

STAFF REPORT 02-08-2023 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG

APPLICATION NUMBER: 23-8198

ADDRESS: 1452 W ALEXANDRINE

HISTORIC DISTRICT: WOODBRIDGE FARM

APPLICANT: EDWARD POTAS

ARCHITECT: INFUZ ARCHITECTS LTD.

PROPERTY OWNER: HAWKYTOWN LLC

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 01-16-2023

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 01-24-2023

SCOPE: REHABILITATE BUILDING, INSTALL FENCING, OTHER SITE IMPROVEMENTS



View of 1452 West Alexandrine, looking northeast. The parcel features a mid-century service station building set at the northeast corner of a completely paved lot. The large 19th century dwelling in the background is 4114 Trumbull, a contributing structure to the historic district but not the subject of this application. Staff photo, January 24, 2023.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The property, located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Trumbull and West Alexandrine, is currently occupied by a vacant mid-century service station building and a large expanse of paved surface. Six-foot barbed wire fencing encloses the majority of the parcel, excepting the approach apron to the vehicle-sized openings in the building.

The service station building has a fair degree of architectural integrity. While the southwest facing storefront opening was incompatibly infilled decades ago, the structure retains its original porcelain enamel tiles, now coated with a light blue paint. In a few areas an original red tile finish is observed below chipping paint. The detailing of the original porcelain enamel system extends to the “bookending” of window and door openings with vertically fluted panels or “drapes”. The tile system, though painted, appears to be in overall fair condition with minimal displacement. Also still present are original wooden doors and transom on the south facing façade, including at the two vehicle-sized doors. The non-primary elevations (north and alley) of the building are plain concrete block.



View of the building. Note original red finish of tile visible near parapet edge. Staff photo, January 24, 2023



View of porcelain enamel panel system and original doors at south elevation; note the vertically oriented “drapes” positioned at either side of the openings, which are part of the panel system. Staff photo, January 24, 2023.



Detail view of porcelain enamel panels to immediate right of storefront opening; note original red finish visible. Staff photo, January 24, 2023.

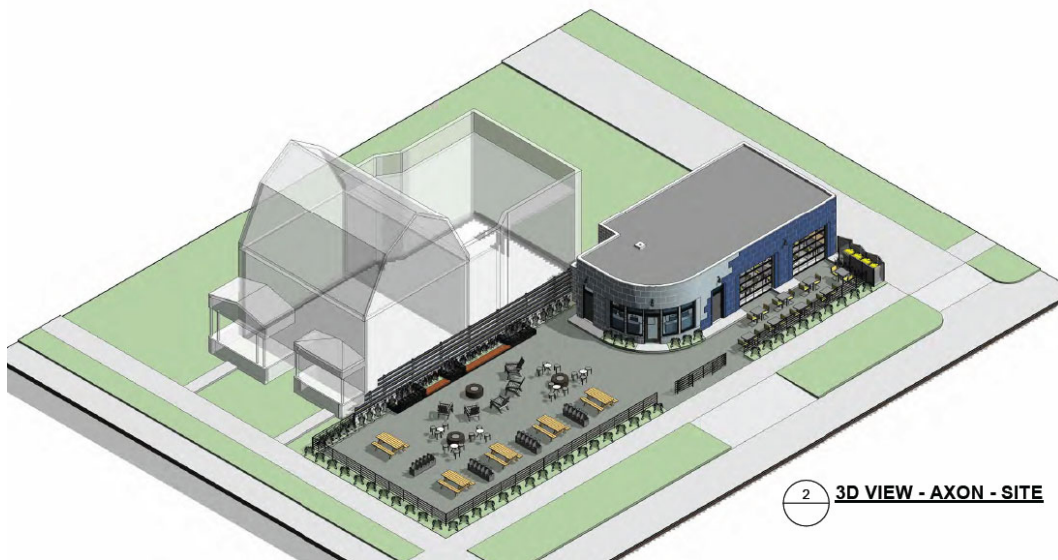


Subject site outlined in yellow. North is up. Detroit Parcel Viewer.

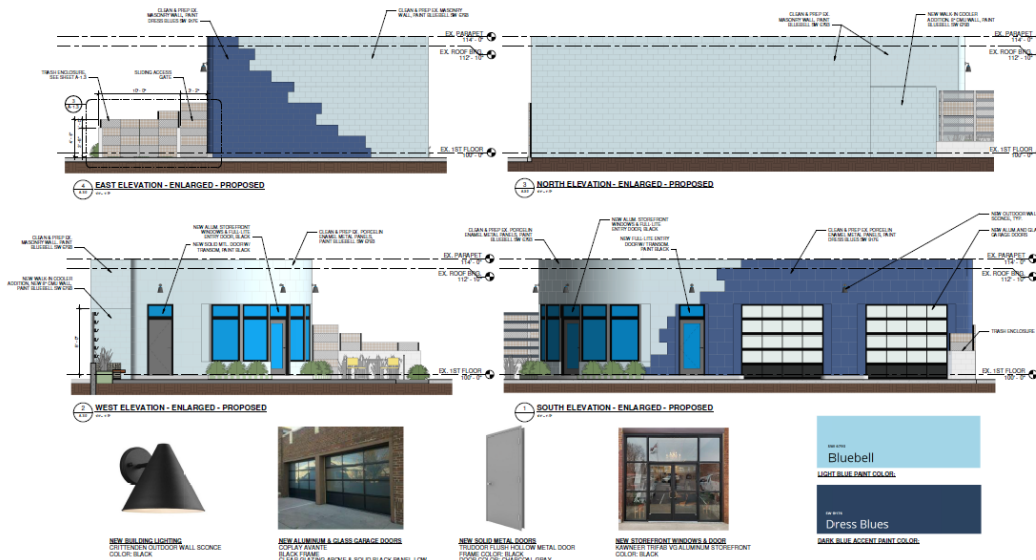
PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes a rehabilitation of the site and the existing building, per the submitted drawings, narrative, and product cut sheets. The scope of work includes, but is not limited to:

- Replacement of all existing door and window systems with new anodized aluminum storefront systems and matching aluminum and glass overhead doors.
- Repair and painting of the porcelain enamel panel facade panels, and painting of all concrete masonry unit walls.
- Construction of a new 1-story block walk-in cooler addition.
- Installation of new exterior lighting.
- Site improvements, including replacement of all site concrete with a flexible plaza constructed of decomposed granite, landscaping, construction of a new masonry, metal, and metal mesh screen wall at the north property line, and construction of a new trash enclosure.



Rendering from applicant's submission materials, above. Proposed treatment of primary elevations, below.



STAFF OBSERVATIONS

- The Woodbridge Farm Historic District was established in 1991. There is no listing of contributing/non-contributing (i.e., historic/non-historic) properties provided in the district designation report prepared by the Historic Designation Advisory Board.
- Staff assesses that the building is non-contributing to the district (i.e., non-historic), as the designation report for the district focuses exclusively on residential development that concluded in the 1920s. The Commission is not required to follow staff recommendation concerning historic/contributing status.
- Nevertheless, under the ordinance and state law, the Commission maintains jurisdiction over exterior changes to both historic and non-historic resources in local historic districts. For alterations to non-historic/non-contributing properties (similar to reviews for new construction), the Commission is tasked with assessing the general *compatibility* of the proposed changes with respect to the historic and architectural character *of the district*. A non-contributing property is presupposed to have no features of significance requiring preservation.
- Staff notes that this mid-century building does exhibit important architectural character of its own, independent of any direct connection to the architecture and historic character established for the district. The proposal recognizes the porcelain enamel tile as an important design element; were this a contributing building, staff would define this as a distinctive feature.
- Though the building's original doors on the south elevation will be replaced, and these elements do have some basic historic character, staff assesses that they would not necessarily be distinctive features worthy of exact reproduction or repair (in the event that the building was contributing). The applicant notes that these elements are in deteriorated condition. The proposed alterations are modern analogs and would not detract from the historic character of the district.
- The walk-in cooler addition is very small, carefully situated, and is not incompatible with the site or the district.
- Staff has no concern with the site improvements.

ISSUES

- None. Staff's opinion is that the proposed design is compatible with the historic district.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

Staff recommends that the proposal for rehabilitation at 1452 West Alexandrine should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Woodbridge Farm Historic District's Elements of Design.