

STAFF REPORT: 04/10/2024 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: D. RIEDEN

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00087

ADDRESS: 232 W GRAND RIVER (1400 WASHINGTON BLVD)

HISTORIC DISTRICT: WASHINGTON BLVD LOCAL

APPLICANT/TENANT: PAUL HOWARD, HONEY ONE LLC

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 03/25/2024

DATES OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 03/25/2024, 03/27/2024, 04/02/2024

SCOPE: ALTER STOREFRONT (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Erected in 1926, this is one of five buildings in the Washington Boulevard Local Historic District designed by Louis Kamper. Also known as the “Industrial Bank Building”, this twenty-two-story brick and limestone building differs from his earlier work and is described by the Historic Designation Advisory Board’s (HDAB) Final Report which notes the following:

“This building differs from his earlier commissions in that it is more in line with contemporary concepts of skyscraper design. It is ornamented with Art Deco-influenced Gothic motifs but derives its visual impact chiefly from the vertical emphasis of the continuous piers between the windows. The building tapers at the top with the use of minor setbacks and is topped by an ornate parapet wall.”

The main entrance centers on Grand River with new cast stone surround, glass transom sidelights and a polished granite water table, work completed without Commission approval. From the main entrance, ornate cast-iron storefronts with a polished granite water table wrap around the corner on to Washington Boulevard. Historic images reveal additional entrances were present on Washington Boulevard and Grand River (*See Figure 1*).

Where these secondary entrances occurred, the storefront angled inward toward smaller inset doorways. Non-historic exterior work, which was undertaken in the 1980s includes the replacement of all windows with aluminum sash units as the building has been rehabilitated for residential use. Unapproved work on this property has been identified as the following: the formerly recessed entrances on the Washington Blvd and Grand River were reconfigured without approval, and the main south entrance was reconfigured, and an inscribed sign mounted without approval. This application addresses one of these violations.



Site Photo 1, by Staff March 25, 2024: (facing north) showing existing corner storefront at south corner of Grand River and Washington Boulevard.



Figure 1, by Burton Collection, date unknown: (facing northeast) showing corner storefront at southwest corner of Grand River and Washington Boulevard and former storefront entrances along Washington Boulevard and Grand River.

PROPOSAL

The applicant is a tenant who has leased the 1400 Washington corner commercial space within the 232 W. Grand River property. This proposal is focused only on this portion of the building, which consists of 3 commercial bays from each side of the corner of Grand River and Washington Blvd, separated by stone columns, to total 6 commercial storefront bays. New glass is proposed for installation at each storefront, leaving the surrounding cast iron framing untouched, except for the two central bays for each side, which would be altered in the following manner: each bay would have the current door removed and recessed back to its near-original historic location creating a recessed doorways along these storefronts. Drawings are supplied through the applicant by Studio Detroit Architects.

- Remove existing doors and remove the existing aluminum window system, while maintaining all original exterior cast iron framing per attached drawings.
- At the proposed doorway locations only, the existing granite water table base will be modified to provide two wider recessed entryways. New sill construction to match existing, using existing granite cladding to be reused at water table base to match existing per attached drawings.
- Install Tubelite commercial storefront system along all bays (and two doorways) with thermal pane glass and dark bronze anodized finish per attached drawings.

PROPOSED ELEVATIONS

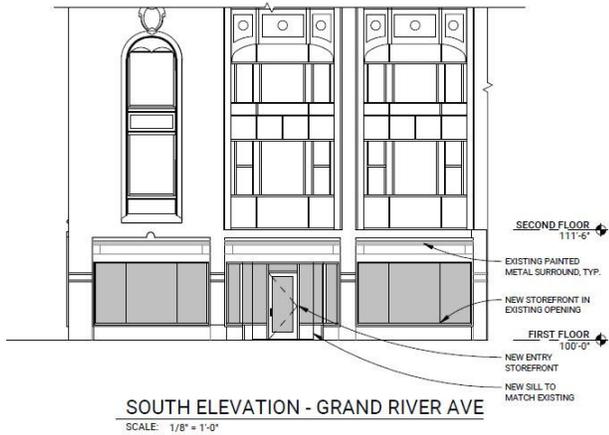
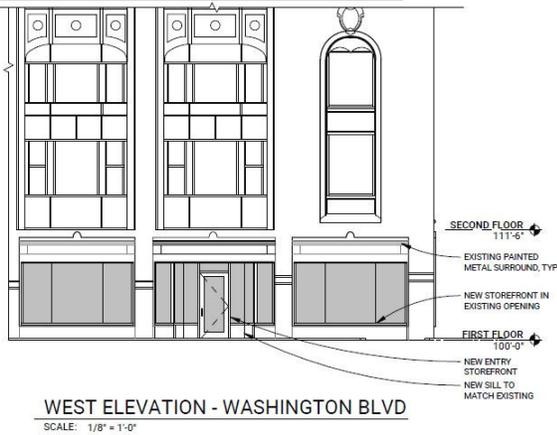
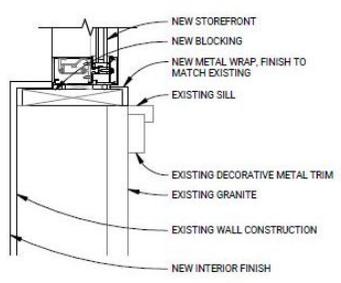


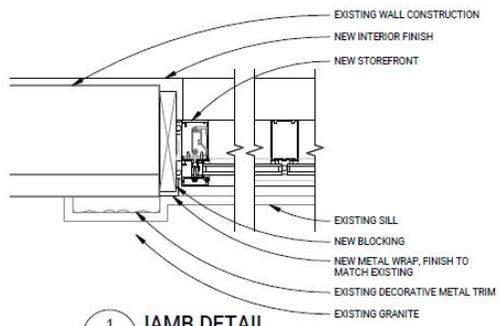
Figure 2, by Applicant: Proposed elevations showing new entry and storefront while retaining existing cast-iron trim.

PROPOSED PLAND AND DETAILS

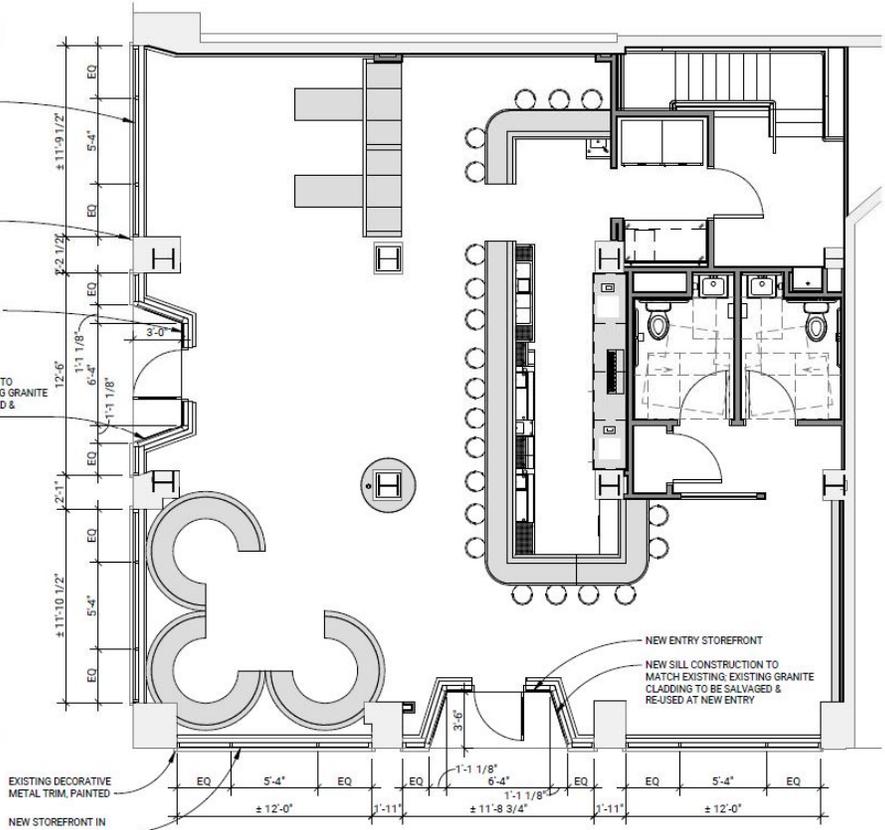
PROJECT NO. "WASHINGTON BAR"
22071 1400 WASHINGTON BLVD, DETROIT, MI



2 SILL DETAIL
TYP 1 1/2" = 1'-0"



1 JAMB DETAIL
TYP 1 1/2" = 1'-0"



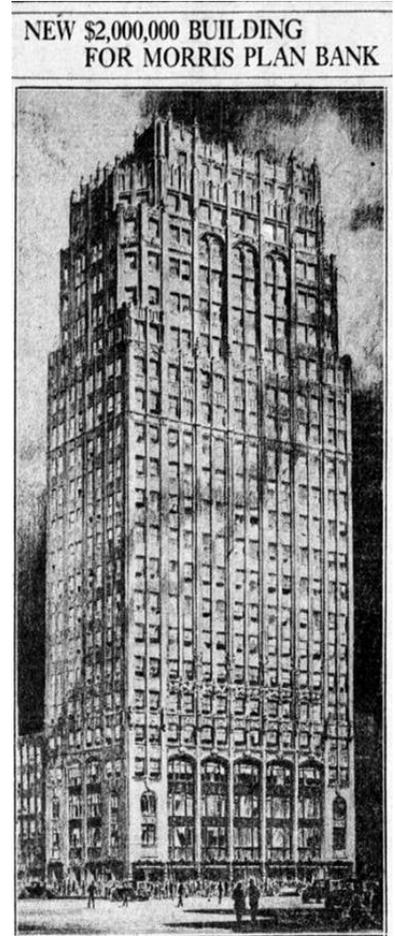
FIRST FLOOR PLAN - SCHEMATIC
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION REVIEW: 04.03.24

STUDIODETROIT ARCHITECTS

Figure 3, by Applicant: Proposed plan showing new entry and storefront while retaining existing cast-iron trim.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The HDAB report for Washington Blvd Local HD, enacted in August 2003, offers the following insight regarding the boulevard:
 - In mid-nineteenth century, Washington Blvd, one of the “grand boulevards” as identified in the 1807 Woodward Street plan, was developed as an upper-class residential area. One of the residents, J. Burgess Book, Jr., dreamt of transforming this boulevard into Detroit’s most exclusive shopping district after traveling Europe and the USA, studying grand boulevards.
 - The Book family controlled 60% of the street frontage. Book was influenced by the City Beautiful movement, grown out of the Chicago World Fair of 1893. In 1915, Edward H. Bennett, who collaborated with Daniel Burnham on the Chicago Plan, used the idea of this movement in the master plan for Detroit. *“Although his grand designs were not realized, his recommendations encouraged Book to plan a monumental Beaux Arts streetscape. To carry out his scheme, he retained Louis Kamper, one of Detroit’s best known architects, to design the buildings. Kamper designed five buildings in all for the Book family. Each of these was intended to be an individualistic structure of architectural distinction that would fit into his overall streetscape plan, which he published in a still extant rendering entitled “Development of Washington Boulevard and the Book Estate.” With the exception of the **Industrial Bank Building**, all of the structures were Beaux Arts classical in design.”*
- The Elements of Design for the Washington Blvd Local HD offer the following insights for this proposal:
 - *Square storefront windows and entrance bays line the ground floor of the commercial buildings.*
 - *Voids in the front façades of buildings originally used for commercial purposes are generally arranged vertically in bays and horizontally by floor in a regular fashion due to the stylistic derivation of the buildings, their function, and/or their steel frame and curtain wall construction. Voids are arranged according to functions of spaces behind them. Generally, a regular rhythm of entrances and storefront windows exists on the ground floor of the buildings.*
 - *Most of the original entrances facing Washington Boulevard are centered on the façades of individual buildings or, where there are multiple storefronts, are arranged in a regular pattern along the street façade... While some entrance openings are recessed, as with the Book Building, no façade projections beyond the front lot line exist at ground level. Marquees and awnings above first floor entrances were and are common.*
 - *The major building materials common to wall surfaces in the district are limestone, brick, and terra-cotta. Many granite bases also exist. Façades are often trimmed with limestone and/or terra cotta. Pilasters, window frames and spandrels of the Industrial Building are bronze. Window frames are of wood or steel; building grates and the framing of storefront windows and doors are generally metal.*
 - *The names of street intersections in bronze letters are located on buildings on corner lots above the first floor.*



Here is shown the new Industrial Bank building at Washington Boulevard and Grand River Avenue, which Monday will be the scene of the formal opening of the Industrial Morris Plan bank. Construction was started March 1, by the J. B. Book, Jr., corporation, and was completed according to schedule, October 1. Besides the bank other tenants soon are to occupy offices and stores in the building.

Figure 4. A 1926 Detroit Free Press article showing a rendering of the “Industrial Bank” building at Washington Blvd and Grand River. Source: Detroit Public Library Burton Collection.

- Architectural details generally relate to architectural styles. Early 20th Century buildings in the Beaux Arts, Renaissance Revival, and Italian Romanesque styles exhibit round arches, cartouches, quoins, fluted pilasters, and other Classically derived details... Storefronts typically have apron walls and large expanses of glass, most in their original configurations.
- A strong, overall wall of continuity is formed by the buildings that abut and are sited on the front lot line.
- Signage was placed above the ground floor storefront windows, often in a panel designated for such purpose; sometimes it was part of a marquee or awning, or as a structure on top of the building.
- This property has received the following Certificates of Appropriateness (COA)s:
 - Sept 2019 Rehab building, restore storefronts.
 - July 2021 Install “super sign” on north elevation
- This property, which includes the larger building and storefronts not part of this application, has a property owner with open violations with the Historic District Commission, who is a different party than the applicant. The following violations exist on this parcel. While the storefront violation (scope 1) is being addressed in this application, the signage violation (scope 2) is not.
 - Violation scope 1: Reconfigured/ existing recessed entrances on Washington Blvd and Grand River without approval. (See Site Photo 3)
 - Violation scope 2: Installed “Louis Kamper Building” sign and modified south entrance without approval (See Site photo 2).
- Staff assesses that the granite water table is original historic material dating to the original construction. The existing cast iron storefront frames are original historic features as well. (See photos 3&4) Note that newer storefront window units (visible as a slightly different smoother/ tone of brown) are in fact fitted carefully in the original iron frames. It is staff’s opinion that the storefront cast-iron frame and the granite water table are distinctive historic, character defining features.
- Staff observed that during the period of significance, it was the nature of commercial storefronts to adapt and change over time (See figure 1). Since the time of designation, it is staff’s opinion that retention of historic fabric is of greater importance than its geometry.

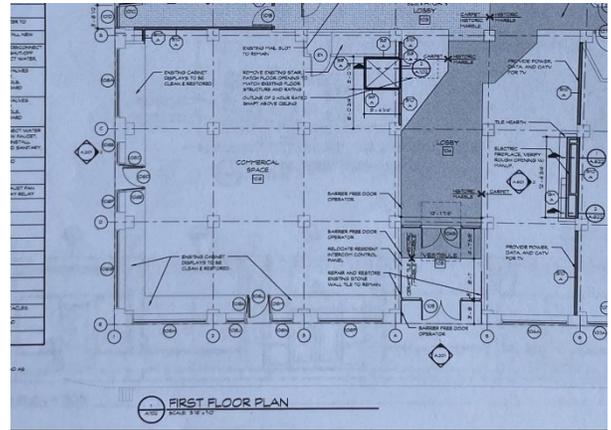


Figure 5, Site Plan from 2019 COA (not from applicant): showing previously approved door openings which have been closed without approval (not related to this application).



Site Photo 2, by Staff March 25, 2024: (south elevation) showing “Louis Kamper Building” inscription and modified south entrance, work completed without approval by the owner (not related to this application).



Site Photo 3, by Staff April 2, 2024: (interior west elevation) showing original granite water table material (arrows) as part of former recessed entrance, altered without approval.

This proposal incorporates historic material still remaining from an unapproved alteration with a modest change in the entrance's geometry, restoring a recessed entry condition while accommodating universal access.

- The proposed features do not conflict with the Elements of Design in materials or design.

ISSUES

- Staff has no issues with the proposed plan.
- The violating scope identified in this report, but not yet addressed by the property owner, has been referred to BSEED for enforcement.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78. Determination of the Historic District Commission – Certificate of Appropriateness

It is staff's opinion that the project generally conforms to the Elements of Design for the district and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness as proposed.



Site Photo 4, by Staff March 27, 2024: (west elevation) showing cast iron header detail over storefront, and newer storefront window units fitted carefully into the original frames.



Site Photo 5, by Staff March 27, 2024: (west elevation) showing cast iron header over current west entrance.