

STAFF REPORT 05-10-2023 MEETING

PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG

APPLICATION NUMBER: 23-8337

ADDRESS: 1346 BROADWAY

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BROADWAY AVENUE LOCAL

APPLICANT/ARCHITECT: BRIAN REBAIN/KRAEMER DESIGN GROUP

OWNER: CAMBRIDGE ACQUISITION LLC

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 04-17-2023

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 04-19-2023

SCOPE: REHABILITATE BUILDING

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The subject property is a prominent early 20th century high-rise Italian Romanesque office building located on the north side of Broadway Avenue, mid-block between East Grand River to the west and Gratiot to the east. It is one of fifteen buildings in the Broadway Avenue Local Historic District, a small non-contiguous district adjacent to several other downtown historic districts.

Per the report of the Historic Designation Advisory Board (HDAB), the building at 1346 Broadway (AKA *1342-1346 Broadway*, *American Radiator Building*, *Broadway Exchange Building*, and most recently the *Harvard Square Building*) was designed by architect George D. Mason & Company and erected in 1925-26. Other prominent landmarks designed by Mason, one of Detroit's most prolific and respected architects, include the Masonic Temple, the Ransom-Gillis House, and the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, among dozens of other fine residential, commercial, and institutional buildings.



View of 1346 Broadway, looking north. Staff photo, April 19, 2023.

The HDAB report gives the following architectural description for the building, which is still accurate:

Eleven stories in height, the Broadway Exchange Building has a concrete and steel frame clad in buff terra cotta, with variegated mauve-hued marble in the mezzanine level on the street façade and in concrete and beige brick on the other façades. The tall and narrow Italian Romanesque -inspired

façade displays three vertical banks of paired windows that, flanked by elongated “columns,” rise froth the 4th through the 11th floor; at the top of each bank is a pair of round-headed windows below a centered rondel. The whole capped by an arch springing from the capitals beneath. Crowning the façade is a low gable. The façade, virtually unaltered above the modernized street level, displays a wealth of decoration in terra cotta.



Detroit parcel viewer, 1346 Broadway outlined in yellow.



Detail view of the building's base. The ground level storefronts retain no original historic fabric of significance. Staff photo, April 19, 2023.



Detail view of the building's crown. Note extant flagpole. Staff photo, April 19, 2023.



Detail view of the window and façade conditions. Staff photo, April 19, 2023.



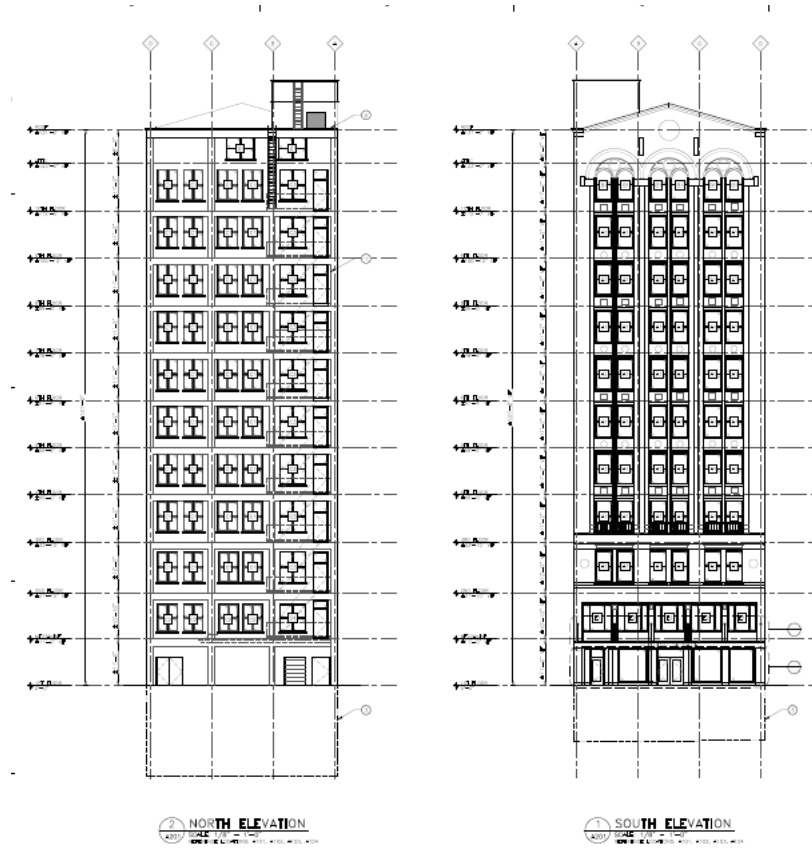
Distant view with additional historic context, view from Gratiot. Staff photo, April 19, 2023.



View of the west facing elevation from adjacent parking lot. Staff photo, April 19, 2023.

PROPOSAL

Per the submitted drawings, narrative, cut sheets, site line studies, window replacement details, and presentation deck, the applicant proposes to rehabilitate the building, to include approximately 6,000 square feet of food and beverage space for a single tenant, spread across a portion of the basement, a portion of the first floor, and mezzanine, and approximately 28,000 square feet of residential space on the second through tenth floors. The proposed work includes, but is not limited to, restoration of the exterior masonry, restoration of historic windows, the repair of the building's fire escape, removal of the flagpole, and installation of new windows, storefront system, exterior doors, roofing material, and rooftop equipment.



STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Broadway Avenue Local Historic District was established in 2005.
- The applicant proposes to replace original windows above the mezzanine level. National Park Service guidelines applicable in this instance, from the online document “[Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards](#),” states thus:

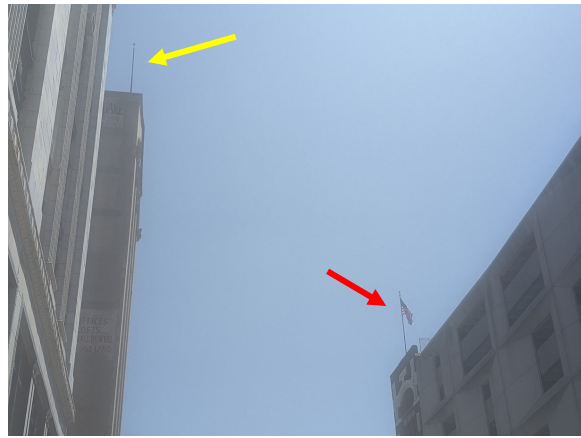
When historic windows exist, they should be repaired when possible. When they are too deteriorated to repair, selection of the replacement windows must be guided by Standard 6. Design, visual qualities, and materials are specific criteria provided by the Standard that are pertinent to evaluating the match of a replacement window. Evaluating the adequacy of the match of the replacement window involves the consideration of multiple issues.

Using the hierarchy of a building’s features and taking into account the window’s visibility, some general guidance can be drawn.

...

*Replacement windows on the primary, street-facing or highly visible elevations of **tall buildings above a distinct base** must match the historic windows in size, design and all details that can be perceived from ground level. **Substitute materials can be considered to the extent that they do not compromise other important visual qualities.** [emphasis added]*

- The applicant states that the existing windows above the mezzanine level are steel and have rusted into a ruined condition that precludes effective and feasible restoration. A selection of photographs, and a report provided by Blackberry Windows, supports this contention. Staff agrees with this professional assessment.
- For the proposed replacement windows, reviewed with respect to the NPS guidance given above, staff finds that the proposed replacement windows effectively reproduce the design and visual qualities of the original windows. New windows of the same historic material (steel) are neither feasible nor commonly available. The proposed windows, from Quaker’s commercial product line, reproduce the design, operation, and visual qualities of the historic prototypes, and are recessed properly into the façade, preserving historic shadow lines. Staff assesses that the proposed aluminum windows therefore satisfy Standard 6.
- Staff notes the appropriate treatments proposed by the applicant for many other distinctive historic features, including the mezzanine casement windows, cast iron elements, and the terra cotta ornament, which prioritize repair and spot replacement (with respect to the masonry) as necessary. The proposed contemporary storefront design is appropriate, in staff’s opinion.
- Like many of Detroit’s high-rise 1920s commercial buildings, this resource features a roof-mounted flagpole. Staff assesses that the flagpole is a design element that plays an important role in the architectural design of the building, and is therefore a historically significant and distinctive character-defining feature. Many other recent renovations of similar 1920s buildings in downtown’s historic districts have featured restoration of the roof flagpoles, or renewal with modern reproductions in the same locations. Preservation of these flagpoles, across many blocks, contribute markedly to the retention of early 20th century historic character across downtown.



Examples of flagpoles as architectural elements in the Broadway Avenue Local Historic District (top row) and other historic districts. The flagpole at the crown of the subject building is arrowed in yellow, upper right. Staff photos, April 19, 2023.

ISSUES

- Excepting the removal of the flagpole, it is staff's opinion that the proposed rehabilitation retains the historic character of the property and district, is aligned with the district's Elements of Design, and protects and preserves the integrity of the property and the surrounding district.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-73, Certificate of Appropriateness

Staff recommends that the proposal should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Broadway Avenue Local Historic District's Elements of Design, with the condition that:

- The original flagpole at the building's roof be retained, or if beyond repair, replaced with a reproduction subject to staff review and approval.