

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager  
**FROM:** Alvin G. Coby, Assist. City Manager  
**DATE:** March 25, 2002  
**SUBJECT:** Status of Brick and Wood Street Restoration

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

That City Council provide input on the proposed restoration of the 400 block of Barcelona Street as a brick street and the "0" and "100" blocks of W. Gadsden as a wood block street.

**BACKGROUND:**

On July 16, 2001, City Council directed staff to cooperate with the North Hill Preservation Association (NHPA) for the restoration of two blocks of Gadsden Street (Palafox to Spring Streets). The specific direction was to restore the "0" block of Gadsden Street as a brick street and the "100" block as a wood street. The intent of the project was to gain sufficient information on the local costs for restoration of brick streets so as to develop a conceptual Citywide policy on brick street restoration.

Jointly, City staff and the NHPA developed a set of specifications for the removal of the asphalt surface from the two blocks of Gadsden Street in preparation for restoration. Specifications were released with a closing date of October 4, 2001. One respondent bid the project at \$31,200, which, with the concurrence of the NHPA, City staff rejected.

As an alternative to bidding the project, City staff acted on the recommendation of the NHPA and sought assistance from the Escambia County Road Prison. Initially, the Road Prison declined; but, following action by the Board of County Commissioners in November, offered labor services only. However, by the time City staff was notified that the Road Prison could supply labor in January, Public Works personnel had been scheduled to complete the project on an overtime basis.

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During the last weeks of December 2002, City crews removed 245 tons of asphalt from two blocks of Gadsden Street. The asphalt removal process from Gadsden Street was more difficult than expected because: 1) after initiating the project it was discovered that both blocks of Gadsden were primarily wood; 2) the asphalt's adherence to wood was greater than to brick; and 3) asphalt had been utilized to level the street and was much thicker than normal, 6" to 8" in some locations. The cost for removal was \$15,450.54 and did not include milling costs of \$1,449.50 and avoided disposal costs of \$6,615.00. Had Road Prison crews been utilized, labor costs would have been reduced; but, there would have remained costs for heavy equipment, equipment operators, milling, and disposal.

Following the removal of asphalt from Gadsden Street, City staff met with the NHPA to establish the next course of action. The initial intent, to restore a brick street for the purposes of establishing local costs for brick street restoration, was negated since Gadsden was primarily a wood block street. In keeping with the direction of Council, City staff and the NHPA decided to proceed with the restoration of the two blocks of Gadsden in wood. In addition, to establish costs for the restoration of brick streets, it was determined that the 400 block of Barcelona would be restored in brick.

#### **Barcelona Street – Brick Reconstruction**

Barcelona Street has been the subject of discussion by City Council on numerous occasions. The neighborhood is divided as to whether Barcelona Street should be resurfaced in asphalt or left as an exposed brick street. Regardless, the current condition of the 400 block of Barcelona is very poor. In that City Council has directed that no brick street be resurfaced, both staff and the NHPA agree that the condition of Barcelona should be improved. Hence, staff is proceeding to restore the 400 block of Barcelona Street.

The NHPA is of the opinion that 55.22 square yards in the 400 block of Barcelona Street needs to be restored. The 55.22 square yards consists of those areas patched with asphalt and some areas of brick in very poor condition. The repair of 55.22 square yards per the proposal of the NHPA will eliminate the most severe conditions and provide an all brick street.

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City staff has agreed to proceed with the restoration of 55.22 square yards of brick surface on Barcelona Street. However, City staff is of the opinion from measurements taken by the Streets Activity that in order to provide the best possible brick-driving surface, minimize future complaints from those who drive this block of Barcelona, and to reduce the City's future maintenance requirements, it would be in the City's best interest to restore 277.5 square yards. While much of the 277.5 square yards measured by Public Works are very minor repairs and presents no current problem, left unattended the flaws could lead to a requirement for more extensive repairs in the future.

Finally, City staff agrees with the NHPA that a properly restored brick street will last for decades with little maintenance. The proposal of the NHPA will minimize restoration costs by utilizing supervised unskilled Road Prison labor. City staff is of the opinion that specifications should be developed and the project bid. Undoubtedly, bidding the project will increase costs; however, given that this is a public street that is intended to be functional for an extended period and to establish costs for possible future restorations, the project should be given to an insured and bonded firm that has a labor force experienced in this type construction.

#### **West Gadsden Street - Wood Block Restoration**

The City's unintended milling of the "0" and "100" blocks of Gadsden Street set into motion the restoration of the street in wood block. Initially, it was believed that the "0" block was brick and only the 100 block of Gadsden was wood block. Removal of the asphalt surface revealed that only the Gadsden Street entrance off of Palafox Street was brick and that the majority of the "0" block is wood block. As a result, City staff is proceeding to restore two (2) blocks of Gadsden in wood.

Both City staff and the NHPA agree that there is a total of 223.14 yards of wood block in the two blocks of Gadsden Street that must be restored. Under the NHPA proposal, the brick entrance off Palafox Street would be extended approximately 40 feet or 124.44 square yards of new brick street surface. The new brick street surface would reduce the amount of wood block area to be repaired to 210.14 square yards. Provided the majority of the wood blocks could be salvaged, the new brick area might eliminate the need to purchase replacement wood blocks.

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The NHPA proposal again utilizes supervised, unskilled Road Prison labor. The City has absolutely no experience in the reconstruction or maintenance of wood block streets, nor has City staff been able to identify any community that maintains a public wood block street. To date, only one firm has been located that constructs a wood surface similar to that of a street, Kaswell & Co., Inc., Framingham, MA. Hence, the proposal of the NHPA to contract with Mr. Phil Livesay, who has represented that he is experienced in this type of construction is acceptable under certain conditions.

In that Mr. Livesay will be supervising the restoration of a public street, a contractual understanding will be required between Mr. Livesay and the City of Pensacola. The contract will require that Mr. Livesay be insured and bonded in the amounts normally required of those contractors who perform work on public facilities. Should the City not be able to reach an agreement with Mr. Livesay, City staff would prepare specifications and bid the project.

**Environmental Issues:**

Gadsden Street is paved with 100+ year-old creosote treated wood blocks. Any replacement blocks that the City might need to restore the street will be creosote treated southern yellow pine. At this point, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has not taken an official position on a creosote treated wood block street. As a precaution, the City is making arrangements to have the stormwater runoff tested. Once the City has the stormwater test results, the information will be provided to FDEP for an opinion.

An additional concern is the waterproofing of the street. Exposed wood blocks absorb water. As water is absorbed the blocks swell and can cause the surface to buckle. The original means of waterproofing, as is the process for current industrial wood floors, is to flush the street with an emulsion of coal tar pitch and then squeegee the excess off. The coal tar not only seals the woods as a waterproofing agent but also fills all of the voids. The process was effective and efficient, but questionable from an environmental perspective. Should the City find it necessary to utilize new wood blocks, coating them in coal tar is probably still the most effective protective measure. Should new pavers not be required, a tar sand mixture will probably be utilized as mortar, with the restored areas of blocks resting on a bed of tar similar to that utilized by roofers. Regardless of the process(s) utilized, an opinion from FDEP will be requested.

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**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The estimated NHPA cost to restore one block of Barcelona Street in brick is \$2,067.17, of which \$1,567.38 is material. The NHPA's proposal does not include the amount of area the City ideally would like to restore, nor does it include any costs for equipment. In addition, bidding the project, as preferred by staff, will probably significantly increase labor costs.

The NHPA projected costs to restore the two blocks of Gadsden Street in brick and wood is \$10,927.54. The NHPA proposal does not include equipment costs; Mr. Livesay's costs to meet the City contractual obligations; or the costs to reconstruct curbs, gutters, and driveways.

To date, the City has expended \$15,450.54 for asphalt removal and \$1,449.50 for milling, for a total of \$16,900 to prepare Gadsden Street for restoration. It is City staff's intent to budget \$30,000 for the restoration phase of Barcelona and Gadsden Streets out of an abundance of caution with the hope that the project can be completed within the NHPA cost parameters.

The cost to mill and resurface three (3) blocks of City streets in asphalt is approximately \$3,000 per block, or \$9,000 total.