

Detroit Sound Conservancy - Blue Bird Inn - Phase 1
Historic District Permit Application

Description of existing conditions

The historic Blue Bird Inn currently sits vacant and secure at 5021 Tireman. On the front elevation, the front door is a metal grate and there are glass block windows and one window space is boarded up with plywood. The original historic masonry exists on the front as well as an idiosyncratic mural painted in the 1990s. The masonry and mural are in medium to poor condition. On the rear elevation, two doorways are boarded up with plywood and there is a concrete block addition off the back. That addition has three window openings. The concrete addition is in rather poor but stable condition. The sidewalk in the front and lot in the back has been maintained by a community member. The concrete on the sidewalk is in poor condition.

Description of Project

Detroit Sound Conservancy (DSC) seeks to rehabilitate the historic Blue Bird Inn, a birthplace of bebop jazz and a working-class, Black owned and operated bar and hearth at 5021 Tireman on Detroit's Old West Side, into a music venue, gathering space and Detroit's only music archive. Through years of engagement, fundraising and planning DSC is ready for rehabilitation of the property. Though the HDC is only concerned with exterior changes, this rehabilitation will ultimately be both an interior and exterior rehabilitation to allow for programs and gathering on behalf of Detroit's rich musical heritage. As a part of an earlier application to HDC, replacement of the windows and doors on the front elevation has already been approved (#22-7954) thus those changes are not included in this application. This rehabilitation will enact changes on both the front (Tireman) and back (alley) elevations.

On the front elevation, DSC seeks to rehabilitate the current exterior elevation through extensive masonry rehabilitation as well as rehabilitation of the existing mural feature. Some of the windows and the front door will be replaced as well but that work has already been approved. In terms of masonry rehabilitation details can be seen on page A20 and S300 of the attached construction documents as well as in the quote from RAM. As detailed this work will include

- a. Mitigating existing steel beam deterioration, retrofitting may be required.
- b. Retrofitting of loose steel lintel around windows
- c. Retrofitting Masonry sill
- d. Restoring or replacing existing pre-cast coping stones on cornice. As verified by multiple masonry professionals, these stones are likely well beyond repair but the brick face will be salvaged to the highest extent possible.
- e. Removing and replacing existing precast detail stones.
- f. Restoration of existing mural
- g. Patching and masonry across the facade.

Further on the front elevation we will restore the existing marquee canopy to secure from additional damage and reinstall a neon sign that reads "Blue Bird Inn" above the marquee and below the cornice as was represented historically. Installation of this sign will require minor electrical work to be reinstalled as was historically to the sign as well as to power the basic lighting system that exists in the marquee currently. We are also planning to replace some of the crumbled concrete on the large double depth sidewalk in front of the Bird. This will be replaced

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with standard sidewalk concrete. At a future date, we are planning to install basic seating and gathering space in front of the building but that will likely be included in a later application as the exact plans have not been designed yet. In the future, DSC is interested in pursuing a restoration strategy that would restore the earlier facade paneling system that was in use during the period of significance. If DSC decides this is the best strategy for the building and our organization, we will apply for that specific work at a later date when timelines, budget and preparation allows. For now, DSC's priority is to open the building for community use.

On the west elevation, which exists in the small lot between the adjacent property, basic brick repointing and replacement will need to be done. This will include removing all compromised mortar, rising voids, repointing new mortar and removing and replacing heavily damaged brick and installing new brick.

The south elevation will see the most extensive work that will serve the future use of The Blue Bird Inn. In an effort to fulfill Detroit Sound Conservancy's mission to serve as a Detroit music's archive, DSC plans to demolish the existing concrete addition of the rear elevation of the building and replace that addition with a larger footprint high volume space with a mezzanine to use as a storage space for the music archive. This new addition will serve the use of the building more more thoroughly as it will allow for ample restroom square footage for the use as well as significant storage space that DSC can use to preserve Detroit music history.

The new addition will extend the entire width of the main building and will comprise two distinct heights to accommodate roof water drainage and interior uses. The west half of the addition will be lower at about 12' high where the main archival space will exist. There will be no windows or doors on this half and there will be a drainage system and gutters that allow for roof water drainage. Further there will be a parapet on the west side elevation to continue and echo the existing parapet on the main building. The east half of the rear addition will be a higher space that will allow for a mezzanine space on the interior for more archival storage and a mechanical room. This half will include a wide storefront door to accommodate egress as well as loading. We will build a small canopy over that door to echo the front of the building as well as a small window on the 2nd floor to accommodate some natural light in the space. Like the west half, there will be a parapet to echo the existing building. The new addition will be built out of CMU blocks with necessary reinforcement. A simple brick veneer will be installed over the CMU block to create a clean presentation and be consistent with the front elevation.

The roof and top elevation will be rehabilitated as is coordinated with the work on both the exterior elevations and on the interior. Further on the rear elevation, the chimney that exists will be repointed and rebuilt if necessary. This work will include recapping the around the retaining wall of the roof, repointing and potentially rebuilding the chimney and finalizing roof work around the new addition. Further, the building HVAC unit will be placed on the rear addition on the 2nd story. Though this will place the HVAC at the highest elevation, this placement is necessary to prioritize the acoustic quality of the interior space for music performance. The Bird was highly sought after as an acoustically pristine venue as such we have to ensure that any potential interference from mechanical or other systems would be put to a minimum. As such the HVAC unit placed far away and on a separate addition from the performance space would be ideal for such a condition. We have done studies to see the visibility from the street and rear and as can be see it will not be an issue from the front elevation as it will not be visible. Further to provide access to the HVAC unit, a roof hatch will be built on the addition.

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Detailed Scope of Work

1. Front (North) Elevation
 - a. Rehabilitation of existing marquee and Reinstall neon sign on front elevation and lights in the existing front elevation marquee
 - b. Masonry Rehabilitation facade and parapet.
 - c. Mural Rehabilitation
 - d. Installation of neon sign in historic location.
 - e. Concrete sidewalk replacement and restoration.
2. West (Side) Elevation
 - a. Brick repointing and replacement
3. South (Back) Elevation
 - a. Demolish the existing rear addition
 - b. Build the new rear addition. New addition will have two distinct heights and include a wide access door, small marquee and single window.
 - c. Install gutters and other drainage mechanisms.
 - d. Install Electrical hookup attached to the rear of the building.
4. Roof Elevation
 - a. Complete roof work as needed in conjunction with interior rehabilitation
 - b. Installation and placement of HVAC unit on roof for interior
 - c. Existing Chimney rehabilitation
 - d. Installation of roof hatch on addition for HVAC access

Current Photographs

- [Current_Photos_Bird_Inn.pdf](#)

Historic Exterior Photographs

- [Historic_Photos_Bird_Inn.pdf](#)

Architectural Construction Documents

- [2023_DSC_HDC_Construction_Docs_Exterior.pdf](#)
- [Blue_Bird_HVAC_Roof_Elevation.pdf](#)

Brochures and Proposals for Work

- [_Blue_Bird_Inn_5021_Tireman_Detroit_MI.pdf](#)
- [Blue_Bird_Inn_Exterior_Preservation_Proposal.pdf](#)
- [Lakeside_Painting_Plaster_Repair_Quote_1.pdf](#)