

STAFF REPORT: 09/10/2025 MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

ADDRESS: 2894-2900 E. GRAND BOULEVARD

APPLICATION NO: HDC2025-00441

HISTORIC DISTRICT: JAM HANDY/NORTH END-EAST GRAND BOULEVARD

OWNER: METHOD MJ LLC

APPLICANT: DAN PATRUS/CIR GROUP

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 8/26/2025

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 8/18/2025

SCOPE: REPLACE STOREFRONTS, ERECT STAIRS, REPLACE DOORS, ERECT FENCE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The current project includes the following three buildings located within the Jam Handy/North End-East Grand Boulevard Historic District:



2894-2900 E. Grand Boulevard. Photo by HDC staff, 8/26/2025



2894-2900 E. Grand Boulevard (outlined in yellow). Detroit Parcel Viewer

2894 E. Grand Boulevard

The building located at 2894 E Grand Boulevard is a one-story masonry structure that was erected to serve as a recording studio for the Jam Handy Organization in 1965. The building features concrete block at the side walls. Wood panels have recently been installed at the front façade without HDC approval. A wood fence which abuts the building's west wall has been erected to enclose the parcel's side yard without HDC approval.



2894 E. Grand Boulevard, photo taken on 8/26/2025 by HDC staff



Fence which abuts 2894 E. Grand Boulevard's west wall and 2898 E. Grand Boulevard's east wall. Also see the rear, two-story masonry addition which connects to two buildings. Photo taken on 8/26/2025 by HDC staff

2898 E. Grand Boulevard

The building at 2898 E. Grand Boulevard is a two-story, masonry four-square former dwelling that was erected ca. 1915. By the early 1920s, the building was purchased by the neighboring Marantha Baptist Church. When the church became part of the Jam Handy Organization, permit #2784 was

pulled on November 4, 1931, to convert the residence into a warehouse for Jam Handy. The building is topped with a hipped roof which features deep, overhanging eaves and hipped-roof dormers. Exteriors walls are clad with brick which has been painted white. Windows are wood, 1/1 double hung units. A masonry and wood porch with a hipped roof on wood columns extends the width of the front façade. A two-story, flat-roof masonry hyphen/addition to the west connects the building to 2900 E. Grand Boulevard.



2898 E. Grand Boulevard. Photo taken on 8/26/2025 by HDC staff

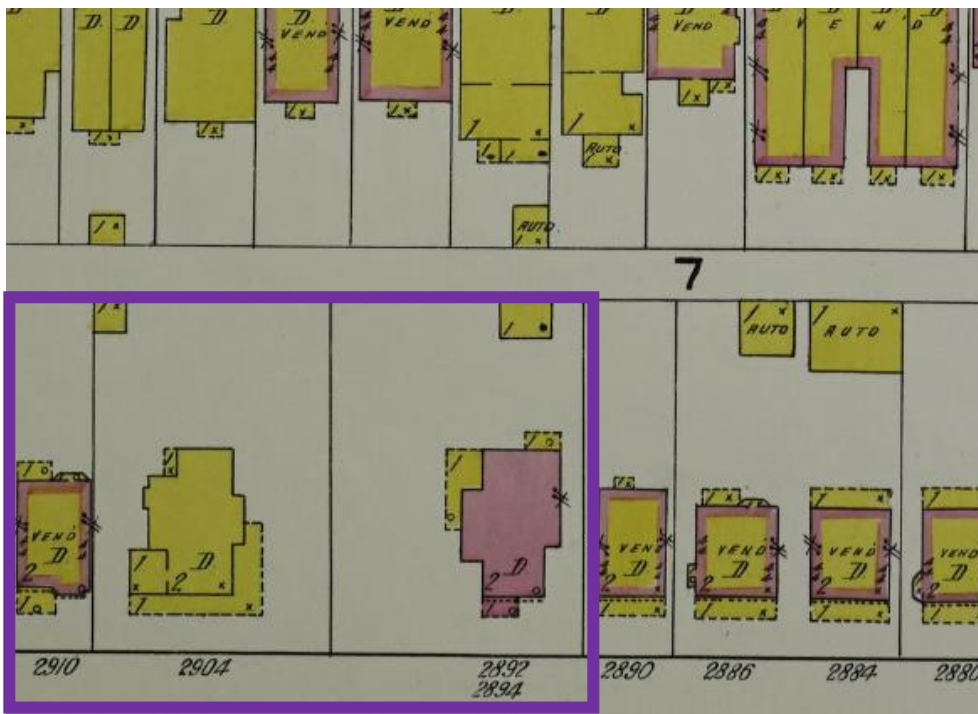
2900 E. Grand Boulevard:

Per the Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board:

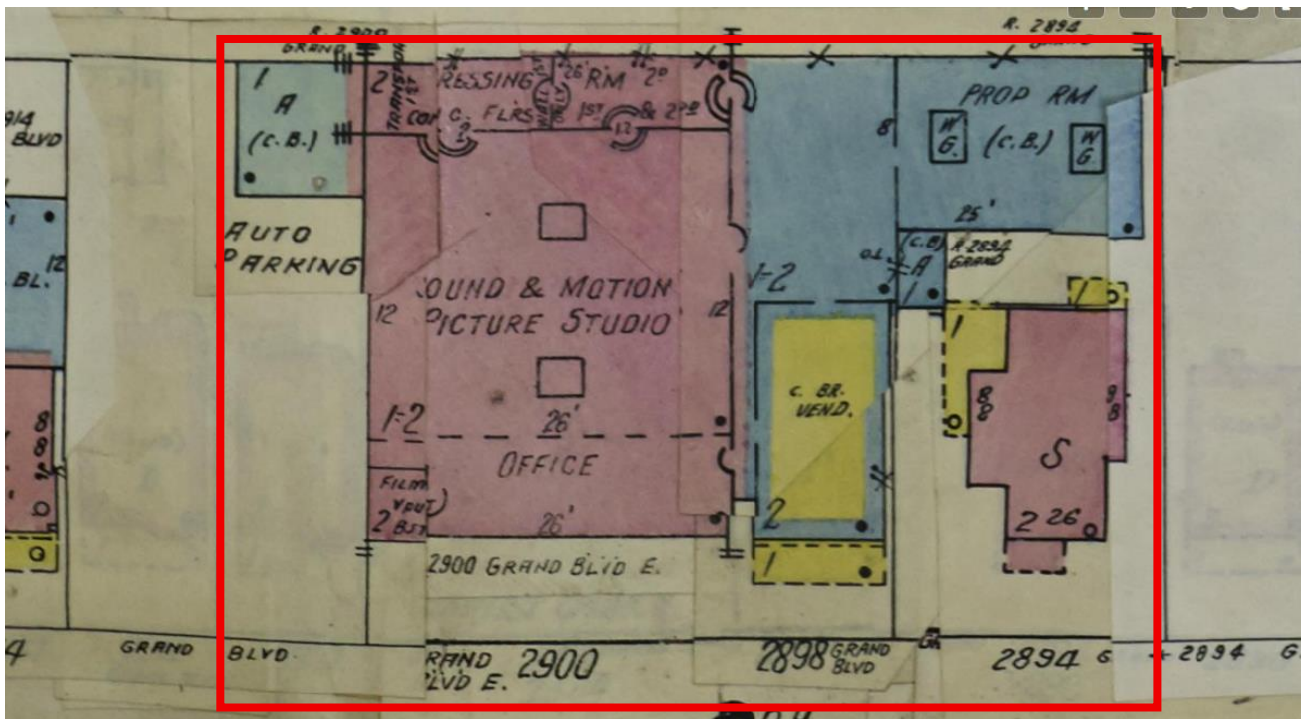
Originally built as the Marantha Baptist Church by Joseph Mills & Sons Architects, the estimated construction cost of this Neo-Gothic building, was \$30,000. The original building permit #8351 for construction of the brick church was pulled on May 27, 1919. In 1929, the building was converted to a studio for the Jam Handy Organization.

The two-story brick building has a ceramic tile street facade with Neo-Gothic motifs on the upper story. The street facade is divided into five bays and has large store-front windows on the first floor and thin windows grouped into sets of three on the second floor. There is a small one-story CMU addition on the northwest end of the building set back from E. Grand Blvd. The building is connected to 2898 E. Grand Blvd by a two story brick addition on the east façade

Also, note that a non-historic high chain-link fence has been erected to the west of the building to enclose the property's rear and side yards. This fence was present at the time of the district's designation.



Sanborn Map, 1915. 2894-2099 E. Grand Blvd (addressed as 2910-2894 on the map) outlined in purple. Note that none of the current buildings have yet been erected.



Sanborn Map, 1917-1951. 2894-2099 E. Grand Blvd outlined in red. Note that the extant building at 2894 E. Grand Blvd. has not yet been built.

PROPOSAL

- Retain the existing wood fence at 2894 and 2898 W. Grand Boulevard (erected without HDC approval)
- **Front Elevation**
 - *2900 E. Grand Boulevard*
 - At three storefront windows, first story – remove bars and replace non-historic metal infill and glass with new glass; replace non-historic /infill at transoms with smoked colored glass with simulated lead coming (to be adhered to the glass). All existing wood trim/brickmold will be retained
 - At westernmost doorway, first story – replace non-historic doors and sidelites with new aluminum doors and sidelites. Install/adhere simulated lead coming to existing glass at sidelites and transom. Adhere yellow colored film to interior of existing glass at sidelites and transom (to match stained glass at historic sidelites and transom at existing west storefront). All existing wood trim/brickmold will be retained
 - At one existing window, first story – remove metal infill, bars, and wall below; install a set of aluminum doors. The existing sidelites, transom, and wood trim/brickmold will be retained
 - Replace one non-historic metal door at east addition with new metal door
 - *2898 E. Grand Boulevard*
 - Punch in a 5'-wide opening to accommodate a new glass door and sidelite
 - Replace deteriorated wood decking at front porch with new wood to match existing
 - Remove 3'-9" portion of brick guardrail wall at porch to accommodate for the installation of new east side metal staircase
 - *2894 E. Grand Boulevard*
 - At front wall of rear connector addition, replace a non-historic metal overhead door with a new glass overhead door.
- **Side Elevation**
 - *2900 E. Grand Boulevard*
 - Replace existing non-historic wood steps at west side, one-story CMU garage with new metal stairs
 - *2894 E. Grand Boulevard*
 - Punch in a 3'-4" x 7'-0" opening at the west side wall to accommodate a new door (material not specified)
- **Rooftop**
 - 2900 E. Grand Boulevard - install new wood decking at one-story CMU garage rooftop patio
 - Install 42"-tall metal guardrails around skylights at 2900 and 2895 E. Grand Boulevard
 - 2895 E. Grand Boulevard - install 42"-tall metal guardrail at rear, one-story CMU addition's parapet

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Jam Handy/North End-East Grand Boulevard Historic District was designated in 2014. See below Google Streetview images which depict the condition of the three buildings in early 2015:



Google Streetview images, 2015

- A review of the above Google Streetview indicates that the following alterations have been undertaken to the building without HDC approval:
 - Sometime between 2021 and 2022 the current wood fence was installed at 2894 and 2898 W. Grand Boulevard, wood cladding was added to 2894 W. Grand Boulevard's front façade, and the current wood staircase was added to 2900 E. Grand Boulevard's side, one-story west side wing. Any unapproved alterations to the property remain as open violations which are subject to future enforcement from the building department.

Staff notes the west side wood stairs which were installed without HDC approval are proposed to be removed and replaced in the current application. Also, the applicant has stated that they would like to maintain the current fencing as is. Staff did provide the applicant the opportunity to add the remaining item/the recladding of 2894 W. Grand Boulevard's front facade to the current submission, but he noted that the owner would like to address the work at a future date. Please note that any outstanding unapproved items will remain as violations which are subject to future enforcement by the building department.

- Note that on 8/8/2025, HDC staff was made aware that the building department had issued a permit for this project without first forwarding the submission to HDC staff/the HDC for review and approval. HDC staff therefore notified the building department of the error that day and requested that it be revoked so that the Commission might undertake and complete its code required review. However, the building department did not revoke the permit until 9/4/2025. The applicant is therefore working with the building department to revise their permit documents to remove any references to the exterior work so they can immediately pull a permit

for the interior work, which will allow them to continue to complete with scope items which are not under HDC review purview. Once they receive their decision from the Commission, they must revise their current permit set to reflect all exterior work approved by the Commission

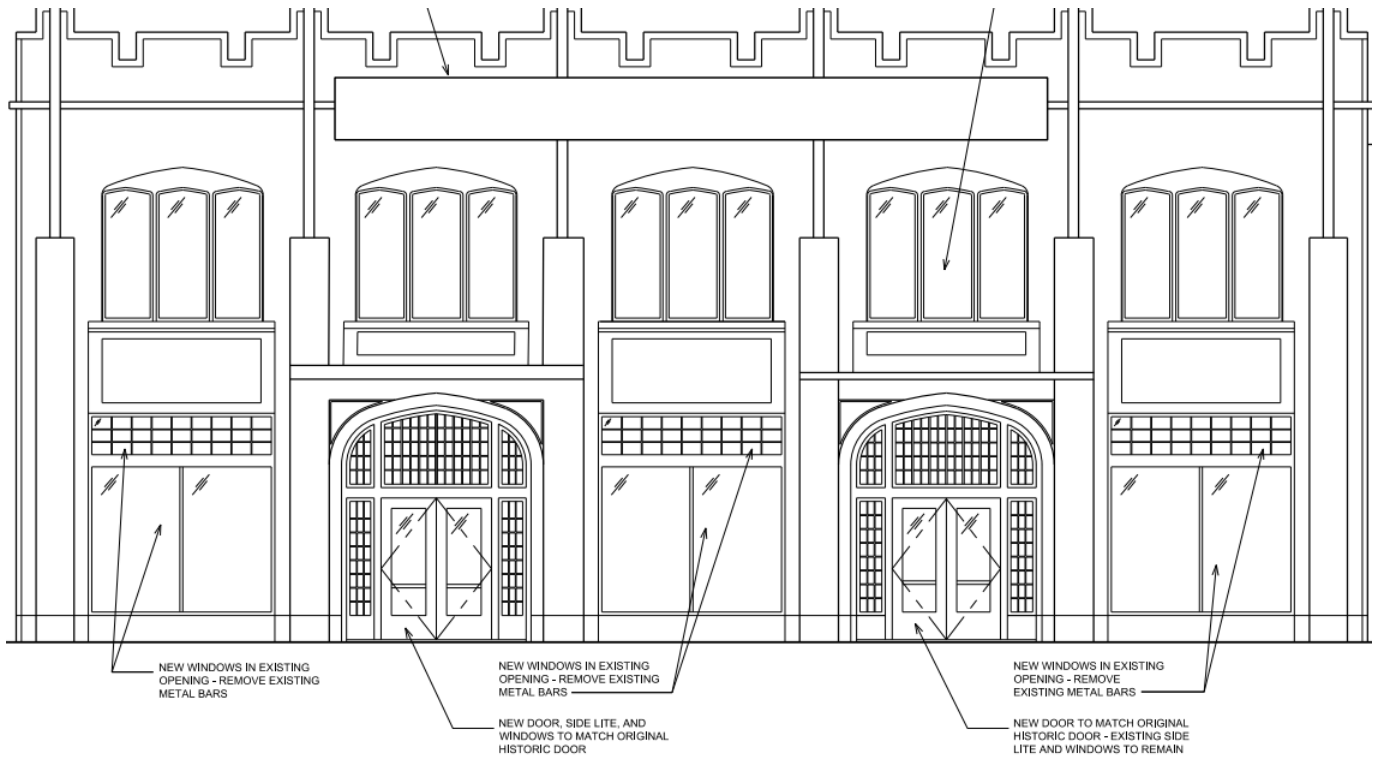
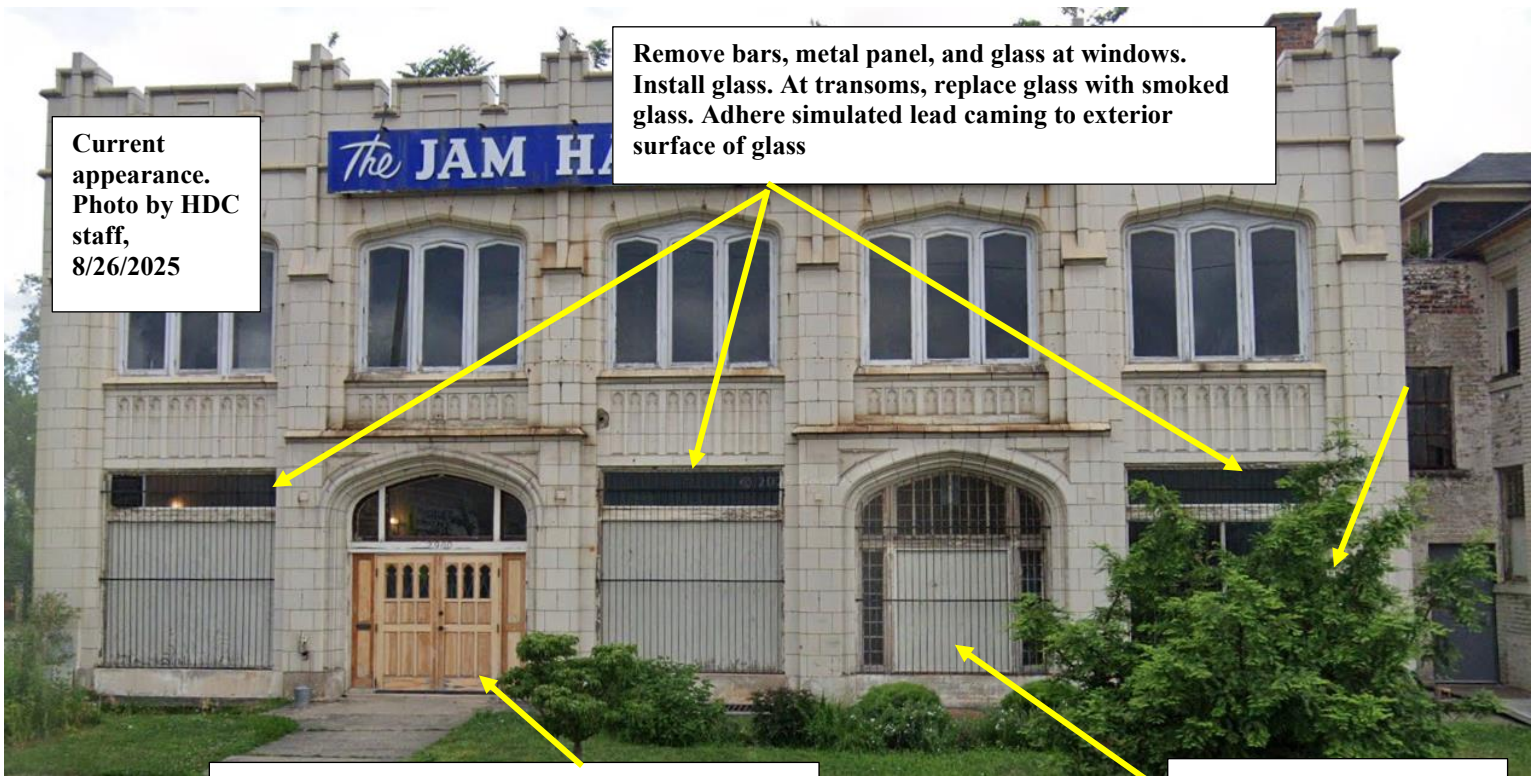
- With respect to the application/s proposal to retain the fence that was erected at 2894 and 2898 W. Grand Boulevard without HDC approval, staff notes that its placement and material, and type (dog eared) conforms to the HDC's fence guidelines. Although unpainted, the fence has weathered to a reasonable degree. Note that the fence guidelines allow for a maximum height of 6' for fencing at this location. Although staff is unclear as to the fence's actual height, it staff's opinion that the height is appropriate/compatible, given the scale of the buildings and their location within a commercial corridor.
- With respect to the front façade storefront replacements at 2900 E. Grand Boulevard, the applicant has noted that they are seeking to undertake the removal/replacement of non-historic, incompatible elements so that the storefronts better match their historic appearance as depicted in the below photo.



The Jam Handy Organization building on E. Grand Blvd. in Detroit is seen in this image from the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Historic appearance, date unknown. Photo provided by applicant



Proposed front façade, per application

- It is staff's opinion that the work proposed for the storefronts at 2900 E. Grand Boulevard is appropriate because it will not remove existing historic-age elements, and the new transom glass, doors, and sidelites are consistent with the building's historic appearance. The applied simulated coming and stained glass application is reversible and can be easily removed and replaced for maintenance/upkeep purposes.
- Staff supports the new decking and metal staircase proposed for installation at the west, one-story CMU garage wing at 2900 E. Grand Boulevard as the wing sits well to the rear of the lot and the work will not result in the removal of historic, character-defining features (see below photo).

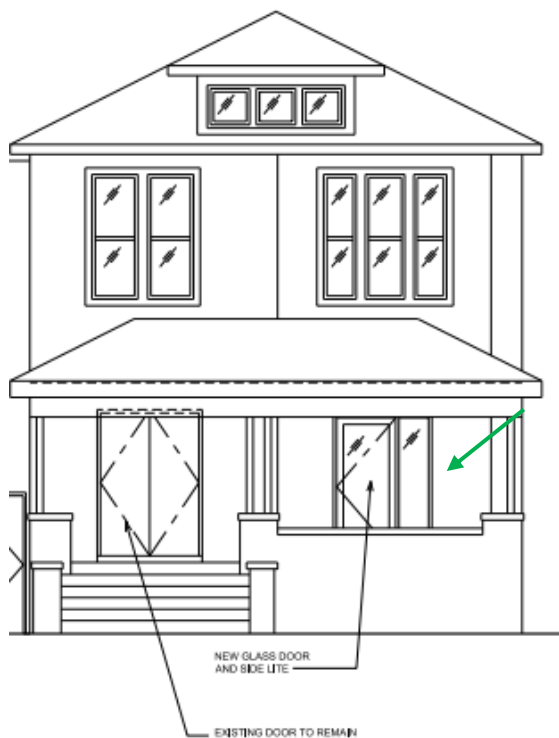


The stairs proposed for replacement were installed sometime between 2022 and 2023. Photo by applicant.

- It is staff's opinion that the new doorway proposed for the 2898 E. Grand façade does not meet the Standards (see below elevation). See the below Google Streetview image of the building, taken in 2007 to note conditions prior to the current overgrown vegetation's coverage of the front wall and porch. The applicant has noted that the new door will be located where a former window opening has been bricked in. The National Park Service's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings [rehabilitation-guidelines-1997.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/tps/plan-manage/rehabilitation-guidelines-1997.pdf) recommends the following for new entrances:
 - Designing and installing additional entrances...for a the new use in a manner that preserves the historic character of the buildings, i.e., limiting such alterations to non-character-defining elevations.

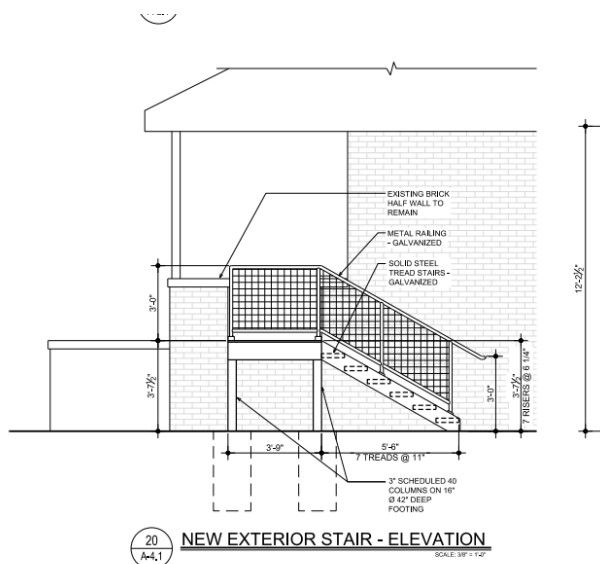
Although the property now houses a commercial use, it still does maintain its original residential character, with the south/front façade remaining as a character-defining elevation. While it is common for houses of this vintage and plan to serve as a multiple-family dwelling with two entry doors at the front façade, the building originally served as a single-family dwelling, with a single entrance at the façade. The addition of a second entrance/enlarging a former window opening would detract from its historic character. Also, the proposed door and sidelite style is commercial in nature/is incompatible with the residential character of the building. Staff therefore recommends a denial of this scope item because the location of a new

door at the façade does not meet the above-quoted guideline and the proposed new door is incompatible with the building's historic character.



2898 E. Grand, proposed elevation. Green arrow indicates new door and sidelite.

- It is staff's opinion that the new metal staircase proposed for 2898 E. Grand Blvd.'s front porch does meet the Standards as it is a reasonable alteration within the context of the adaptive reuse of this building and the surrounding long-time commercial context commercial of this block of East Grand Boulevard and it will have less of an impact on the building's historic character than the proposed entrance alteration (see below elevation drawing)

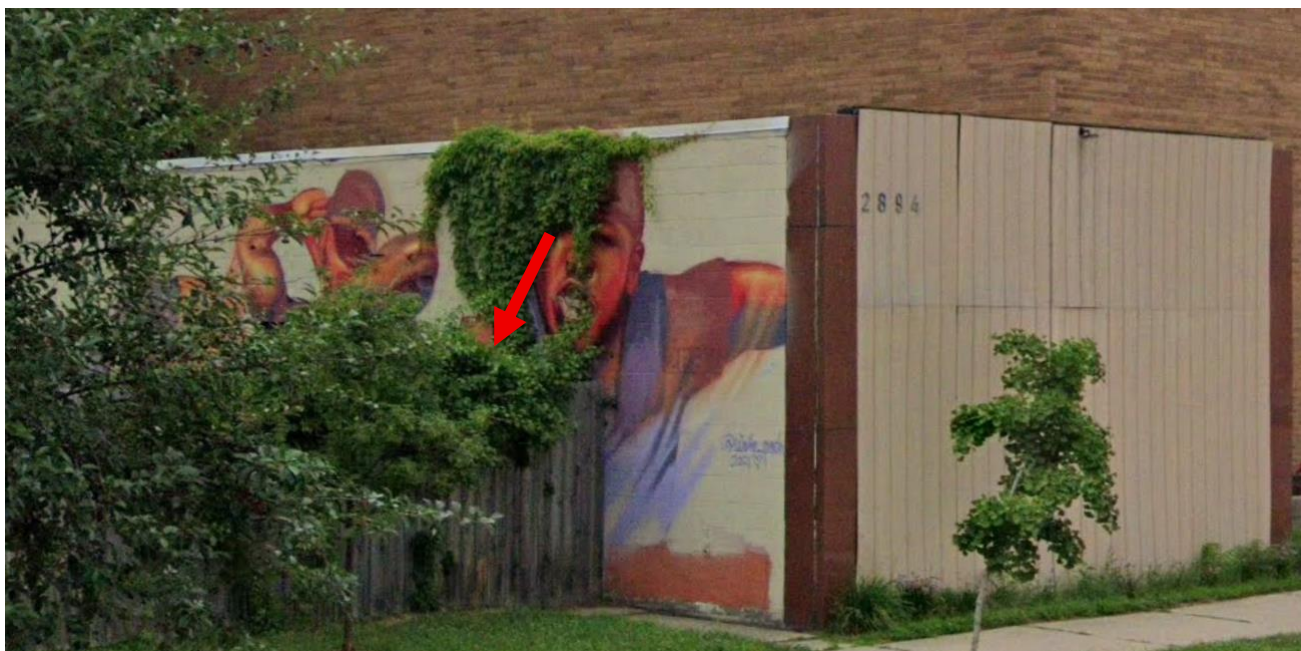


2898 E. Grand, proposed exterior stair at front porch



2898 E. Grand Boulevard, 2015 Google Streetview image which shows the building free of vegetation. Yellow area indicated the proposed location of the new door and sidelite while the red arrow indicates the proposed location of the patio wall enclosure and new metal staircase.

- Staff supports the location of a new door at 2894 E Grand Boulevard's west side wall as it will be installed in a secondary wall which lack distinctive architectural character. However, the proposal's schedule does not describe the door's material.



Location of new door. Google Streetview, 2025.

ISSUES

- The doorway proposed for 2898 E. Grand's façade does not meet the Standards as the National Park Service's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings limit such alterations to non-character-defining elevations. Also, the proposed door and sidelite style is commercial in nature/is incompatible with the residential character of the building.
- The material for the new door at 2894 E Grand Boulevard's west side wall has not been provided

RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

Recommendation 1 of 2, Denial – At 2898 E. Grand, install a new door and sidelite at the front/south façade

Staff recommends that work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Jam Handy/North End-East Grand Boulevard Historic District'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.

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.

For the following reasons:

- The new door and sidelite proposed for 2898 E. Grand is proposed for installation at the building's primary/front, character-defining façade
- The style of the new door and sidelite/doorway proposed for installation at 2898 E. Grand Blvd's façade is commercial in nature/is incompatible with the residential character of the building.

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

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Jam Handy/North End-East Grand Boulevard's Elements of Design with the condition that:

- Staff have the authority to review and approve the final design of the new door proposed for installation at 2894 E Grand Boulevard's west side wall.