

**STAFF REPORT: MAY 14, 2025 MEETING**

**PREPARED BY: A. DYE**

**APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00114**

**ADDRESS: 2233 PARK AVENUE (AKA IODENT BUILDING)**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT: PARK AVENUE LOCAL**

**APPLICANT/ARCHITECT: STEVE FLUM, STEVE FLUM, INC.**

**PROPERTY OWNER: SEAN HARRINGTON, 2233 PARK AVENUE, LLC**

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION:**

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: APRIL 24 AND MAY 2, 2025**

**SCOPE: REPLACE WOOD WINDOWS**

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The building at 2233 Park Avenue is located at the southwest corner of Park Avenue and Montcalm street.

According to the Historic Designation Advisory Board's Park Avenue Local Historic District Final Report:

*It is eight stories high and built with a reinforced concrete and steel structure. The building has Arts-and-Crafts-influenced decorative details in cut limestone on the façade at the two-story base and on the top floor. The entry doorway on Park Avenue has classical Greek elements on its frame. The second floor windows are arched. The body of the building, floors three through seven, has an exterior of dark brown brick. The fenestration pattern of the upper floors consists of banks of paired windows. The interior of the building has decorative elements such as plaster molding and stained-glass windows.*



*Facade of building, facing Park Avenue. Staff photo, May 2, 2025.*

The five-bay wide design of the façade is accentuated at every floor, but most dramatically through the vertical limestone columns spanning the first two floors, and the vertical limestone detailing that extends downward from the 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floors.

The limestone wraps the north and south side walls; however, different percentages of the side walls were architecturally articulated, based on their street-facing location. The north wall faces Montcalm, while the south wall is adjacent an alley.



*Left: South wall.*

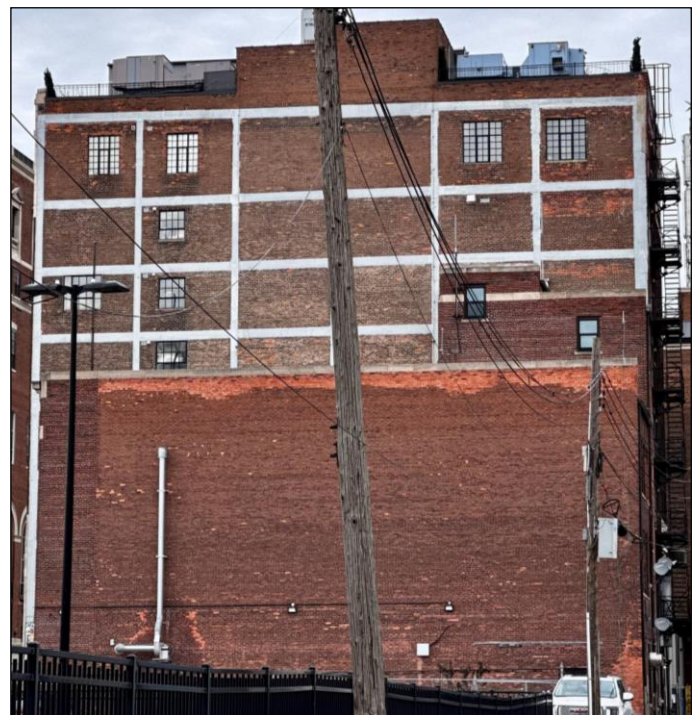
*Right: North wall.*

*Below: West wall.*

*Staff photos, May 2, 2025.*

The window openings at the third through eight floors at the finished front and sides of the building are comprised of wood-framed French windows with a fixed, undivided transom. The remaining windows on the side and rear walls are aluminum or steel-framed fixed windows with muntins (south-side) or a combination of fixed/casement windows with muntins (west-rear).

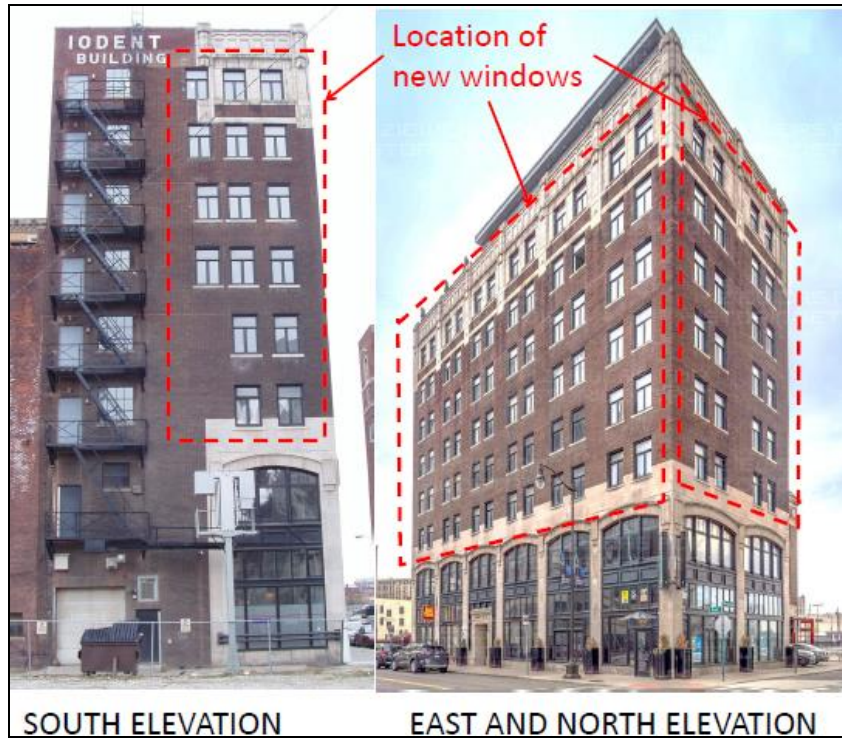
The windows subject to this application are the wood windows on the front and sides of the building.



## PROPOSAL

Per the applicant's submitted scope of work:

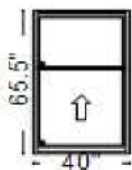
1. Remove existing windows, sashes, jambs, head and sill
2. Install new wood blocking at the jamb, head and sill to the masonry
3. Install new windows and trim
4. Install sealant between exterior aluminum trim and masonry
5. Install new interior wood window sill, caulk and paint



2233 Park Avenue  
Iodent Building  
Park Ave. Historic District    4/15/2025

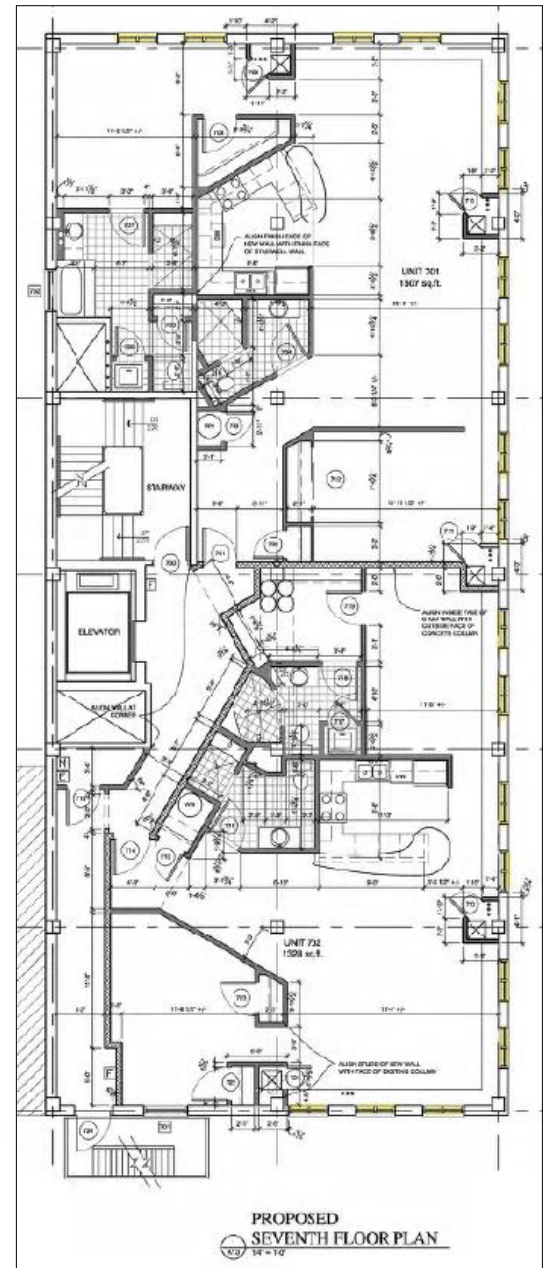
### Scope of Work

- Remove windows in 112 openings on floors three thru eight, on the north, east and south facades.
- Install new single hung windows
- Repair or replace wood bucks at the sill, jamb and head.
- Insulated and caulk perimeter.
- Install aluminum trim to cover perimeter wood buck.
- Replace wood sill with marble sill.



Viewed From Exterior

Pella Reserve, Traditional  
Cottage Style Single Hung Window  
Exterior aluminum clad black  
Interior painted white



Above: and far left: Applicant materials. The yellow on the floor plan indicates windows to be replaced.

Left: Photo from Pella's website of a Pella Reserve Traditional window. It is offered with a wood or aluminum-clad, wood frame. This double-hung unit is the visual provided by Pella on their website as well as by the applicant. However, this is not the window specified within the application.

Pella's description of their three types of "sash splits" are:

- Traditional – the most historically correct look.
- Cottage - provides the appearance of an awning window over a fixed window more cost-effectively.
- Custom

Far left: As shown within the applicant's project description, the cottage-style window is a single-hung window, so only the lower sash is operable.

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Park Avenue Local Historic District was enacted on January 21, 2008, and encompasses 10 buildings. Eight of the buildings are located on either side of Park Avenue between the Fisher Freeway Service Drive and W. Adams.
- The district's final report states:
  - *The development on Park Avenue, on the west side of Grand Circus Park, rather than Witherell, on the east side of the park, was because of the prestige established earlier by the Tuller Hotel (1906-1991)."*
  - *The permit for the Wormer & Moore office building was issued on December 14, 1922 to the architecture firm of Bonnah & Chaffee. Its estimated cost of construction was \$136,000.*
  - *Constructed by the Wormer & Moore real estate company, the firm's flagship building and headquarters on Park was led by the partnership of Clarkson C. Wormer, Jr. and Lucian S. Moore, Jr. The Wormer & Moore Building first appears in the 1923-24 Detroit City Directory, at near capacity, and continues this way through the 1920s. However, the Great Depression seems to have hit the building hard, because listings for the upper floors of the building disappear as of the 1932-33 directory, through to the 1940 directory. The only enterprises listed at the building's addresses are the Parkmont Cut Rate Drug Store and the Mayfair restaurant.*
  - *This vacancy made the building a candidate for sale, and the Wormer & Moore Building later became the manufacturing facility and headquarters for the Iodent Toothpaste Co. The Detroit City Directory was not published in the 1940s, but it is likely the sale occurred during these years; the building appears as the Iodent Building in the 1950s. Its primary brand was Iodent Toothpaste, but the firm manufactured other toiletries. The Iodent Co. appears in the directory through 1973. Shortly thereafter the company moved from the building and donated it for tax purposes to Shaw College at Detroit.*
- The "general environmental character" as discussed in the district's elements of design (22) states: *The Park Avenue Local Historic District consists of an eclectic mix of commercial architecture built in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Although set in an urban setting, the district retains an intimate pedestrian scale due to the narrow right-of-way, the scale of the buildings, the buildings' street-level display windows, and the overall density of the streetscape.*



View of the district  
along Park Avenue  
Looking northeast  
Left: At W. Columbia.  
Right: At alley,  
between W. Columbia  
and W. Elizabeth.  
Bottom left: At W.  
Elizabeth



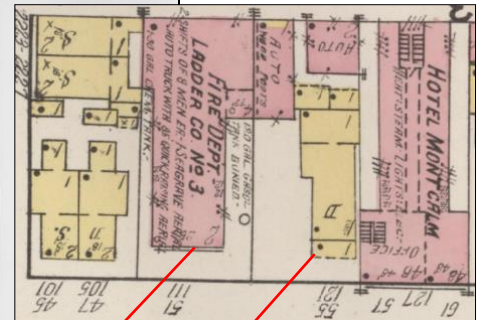
Looking Southeast  
Bottom right: Park at  
W. Elizabeth.





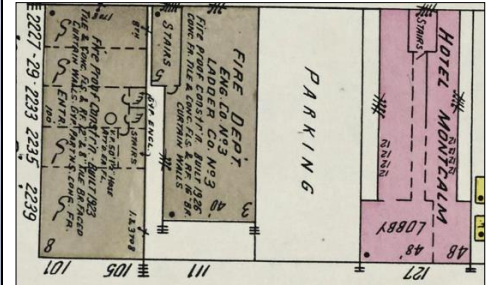
Below: the 1921 Sanborn map shows the footprint of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, two-story firehouse and a vernacular 19<sup>th</sup> century two-story single-family house.

In the photo at left, the firehouse is mostly obscured by 2233 Park, but the front half of the single-family house is visible.



Above: Undated photo, Burton Collection. As the two-story fire house and single-family house are in this photo, staff presumes the photo was taken between 1923 – 1928.

This photo captures the now-demolished two-story commercial building to the south of 2233 Park Avenue ★ - demolition date unknown and is currently a playground; as well as the Varney apartment building ▲. The apartment building was erected in 1892 and designed by architect Almon Varney. It is attributed as the first apartment building in Detroit. It was demolished in 1995 for use as a staging area for Fox Theatre theatrical productions/trailers.



Above: Vol. 2 Sanborn map, 1950, shows the footprint of the existing three-story firehouse that was erected in 1929. Due to the large number of demolitions on the surrounding streets, these are the only two buildings that retain close proximity to each other. The remaining historic buildings are separated by alleys, streets or open lots.

Left: Montcalm street, looking south. Staff photo, May 2, 2025



The windows at 2233 Park are unique in design and operation and are a distinctive character-defining feature of the building. With the windows closed and viewed from a distance, it appears that each opening is comprised of a double casement window with an undivided transom above.



The interior photos demonstrate the design and function of the lower window sash. The operable window is called a “French window”. They are like standard casement windows and are attached by a hinge to the window frame on one side, but they differ from casements in that they don’t have a central post or mullion. This allows for one large opening, eliminating structural elements from obstructing the view from the window.



Left: Historic photo.  
Above and right:  
Applicant photos.

- The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office confirmed a federal tax project is in their database for this address. The SHPO didn't have immediate access to the records, to confirm the details of the project, but did say the Part 2 was approved in 2007 and the Part 3 was approved by the NPS in 2009. The building houses rental apartments and commercial spaces at the ground floor.
- The applicant states the windows were replaced in 2006. However, during staff's site visit on April 24, it appears that some original windows and mullions, as well as most of the brick mould, remain in place.



*Photos of side-by-side windows from the building's façade. When looked at closely, there are three different transom conditions, and are discussed below. Staff photos, April 24, 2025.*



**Group A, Second Floor** – Both openings have matching highly profiled, and likely original, wood brick mould. The frames of the French windows at left have a visible top sash, whereas the top sash at right is minimally visible.

*The transom in the left window sits back in the window frame and has additional wood framing, creating a smaller glass area; the horizontal mullion is thin and offers some dimensional profile. In contrast, the transom at right sits forward in a uniformly flat frame and doesn't have a mullion. Staff photos, April 2025.*

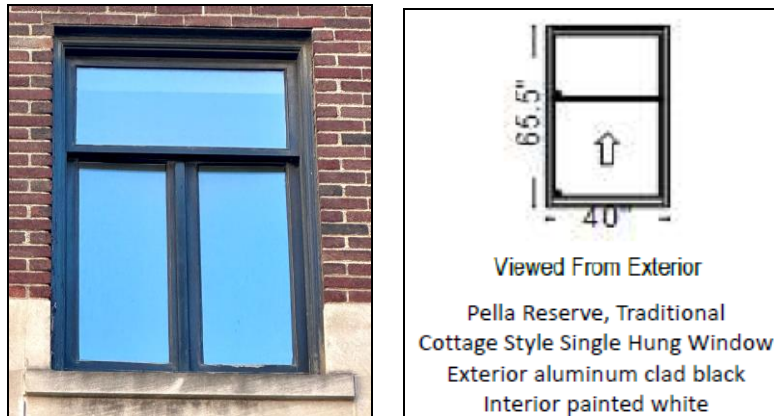


**Group B, Third Floor** – Both openings again have matching highly profiled, and likely original, wood brick mould. Contrasting with Group A, the top sash of the French windows at left have the partially obscured top sash, and the window at right has the mostly exposed top sash.

The transom in the left window sits forward in a uniformly flat frame and doesn't have a mullion. The transom in the opening at right is a different (and now third) example of the glass extending to the outer window frame. There is a thin, deep mullion, but no dimensional trim as shown in the Group A window at left. Staff photos, April 2025.

- The submitted visual exterior analysis by staff shows that there is no clear understanding of what, if any, original historic material remains, beyond the brick mould. It is staff's opinion that before the Commission can consider any level of a window replacement project, a window survey documenting the details of each window opening must be completed.
- Staff will request copies from the Michigan SHPO archives to document the scope of work approved by the National Park Service in 2007. This tax credit project review took place prior to the designation of the local historic district.
- It is apparent that many replacement windows were installed and likely occurred prior to designation of the local historic district. Importantly, the replacement windows were designed to be compatible with the historic window opening pattern and French window function. The windows are a distinctive character-defining feature, and consideration of replacement windows must meet the following 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 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.*

- While the review of replacing the existing windows is premature, staff can offer comments on the selected replacement window. The application proposes to install “cottage-style” windows from the third through eighth floors on three sides of the building. The installation of this new window type would obliterate the distinctive, character-defining feature of the existing windows and would alter the features that characterize this building.
- Additionally, the proposal is to remove or cover all remaining details, including the profiled wood brick mould. The brick mould is one of the most visible components of a window opening due to its proximity to the masonry wall. Aluminum trim cannot be bent in such a way as to match the highly profiled wood brick mould. The flatter surface and sheen of aluminum is not compatible with a building erected in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



*Comparison of one existing window and the proposed window. Staff photo, applicant drawing.*

## ISSUES

- The circa 1920s photo of the building confirms the existing windows at the third through eighth floors are similar to the historic windows; unique in design, proportion and operation, they are a distinctive character-defining feature of the building.
- Replacement windows that were installed likely occurred prior to designation of the local historic district and were designed to be compatible with the historic window opening pattern and French window function.
- The submitted exterior visual analysis by staff shows that there is no clear understanding of what, if any, original historic material remains, beyond the brick mould. Before the Commission can consider any level of a window replacement project, a window survey documenting the details of each window opening must be completed.
- The application proposes to install “cottage-style” windows from the third through eighth floors on three sides of the building.
  - The installation of this window type would obliterate the distinctive, character-defining feature of the existing windows and would alter the features that characterize this building.
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## RECOMMENDATION

### Section 21-2-78, Determination of Historic District Commission

#### **Recommendation 1 of 1, Denial**

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Park Avenue Local Historic District's Elements of Design, specifically:

- 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 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.*

For the following reasons;

- The circa 1920s photo of the building confirms the existing windows at the third through eight floors are similar to the historic windows; unique in design, proportion and operation, they are a distinctive character-defining feature of the building.
- Replacement windows that were installed likely occurred prior to designation of the local historic district and were designed to be compatible with the historic window opening pattern and French window function.
- The submitted exterior visual analysis by staff shows that there is no clear understanding of what, if any, original historic material remains, beyond the brick mould. Before the Commission can consider any level of a window replacement project, a window survey documenting the details of each window opening must be completed.
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