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# Downtown Alley Project

From Blight to Beauty  
One Alley at a Time  
Submitted - January 14, 2019

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## What is a Living Alley?

A **living alley** is a street designed as a place for people. It can be considered an "Urban Living Room". Its design can reconfigure the geometry and surfacing of the street, or simply add low cost amenities for residents while maintaining the traditional curbed right-of-way. Whatever approach, living alleys prioritize the entire public right-of-way for pedestrians and bicyclists with alternative but clear physical boundaries. A living alley also has areas of exclusive pedestrian use and areas where vehicles are allowed to share space with pedestrians and bicyclists.



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# Introduction

## Indian Alley

Alleys are very old features of American cities that today are usually only used as places for dumpsters or excess parking. Cities are now repurposing these spaces as a strategy for revitalization that integrates the city's history. While alleys tend to be underused spaces, simple changes that make them attractive to pedestrians can help ensure they become active areas, and viewed as social spaces to be used, rather than avoided.

Vallejo has a unique network of alleyways connecting streets, businesses, and parking lots. Currently, these spaces are not being utilized as pedestrian walkways, but mostly serve as side streets for cars and dumpster storage. Here, Indian Alley was selected for improvements because of its central location and connection to current businesses, and because it contains numerous historical buildings that can be built upon in developing a historical sense of place.

Multifunctional:

- **Lighting:** Indian alley has a great location and ample space for socializing. Adding lights to the alley would encourage people to use them as pedestrian and bike ways in the evenings, and create an overall sense of safety. This would also improve safety when people are using the alleyways to move between businesses or businesses and parking areas.
- **Seating:** Adding tables, chairs, and benches in the alleys and on side build out spaces would enable people to eat, and socialize in these spaces. One potential concern here may be the presence of large dumpsters and the general appearance of the alley. To overcome these limitations the dumpsters could be shifted to parking areas or other spaces not being used during business hours, and then transported back in the evenings or other hours.
- **Green Spaces:** To help with the overall appearance, potted plants can be brought in to add green spaces and serve as decoration. Adding potted plants and flowers lining the building walls would enhance the overall appearance of the space, while making it more visually stimulating.

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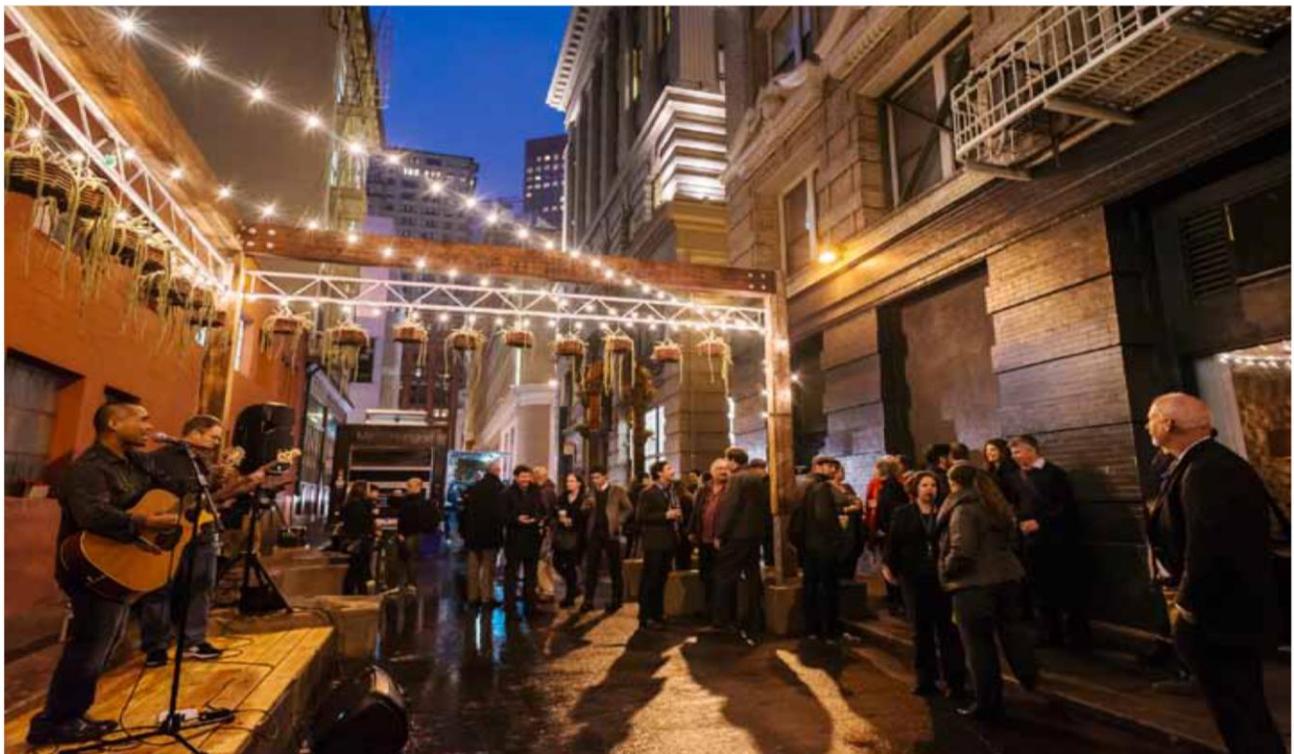
Circulation:

- Signage and way finding: The alleys are based on a basic grid system running parallel to the streets, but enhanced signs would improve way finding to key features and businesses. The current signs in Indian Alley are new looking, but they are fairly small compared to the surrounding areas. Having larger signs would draw more attention to the Alley and help designate it as a place, not simply a passageway.

Sense of Place:

- Murals and historical signs: The alleys in Vallejo have an interesting history of being named after cars, and are a historical element to the downtown. The buildings lining the alley show some of the history here because they are old carriage houses turned into present day garages. More people could appreciate this interesting architecture with signs highlighting their stories. Murals are another potential method for integrating the history into the built environment. A few of the buildings are already brightly painted making the trek through the alley interesting, but having local artists work with historians to showcase images would add another level of interest to the area, while simultaneously involving the community and working towards a self-identified sense of place.

**Contact Information: Vallejo Living Alley Project Committee (coming soon)**





**Location:** 300/400 block of Indian Alley, located in the heart of downtown between Sonoma Boulevard to the east and Sacramento Street to the west.

**Link to a Toolkit for Alleys:**

[http://default.sfplanning.org/plans-and-programs/in-your-neighborhood/market octavia living alley/Market-Octavia-Living-Alleys-Toolkit\\_FINAL-WEB.pdf](http://default.sfplanning.org/plans-and-programs/in-your-neighborhood/market%20octavia%20living%20alley/Market-Octavia-Living-Alleys-Toolkit_FINAL-WEB.pdf)

**Project Description:**

To revitalize a section of Indian Alley in the downtown by making it safe, green and clean, thereby creating an appealing pedestrian and biking passage connecting the downtown to the waterfront.

During the period when Vallejo was being considered as the site for the Capitol of California, the City's street grid was laid out with streets bearing state names running east/west and county names running north/south. At the same time all of the blocks were bisected by alleys.

The black and white picture, on page 7, is that of the 300 block of Indian Alley taken in the late 1800's. Successful CDBG Neighborhood Grant Project: The Butte Street Stairs. Total amount of funds requested for the Living Alley Project: ( to be determined).

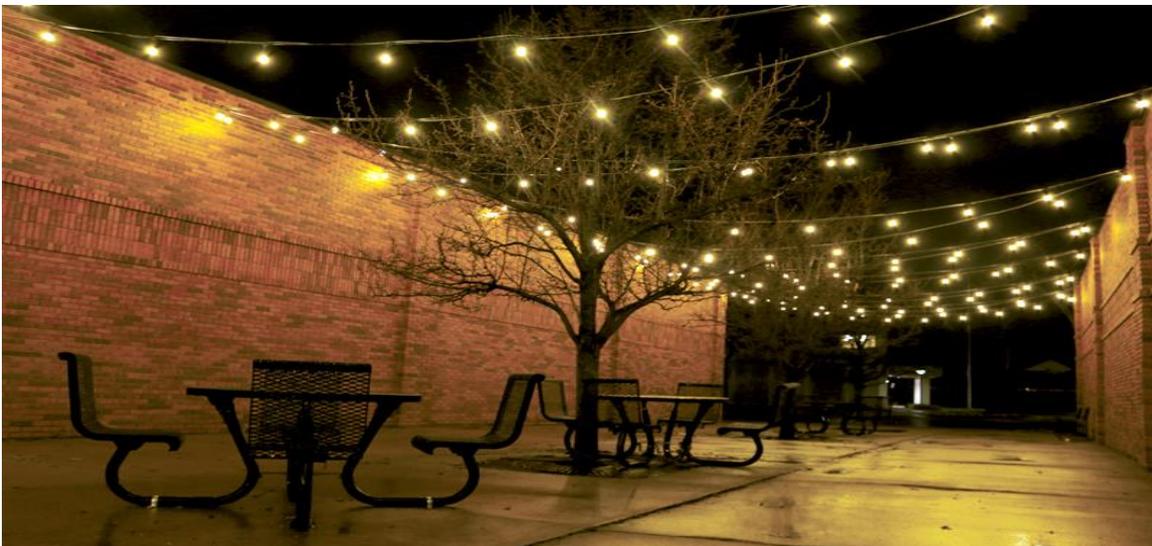
The Main goal of living alleys is to create safe and active public places for people, especially where there are narrow sidewalks or little open space. In doing so, they add vitality to the street and to the block. Living alleys are also part of a pedestrian and bicycle network. Living alleys improve pedestrian safety by designing alleys as places first and roads second by creating expectations that reinforce community expectations. The funds would be used to fund pedestrian-oriented lighting, security cameras, landscaping, pavement resurfacing, material for eco-friendly drainage systems and proper placement of waste containers.

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**The alleys could look like this**



**Or this**



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**And not this**



**Or this**



