

REVISED 12/10/2025**ADDRESS: 1815 SEMINOLE****APPLICATION NO: #HDC 2025-00473-#HDC2025-00705****HISTORIC DISTRICT: INDIAN VILLAGE****APPLICANT: ALISSA JACOBS (4545 ARCHITECTURE)****OWNER: RACHEL AND TROBAUGH NELSON****DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 11/20/2025****DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 11/17/2025****SCOPE: REPLACE WINDOWS****EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The building located at 1815 Seminole is a Norman-Gothic style church that was erected at the southwest corner of Seminole Street. and Kercheval Avenue in 1949. Known originally as the St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church, the building houses approximately 5,000 square feet and features a cruciform plan, with a projecting gabled-roof central mass with lower, intersecting gabled and flat-roof wings to the rear. Exterior walls are red brick with buff-colored stone detailing around windows and doors. Stone accents are also present at the end and side buttresses. Windows are the original steel casement units and feature both decorative lead coming and multicolored-glass panes. One glass block window is located in the rear southwest side of the building. The front/west façade retains the building's original vertical wood plank doors.



1815 Seminole, current conditions. Photo by staff, 11/20/2025

PROPOSAL

- Replace existing historic steel casement windows at six openings at the north and south sides with new aluminum-clad wood casement units. Note that the decorative leaded glass at the central fixed window and the fixed transoms at each of the six openings will be retained. Please see the below drawings to note the location of the proposed windows replacement

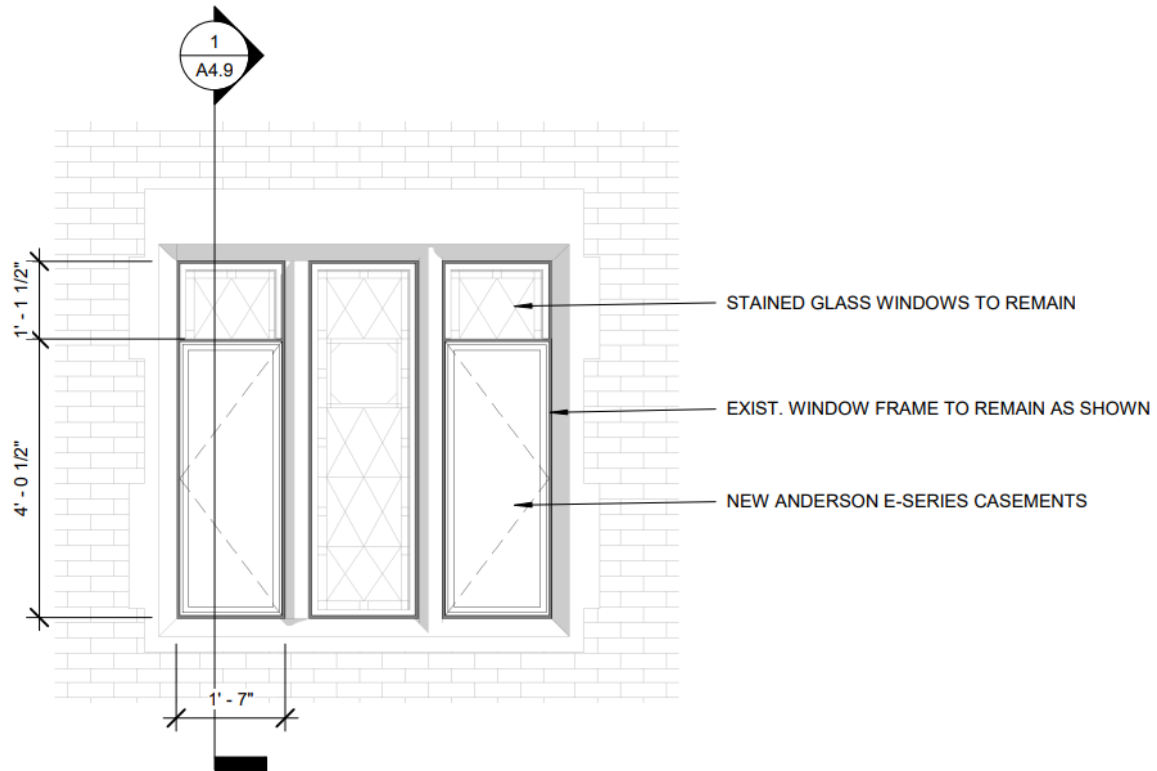


2 SOUTH ELEVATION
SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"



1 NORTH ELEVATION
SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"

Windows proposed for replacement at north and south side. Elevation drawing by applicant



Typical proposed condition. Note that the existing central fixed window and the two existing transom panes will be retained. Drawing by applicant.



South wall, casement windows at openings 1-3 proposed for replacement. Annotated photo by applicant



North wall, windows casement windows at openings 1-3 proposed for replacement. Annotated photo by applicant

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Indian Village Historic District was designated in 1970
- A review of the property's designation photos and files maintained by the Historic District Commission indicated that the colored glass panes which are present at the building's original steel casement windows were added sometime after 1970/after the district's designation without HDC approval. Although the steel casement windows themselves are original to the building's construction, the multi-colored glass panes are not significant as they were installed relatively recently.
- At the 10/11/2023 regular HDC meeting, staff engaged the Commission in a discussion regarding the potential adaptive reuse of 1815 Seminole in an effort to identify the exterior features which would need to be retained if such a rehabilitation was undertaken as the property was targeted for future sale by the Detroit Landbank Authority (DLBA). Although the Commission did not issue a resolution or formal guidelines, the Commissioners who were present at the meeting did make general observations/statements regarding any future exterior work which might need to be undertaken at the property with respect to the building's historic windows, among which was the following:
 - The primary, street-facing Seminole and Kercheval elevations should be restored and preserved (including rooflines, stone detailing, leaded ornamental (stained) glass, and the steel casement windows. The plain colored panes may be replaced with clear glass.
- Staff notes that the Detroit Landbank Authority (DLBA) marketed the property for sale in 2024 with the Commission's expectations (which were outlined at the 10/11/2023 regular HDC meeting) clearly laid out to perspective developers/buyers. Please see the below from the DLBA marketing package for 1815 Seminole:

PRIME INDIAN VILLAGE OPPORTUNITY

1815 SEMINOLE ST

PROPOSAL DETAILS

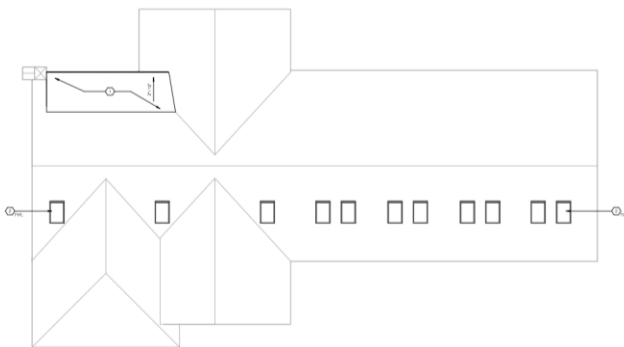
Proposals including conceptual design drawings for the property are strongly encouraged, and will be reviewed in combination with city historic preservation staff for recommendations.

Renovation and rehabilitation proposals will require the review and approval of the Detroit Historic District Commission at a public meeting. As this unique property was historically designed and used as a church building, the Commission will expect the preservation of certain historic features as part of a creative and historically sensitive rehabilitation project, even if the proposed adaptive reuse is for a single-family home.

The Commission, working with community stakeholders, has prioritized the following:

1. The primary, street-facing Seminole and Kercheval elevations should be restored and preserved (including rooflines, stone detailing, leaded ornamental (stained) glass, and the steel casement windows. The plain colored panes may be replaced with clear glass.
2. The current open lawns along Seminole and Kercheval should remain unenclosed, excepting modest fencing along the south side of the building.
3. The flat-roofed block at the northwest corner of the parcel may be considered for more substantial alteration (e.g., a residential garage accessed from the rear alley).
4. Skylights to introduce additional interior daylighting may be acceptable, but only if they are minimally visible from the public right-of-way and do not extend past the ridgeline;
5. The less prominent and publicly visible portions on the southside of the building offer the best opportunity for design flexibility.
6. Property is zoned R1 and deed restriction prohibits the sale of alcohol

- At their 9/11/2024 regular meeting, the Commission issued a COA for an extensive rehabilitation of the building to include the retaining and repairing of the north and south side historic steel sash windows which are currently proposed for replacement.
- Staff notes that the Commission's 9/11/2024 approval did allow for the installation of a number of skylights at the building's south roof surface to accommodate the property owner's desire to admit more daylight into the interior space. See the below plan for the approved skylight scope:



Roof plan approved by the Commission at the 9/11/2024 regular meeting, to include the addition of 11 new skylights at the south roof surface.

- The applicant is currently seeking to revise the approved window scope for the north and south facades for the following reasons:

- **Presence of hazardous materials.** Specifically, the application includes a letter from Michigan Air Consultants which states the following:
 - *The existing windows and associated components contain hazardous materials, including lead and asbestos-containing materials (See test results attached). The deterioration of these materials presents significant health and safety risks during repair, handling, and ongoing occupancy. Proper abatement would require extensive removal and disturbance, making repair infeasible and unsafe compared to full replacement.*
- **Structural Failure and Missing Components.** Specifically, the application includes a letter from Michigan Air Consultants which states the following:
 - *The property was abandoned for approximately 15 years without maintenance. During this period, exposure to moisture, temperature swings, and lack of protection allowed the steel window frames to rust beyond repair. The extent of corrosion and material degradation precludes any meaningful restoration or stabilization of the existing units. One of the window units is missing its steel frame entirely, eliminating any structural integrity and making restoration impossible. Other windows exhibit severe corrosion and metal loss, compromising their function and rendering them structurally unsalvageable. The original operating hardware and mechanisms are completely inoperable. Due to rust, metal fatigue, and long-term neglect, these components cannot be restored to safe or functional condition*
- To support the above, the applicant has submitted an Asbestos Survey Report. The application also includes interior and exterior photos of the windows within the subject six openings as well as the below five photos which are meant to detail typical conditions/deterioration and areas of caulk and glazing



Photos by applicant. Showing typical conditions. Specific window locations not provided

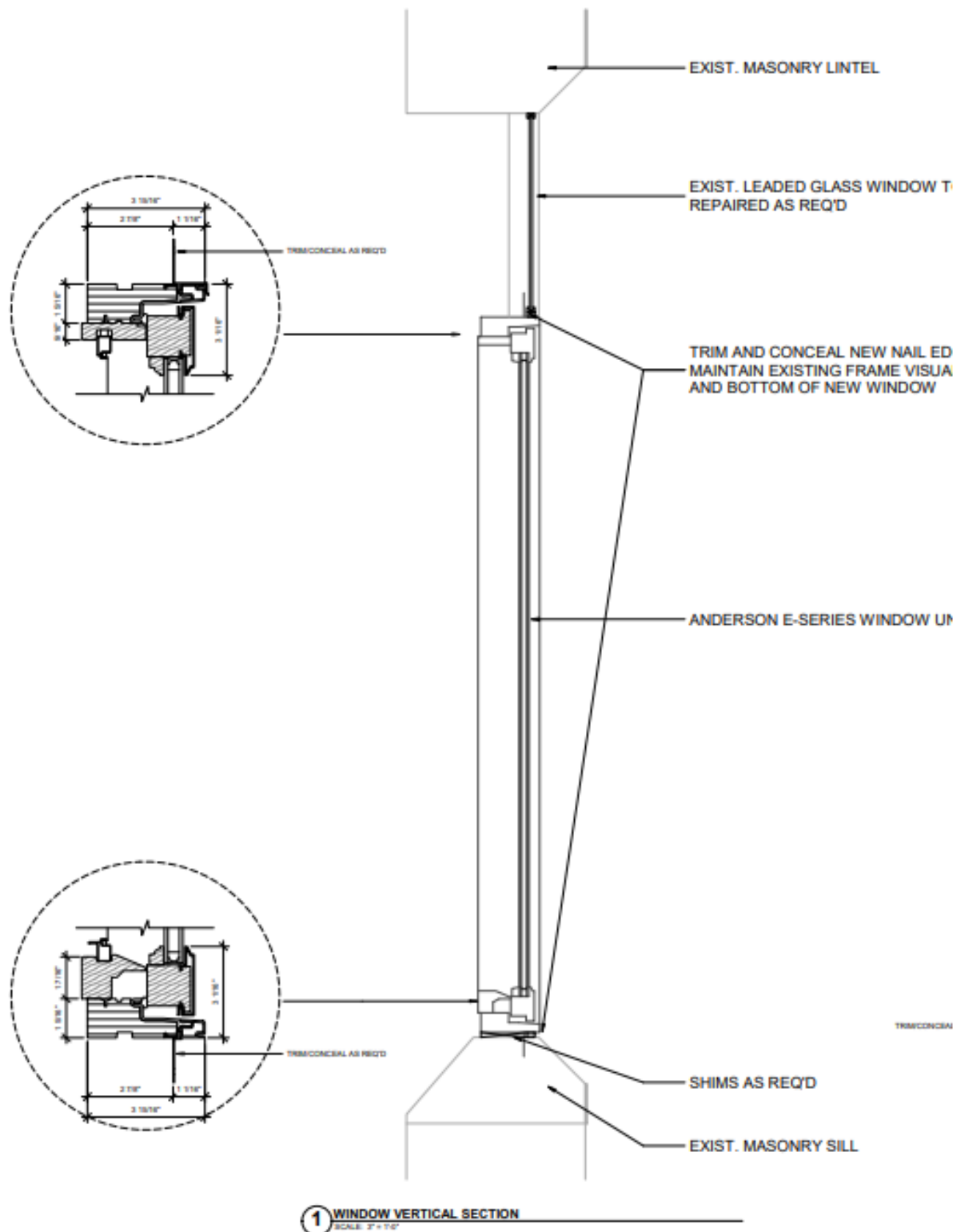


Photos by applicant. Showing typical conditions. Specific window locations not provided

- While the application materials do indicate the presence of asbestos at the subject steel casement windows, they do not adequately demonstrate that it is not technically and/or financially feasible to abate the hazardous materials while retaining the existing historic casement units. Also, the submitted photo documentation and narrative analysis does not adequately support the above statement that the windows are deteriorated to an extent that merits their replacement. Staff therefore recommends denial of the project because the removal of the original/historic steel casement does not meet the Standards.
- In order to understand how closely the proposed windows match the existing, staff requested that the applicant provide the following:
 - For both the existing AND proposed windows provide drawings showing the elevation and horizontal and vertical sections (typical). Drawing should be dimensioned and show all window components to include muntins, meeting rails, sash, frames, moldings, and other features. Construction details must be apparent. The window's relationship to the existing wall plane must also be provided
- See the below photos drawings which the applicant submitted in response to the above request. Staff notes that the submitted drawings do not adequately document the existing conditions/dimensions at the top and bottom portion of the frame to compare to the proposed. However, a review the below horizontal sections (drawings #2 and #3) revealed that the side portions of the frame for the proposed new windows will be significantly wider than the existing. Also, each of the proposed new casement windows will include a single, undivided panel of glass while the existing casement units are divided to include four panes of glass each. Staff therefore concludes the proposed casement windows are not an adequate match to the existing historic steel units



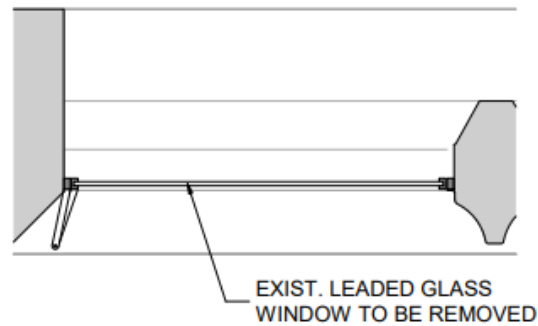
Photo provided by applicant. Note that the transoms panes appear to be slightly more inset within the opening than the operable sash. Staff notes that the submitted drawings do not provide dimensions of the top portion of the existing casement window frame (see yellow arrows).



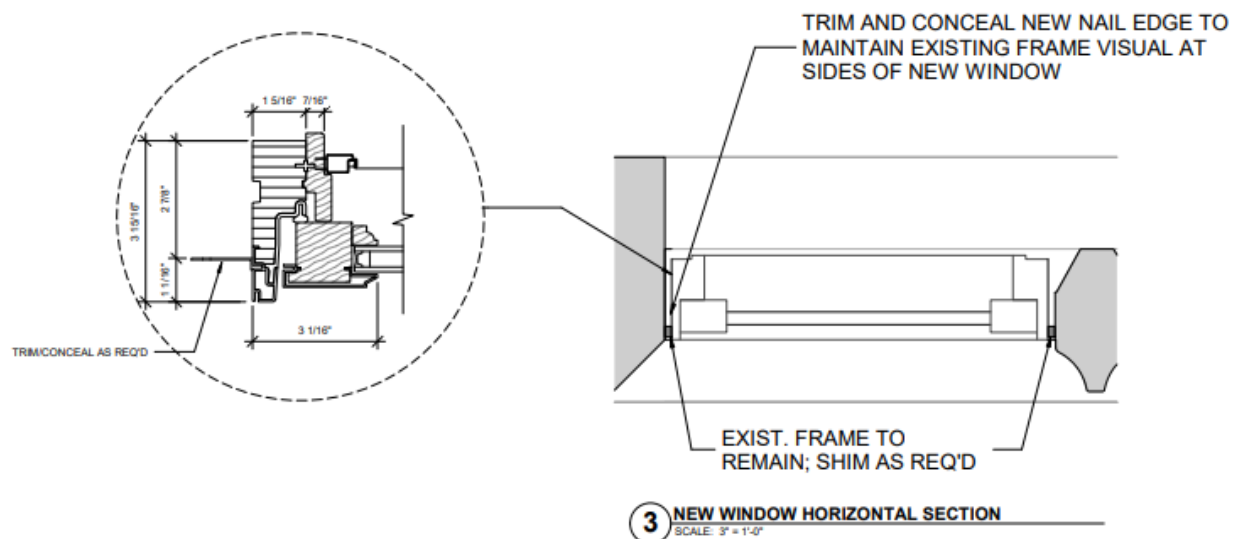
Vertical section showing proposed condition

NAIL EDGE TO
BE VISUAL AT TOP
OF WINDOW

WINDOW UNIT



2 EXISTING WINDOW HORIZONTAL SECTION
SCALE: 3" = 1'-0"



3 NEW WINDOW HORIZONTAL SECTION
SCALE: 3" = 1'-0"

Horizontal section showing existing and proposed condition

ISSUES

- The application does not adequately demonstrate that it technically and/or financially infeasible to abate the hazardous materials while retaining the existing historic steel casement units. Also, the submitted photo documentation and narrative analysis does not adequately demonstrate that the existing historic steel casement windows at the north and south walls are deteriorated to an extent that merits their replacement
- The proposed casement windows are not an adequate match to the existing historic steel units, which are distinctive, character-defining features previously identified as important by the Commission and described as such in the City's/DLBA marketing materials prior to the property's sale to the current owner.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Recommendation 1 of 1, Denial – Replace historic steel casement windows at six openings at the north and south walls with aluminum-clad wood units

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

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

5.) Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.

6.) 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 missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

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.

For the following reasons:

- The application does not adequately demonstrate that it technically and/or financially infeasible to abate the hazardous materials while retaining the existing historic steel casement units. Also, the submitted photo documentation and narrative analysis does not adequately demonstrate that the existing historic steel casement windows at the north and south walls are deteriorated to an extent that merits their replacement
- The proposed casement windows are not an adequate match to the existing historic steel units, which are distinctive, character-defining features previously identified as important by the Commission and described as such in the City's/DLBA marketing materials prior to the property's sale