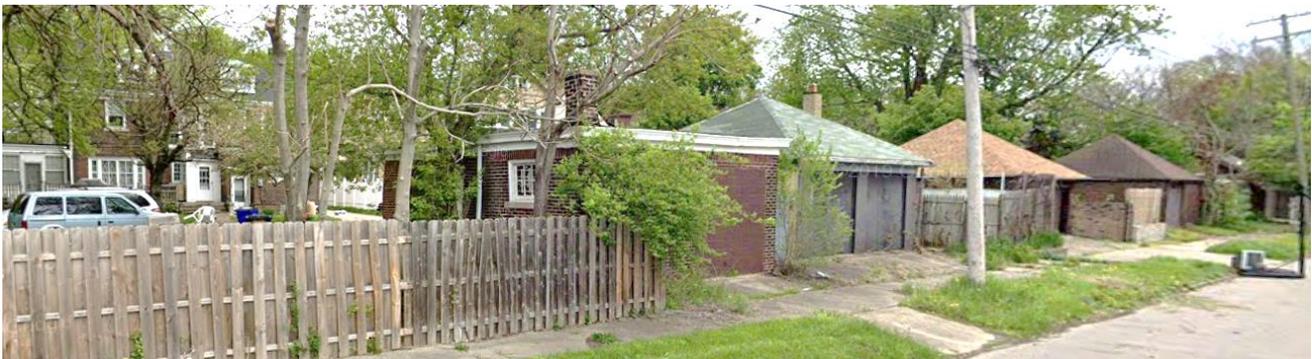
*This map captures the surrounding properties, confirming location of dwellings and garages and their respective construction/cladding materials. Standard 9 discusses compatibility of new construction to the integrity of the property and its environment. The Indian Village historic district is the environment in its totality. Neighborhoods are large areas of land developed over time, so there often are differences in lot size, house size, architectural massing, and articulation of structures on the individual blocks. Therefore, staff often uses the block in which the property is located as the environment to closely consider when determining compatibility of new construction.*



Looking east on Maxwell. From left to right - Garages for 3417 Seminole and 8215 Goethe.



Looking northeast on Maxwell. From left to right - Garages for 3449 Seminole, 3439 Seminole, 3431 Seminole, and 3421 Seminole.



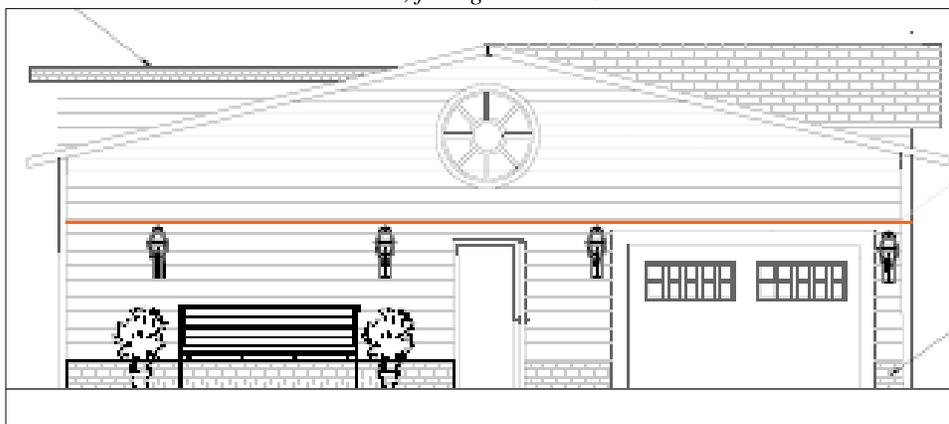
Looking southeast on Maxwell. From left to right - Garages for 3449 Seminole, 3439 Seminole, 3431 Seminole, and 3421 Seminole.

- This photo survey shows the garages on this block were all designed with a similar time period and reflect the massing and roof designs popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: reverse gable (8215 Goethe), flat/minimal slope roof (3417 and 3449 Seminole) and pyramidal hip roof (3439, 3431, and 3421 Seminole).
- The six garages were erected with minimal articulation and wall materials that match the materials on the respective houses. If a new garage is considered for any of these lots, including 3417 Seminole, it is staff's opinion compatibility requires a similar massing, situational materiality, roof lines, window and door openings and minimally applied decorative details.

*Applicant drawings for proposed replacement garage.*



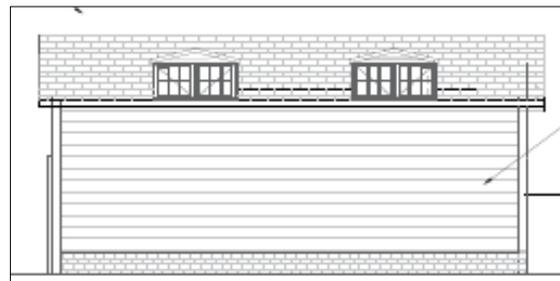
*West wall, facing Maxwell Street.*



*East wall, facing the house.*



*North-side wall*



*South-side wall*

- The proposed design includes a front facing gable roof with cross gables, both of which have differing ridge heights, dormers, and multiple wall materials. These features create a complex massing and oversized design which is atypical of the environment in which it is to be placed.

## ISSUES

- The existing concrete block garage is a contributing structure/resource to the property and district and retains its integrity.
  - The wall material identifies the structure as being erected in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century,
  - Its materiality and neutral color are similar to the house's stucco walls (which likely remains under the vinyl siding),
  - The cobblestone pattern relates to the English revival features of the house, and
  - The straightforward form of the garage and lack of additional architectural details is compatible with the stucco walls and general design of the dwelling
  - The historic openings on the east and west walls of the garage remain, and the wood pedestrian doors and double-hung windows are intact and in repairable condition.
- The applicant must submit a repair/rebuild estimate, along with the estimate for demolition/new construction so the Commission can fairly assess the economic feasibility of retaining the contributing resource.
- The proposed new garage is not compatible with the house and property, due to its massing, complex roof forms, multiple wall materials and design details. Erecting a "Victorian-style" garage, however defined, would be anachronistic for this property.

## RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the proposal for the demolition of the existing garage and erection of a new garage does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the following reasons:

- The existing concrete block garage is a contributing structure/resource to the property and district and retains its integrity.
  - The wall material identifies the structure as being erected in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century,
  - Its materiality and neutral color are similar to the house's stucco walls (which likely remains under the vinyl siding),
  - The cobblestone pattern relates to the English revival features of the house, and
  - The straightforward form of the garage and lack of additional architectural details is compatible with the stucco walls and general design of the dwelling
  - The historic openings on the east and west walls of the garage remain, and the wood pedestrian doors and double-hung windows are intact and in repairable condition.
- The applicant must submit a repair/rebuild estimate, along with the estimate for demolition/new construction so the Commission can fairly assess the economic feasibility of retaining the contributing resource.
- The proposed new garage is not compatible with the house and property, due to its massing, complex roof forms, multiple wall materials and design details. Erecting a "Victorian-style" garage, however defined, would be anachronistic for this property.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the work as proposed, as it does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standards 2, 3, 5, and 9:

- 2) *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
- 3) *Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*
- 5) *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.*
- 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.*

and does not meet the following Elements of the district: 7, 8, 9, and 10.