

STAFF REPORT: MARCH 13, 2025, REGULAR MEETING **PREPARED BY:** T. BOSCARINO & J. ROSS
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00010
ADDRESS: 3500 MCDUGALL (A.K.A. 3100 GRATIOT AVENUE)
HISTORIC DISTRICT: PRINCE HALL GRAND LODGE
APPLICANT/ARCHITECT: KATIE COOK, KRAEMER DESIGN GROUP
PROPERTY OWNER: PRINCE HALL GRAND LODGE
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: JANUARY 21, 2025
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: FEBRUARY 28, 2025

SCOPE: REPLACE VINYL, STEEL, AND WOOD WINDOWS WITH ALUMINUM WINDOWS; INSTALL WALL SIGNS



January 2025 photo by staff. The original portion of the building is the hip-roof mass in the foreground; the flat-roofed addition along Gratiot Avenue is at the left of the image.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Prince Hall Grand Lodge is a single-building historic district. It consists of a three-story, hip-roof, primary mass fronting on McDougall Avenue and containing the original Masonic lodge, built in 1924, plus a three-story, flat roof addition that fronts on Gratiot Avenue which was built in 1931. The addition contains storefronts and offices and replaces an earlier, two-story wing. The angled, western corner of the 1924 building is a result of the building having been truncated in 1930 to accommodate the widening of Gratiot Avenue.

The primary and secondary facades are clad in buff-colored brick. Both facades are symmetrical and divided into seven bays. A projecting stone cornice and plain frieze caps the first-story. At the roofline is a stone cornice with narrowly spaced classical modillions and denticulated frieze. The end bays of the second and third stories are framed by raised, buff-colored brick quoins.

The primary facade features a central recessed entrance with modern aluminum double doors with transom windows above. Flanking the central entrance, windows have a raised stone surround with an oval cartouche. The second-story window bays consist of round-arched openings with brick voussoirs, stone springers, and an elongated stone keystone. The third story features seven openings with raised stone sills that

are evenly spaced and centrally aligned with the second-story window bays. A simple rectangular stone frieze is located on both end bays between the second and third stories. Six electrical boxes and cable wiring are positioned in the center bays between the second and third stories, vestiges from a previous illuminated sign that read “Metropolitan Detroit Prince Hall Masonic Temple” with two Masonic emblems on either side.

The secondary facade contains three storefronts, now filled with non-original doors, glass-block windows, and boarded-up transoms (according to the Historic Designation Advisory Board Final Report, none of these elements are original). Above, architectural detail is simpler than on the primary facade; second-floor windows have surrounds with keystones.



Detail of non-original storefronts. January 2025 photo by staff.

A third, treated facade faces Preston Street to the southeast. It has no storefronts, but otherwise similar materials and detail to the Gratiot facade. The rear of the building is common brick and unadorned.



Preston Street facade. 2019 Google Street View image.

Subject of this application, windows on the street-facing facades are mostly non-original vinyl with some non-original aluminum units and are of an unknown date. One window is missing entirely. The arched upper portions of window openings on the second floor, primary facade, have been infilled with aluminum siding; these areas would have once contained either arched windows sashes or decorative spandrel panels, though staff is not aware of any historical photos of the building. Original wood brickmould exists on some of the street-facing openings. Rear windows are mostly steel and appear to be original; a few are wood sash windows, and a few openings have been infilled with brick. Also at the rear, between the two sections of the building but not visible from the street, is a narrow court providing light and ventilation (described as an “alcove” in the application narrative) with steel windows, likely original.



Rear (southeast) elevation. Photo from application documents.

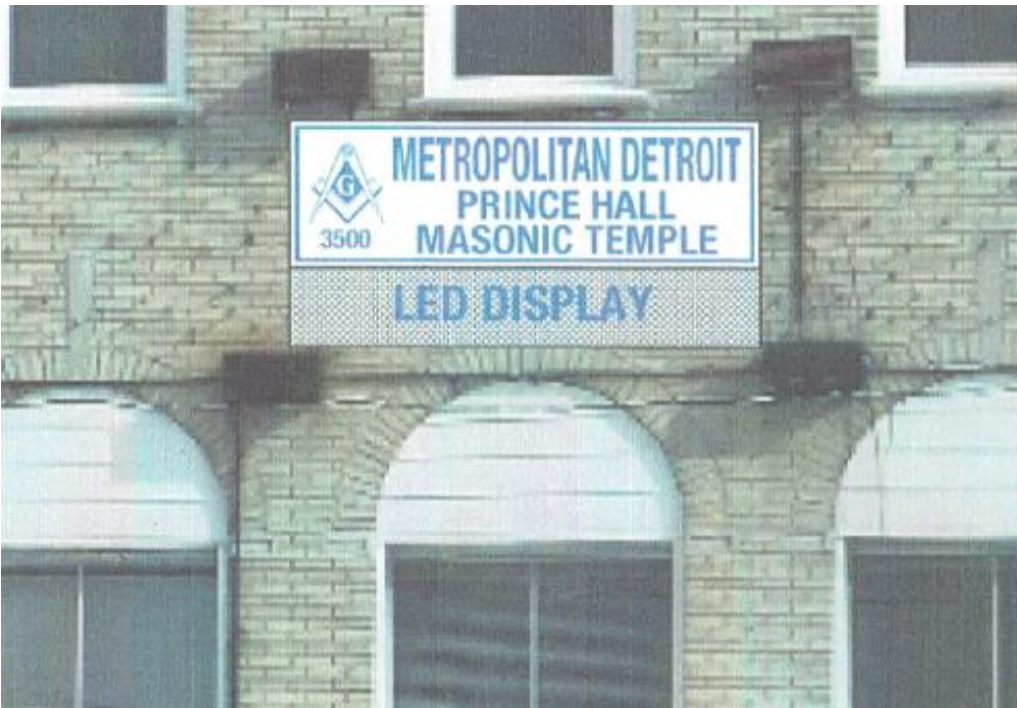
PROPOSAL

The proposal is to replace all windows on the building, except for the storefronts and basement windows. The proposed replacement windows are Quaker aluminum windows in a dark bronze color. On the McDougall and Preston facades, windows would be one-over-one, single-hung units; curved upper sashes would be used in the arched openings on the second floor of the McDougall facade. On Gratiot Avenue, the new windows would be single-hung six-over-one with simulated divided lites. On the rear, the new windows would be rectangular, fixed units with simulated divided lites in varying configurations. Historic brickmould would be retained or replicated where it is missing.

Two new signs are also proposed to be installed. On the Gratiot facade is proposed a 72-inch by 22-inch Alupanel, non-illuminated sign, centered on the facade above the second floor. On the McDougall facade is proposed a 96-inch by 30-inch Alupanel sign, internally illuminated, with an 18-inch-tall LED display below.



Proposed Gratiot sign. Image from application.



Proposed McDougall sign. Image from application.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Prince Hall Grand Lodge Historic District was established by Ordinance 30-18 in 2018. The Final Report for the district states that the building is significant under National Register Criterion A for “historical associations with freemasonry, labor organizing, African American heritage, and the Civil Rights Movement,” and under Criterion C for its architecture. The Period of Significance is from 1924, the construction date of the original portion of the building, through 1994, when Coleman A. Young was involved with the facility.

- The building is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places with a period of significance of 1924 through 1971, following National Register guidance¹ to close the period of significance fifty years prior to the documentation date (that is, fifty years prior to 2021) when significant associations are ongoing.
- Of the Elements of Design, only one is pertinent to this application. Element #7, “Relationship of Materials” states:

The original use of glass for display windows in the office addition provided transparency contrasting with the solid masonry, although the first floor openings are presently boarded or filled with glass block for protection. ... The original wood window frames have been replaced with vinyl throughout both sections of the building, although the original steel casement windows remain in the rear façade (east elevation).

- It is not known when the vinyl windows were installed; consequently, it is not known if they are historic materials dating from the period of significance. Staff suggests that they were more likely installed after the period of significance, as vinyl replacement windows were much less common in the early 1990s than they are today. It is less likely that they were installed during the period of significance, and if so, it would have been in the final years of that period.
- The vinyl window material is not mentioned in the Historic Designation Advisory Board Final Report, suggesting that the vinyl windows were not found to be significant or character-defining at the time of the designation of the historic district.
- Staff suggests that the vinyl windows do not particularly express the significant histories mentioned in the Final Report as the significance largely pertains to the architecture of the 1920s and 1930s, the history of Freemasonry in the 1950s, and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The history of the 1980s and 1990s is mentioned in the Final Report only briefly.
- Per the above observations, staff opinion is that National Park Service guidance *Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards* applies (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/windows-replacement-meet-standards.htm>.) An appropriate window for the replacement of the existing vinyl units would be “compatible with the overall historic character of the building” and be “consistent with the general characteristics of a historic window of the type and period,” among other concerns. Staff suggests that the windows which are proposed to replace the vinyl units are indeed appropriate and compatible.
- Further, the windows which are proposed to replace the existing vinyl units are based on those seen in a historic photo, satisfying Standard #6: “Replacement of a missing feature shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.”
- Regarding the steel windows proposed for replacement:
 - Located in the alcove, hidden from public view, are cold-rolled steel 4-over-4, 2-over-1, and 1-over-1 units with wire glass, wood 9-over-9 and 12-over-12 units. The applicant has stated that the windows are “...in fair to poor condition, evidenced by peeling paint, degraded glazing compound, rust, holes, and wood degradation. Restoration of cold-rolled steel frame and sash windows is very difficult as the interior of the components is hollow. Even if rust on the exterior of the frame and sash are abated, rust and corrosion continue in the interior void of the components eventually resulting in degradation of the entire unit.” The application therefore proposes to replace these units with 1/1, single-hung aluminum windows. Note that a full documentation of each steel window proposed for replacement at this location was not included in the current documentation, so it is unclear if all of the units are deteriorated to an extent that merits replacement. Also, the proposed new windows do not match the existing in operation or light configuration. Therefore, staff does not recommend approval of this scope item.
 - Window units on the rear façade of the building, facing vacant property to the east, are hot-rolled steel 6- or 9-pane factory style units with a central, pivoting sash and wire glass. These windows appear to be original, but have rusted muntins, sashes, and frames, and degraded glazing compound. Note that a full documentation of each steel window proposed for replacement at this

¹ *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, formerly known as *National Register Bulletin 16A*.

location was not included in the current documentation, so it is unclear if all of the units are deteriorated to an extent that merits replacement. Also, the proposed new windows do not match the existing in operation or light configuration. Therefore, staff does not recommend approval of this scope item.

- From photos submitted, the small number of remaining double-hung, wood sash windows appear to be repairable, in staff opinion. Also, the proposed new windows do not have the same operation and materials as existing. Staff therefore does not recommend approval of this scope item.
- Regarding the proposed new signs:
 - See the below historic photo of the building to note that signage had been located in the masonry cornice above the storefronts at the Gratiot-facing façade. Note that this two-story portion of the building was demolished when Gratiot was widened and was replaced with a three-story addition of a similar design in 1931 (see below image).

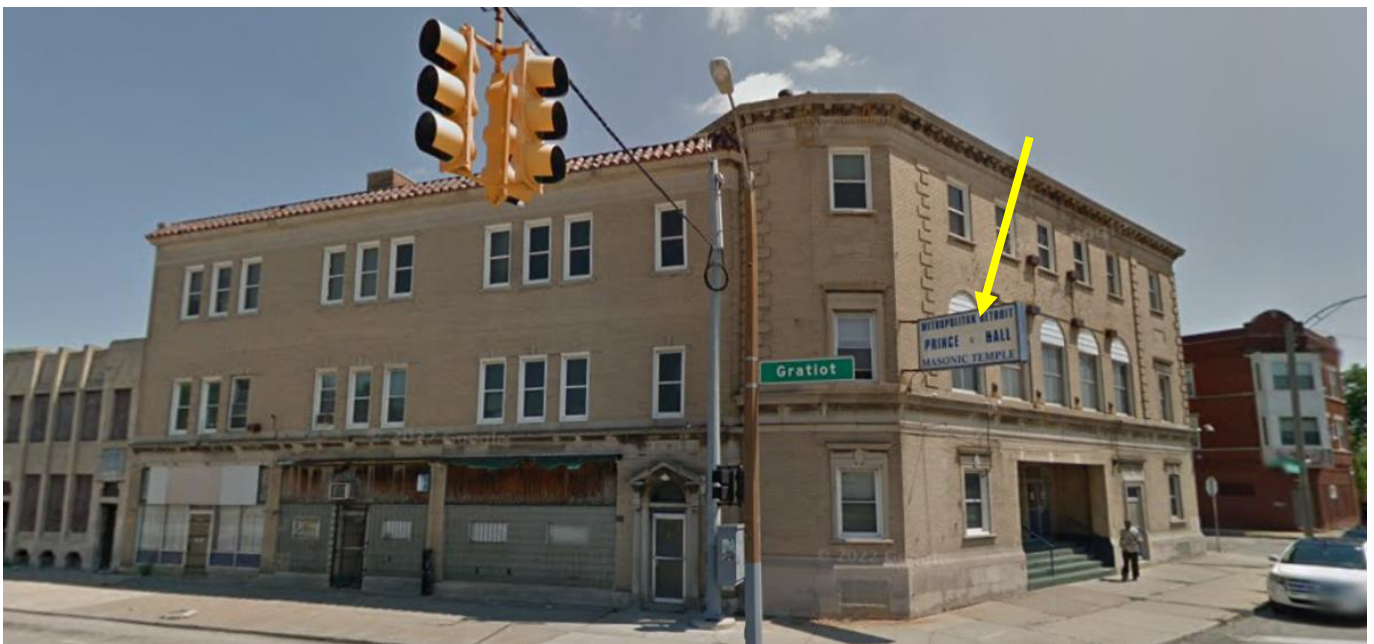


Uncredited 1920s photo provided by the applicant. A single bay of the 1924 building is visible at the far right edge of the photo. The two-story portion of the building shown was demolished when Gratiot Avenue was widened. However, note the location of signage as indicated by the red arrows.



Note the three story addition which faces on to Gratiot was erected in 1931 (indicated by red arrow). The addition includes three storefronts which are topped by a masonry cornice (indicated by white arrow), echoing the design of the original two-story wing which once stood at this location. Google Streetview

- Note that a non-historic age blade sign which existed at the building's northwest corner of the building was removed sometime between 2015 and 2017, prior to the building's designation (see below image).



Non-historic blade sign at northwest corner (indicated by yellow arrow), 2015. Google Streetview

- Per the HDC's Sign and Awning Guidelines section entitled *Materials*, "sign materials should be compatible with the design theme and use of materials on the building where the sign is to be placed." The section entitled *Position* further states the following:
 - Signs should be located where architectural features or details suggest a location, size, or shape for the sign
 - Signs should be placed on buildings consistent with sign location on adjacent buildings
 - In pedestrian areas, orient signs to sidewalk instead of motorists

It is staff's opinion that the proposed signage does not meet the HDC's guidelines as the LED sign is not compatible with the design theme and use of materials on the building and the two static signs are proposed to be installed in a location which is oriented towards motorists, well above the first story storefronts. Staff has therefore forwarded the proposal to the Commission for review.
- Per the above provided historic photograph, signage was located in the masonry cornice, above the storefronts in the original Gratiot-facing wing. While this historic location suggests that new signage is best located at the masonry cornice above the first-story storefronts at the current Gratiot-facing façade, staff does recognize that the affixing of new signs to this distinctive architectural detail would not be appropriate.
- It is staff's opinion that the installation of new signage at the northwest corner of the building, within the same area as the sign depicted in the 2015 Google Streetview image, would be the most appropriate location as it would be oriented towards pedestrians and would not obscure distinctive architectural features. The proposed location of two new **static signs** above the second-story windows at the Gratiot and McDougall facing facades would be acceptable, in staff's opinion, as each sign is moderately sized, would not obscure or alter character-defining features of the building, and is compatible in material.
- With respect to the proposed new LED display, please note that the National Park Service's (NPS) guidance [Preservation Brief 25: The Preservation of Historic Signs](#) states that "...sign materials should be compatible with those of the historic building. Materials characteristic of the building's period and style, used in contemporary designs, can form effective new signs." Also, the district's Element of Design #(7) *Relationship of materials*, speaks to the use of brick and stone at its body, and wood and steel windows. Similarly, Element of Design #(8) *Relationship of textures*, references the significance of the existing brick cladding, stone detailing, and metal clay tile roofing. Finally Element of Design #(9) *Relationship of colors*, notes that neutral buff, gray, white, reds, browns, and royal blue colors prevail.
- While the proposed LED display would not obscure significant features of the historic building, could be attached to the building carefully to avoid damage, and is relatively small in scale, it does not meet the NPS guidance nor does it meet the district's Elements of Design because it is incompatible with the building's historic materials, textures, and colors material. Staff therefore recommends denial of this scope item.

ISSUES

- The application does not provide evidence that each of the steel windows proposed for replacement are deteriorated beyond repair. Also, from the submitted window schedule, it is not clear that the lite configuration and operation of the replacement windows will match that of the historic steel windows.
- The application does not provide evidence that the wood windows are beyond repair. Also, the proposed replacement windows do not match the existing in operation

- The proposed LED display screen/sign is incompatible with the building's materials, textures, and colors of and therefore detracts from its historic character.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

Recommendation 1 of 2, Denial: Replace historic steel windows and wood windows with new aluminum units; install a LED display/sign

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Prince Hall Grand Lodge's Elements of Design, specifically, Standards #:

- 2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
- 5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
- 6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*
- 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*

And Elements of Design 7, 8, & 9

For the following reasons:

- The steel windows and wood windows proposed for replacement are distinctive, character-defining features of the building
- The submitted documentation did not indicate that each of the windows proposed for replacement are deteriorated beyond repair.
- If replacement of the character-defining windows is necessary, the proposed new windows do not match the existing in operation and lite configuration, and the application does not include information that indicates that it is unreasonable or infeasible to replicate the windows in-kind.
- The proposed LED display screen/sign is incompatible with the building's materials, textures, and colors of and therefore detracts from its historic character.

Recommendation 2 of 2, Certificate of Appropriateness: Remaining work items

Staff recommends that the remaining work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Prince Hall Grand Lodge's Elements of Design