

**STAFF REPORT: DECEMBER 14, 2022 MEETING**

**PREPARED BY: B. BUCKLEY**

**APPLICATION NUMBER: 22-8153**

**ADDRESS: 607 SHELBY**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT: DETROIT FINANCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT**

**APPLICANT: PETER HAN**

**PROPERTY OWNER: 607 SHELBY DETROIT LLC**

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: OCTOBER 18, 2022**

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: DECEMBER 2, 2022**

**SCOPE: INSTALL WALL SIGNS**

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

607 Shelby Street, also known as the US Mortgage Bond Building, is located at the northwest corner of Congress and Shelby in the Detroit Financial Historic District. The nine-story office building was completed in 1925 and features a steel frame clad with limestone. The building has a typical three-part Chicago School form, featuring a base with streamlined Renaissance Revival details, a smooth limestone central shaft, and neoclassical frieze and cornice. A pedestrian bridge was constructed in 1962 connecting 607 Shelby and the State Savings Bank Building across Shelby Street.



**Figure 1. View of 607 Shelby St. looking northwest.**



**Figure 2. View of 607 Shelby ca. 1930 looking northwest. Image from the Indiana Limestone Photograph Collection.**

**PROPOSAL**

The applicant proposes to install two wall signs at the corner of Congress and Shelby. Each proposed sign is 12' long by 3'7" tall. The signs will have LED backlit aluminum lettering that projects 4" from the Dibond (aluminum composite) base. The signs will be mounted on an aluminum frames attached to the building facade. The existing blade sign on the corner of the building will be removed.

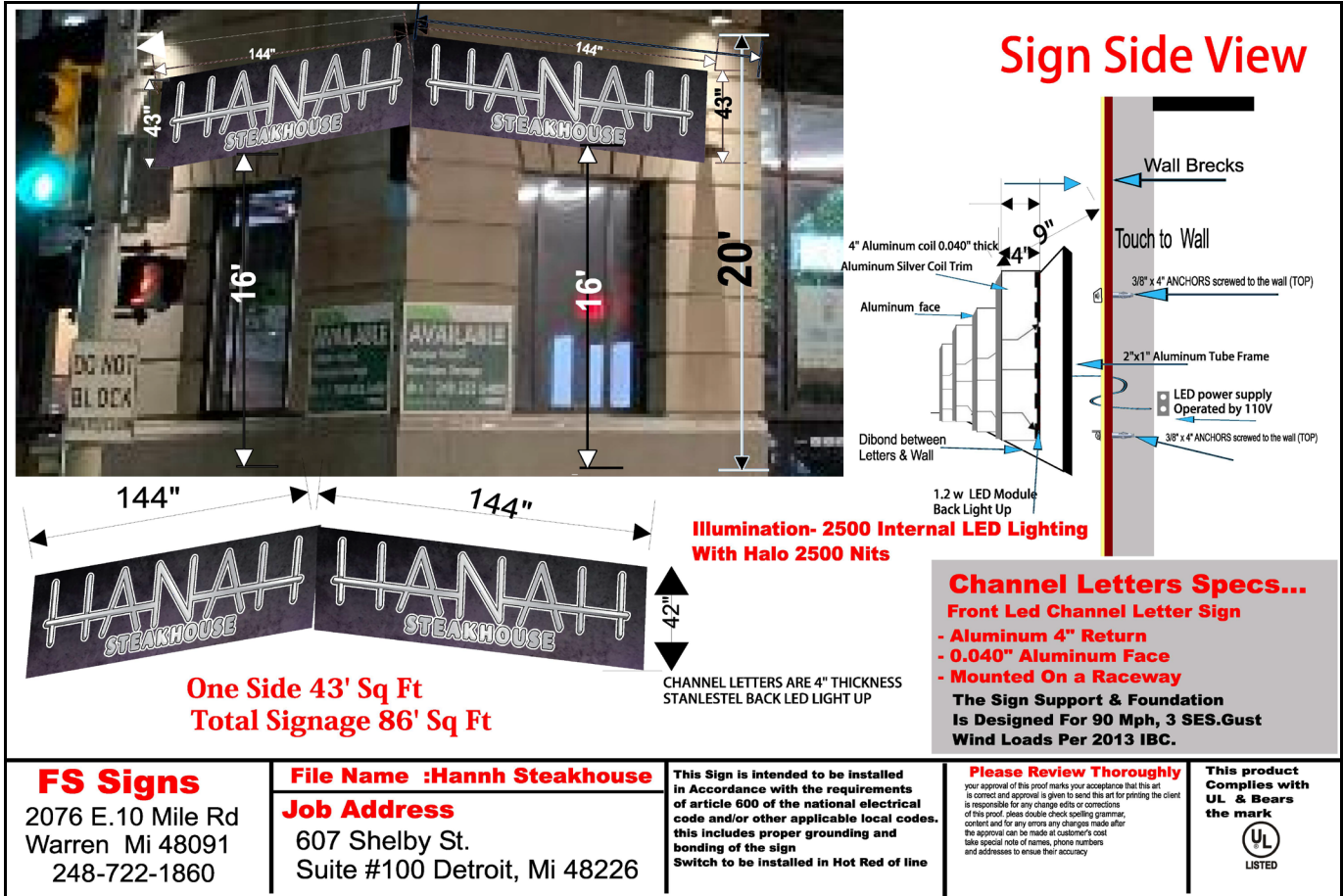


Figure 3: Signage documentation and renderings submitted by the applicant.



Figures 4,5: Views of existing conditions with temporary signage. Red arrows indicate the proposed signage locations.

#### STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Detroit Financial Historic District was established in 2011.
- The 1962 pedestrian bridge obscures the original sign band on the eastern building elevation and reduces the available locations for mounting signage.
- The applicant has installed temporary signage over the existing blade sign.

#### ISSUES

- As noted in the Elements of Design for the Detroit Financial Historic District (Detroit Municipal Code Sec. 21-2-218), “the historic name of the building is commonly integrated with its original design while the names of current occupants are displayed *on vertically-oriented signs hanging at the corners of the buildings above the first story.*” The proposed wall signage does not adhere to the Elements of Design for signage in the Detroit Financial Historic District.
- According to the HDC’s Signage and Awning Guidelines, “Signage must fit within the building design and its storefront and be historically compatible with the site and context; must be compatible with building; and must not obscure architectural elements.” As presented in the rendering, the proposed signage is larger than comparable tenant signs in the District and would obscure the limestone window lintels at a highly visible corner of the building. The limestone façade and its deeply recessed joints at the base of the building are character defining features of this building.
- The existing blade sign adheres to HDC’s Signage and Awning Guidelines as well as the Elements of Design for the District.

#### RECOMMENDATION

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

It is staff’s opinion the proposed signage project will alter and obscure the features and spaces that characterize the property. Staff therefore recommends the Commission issue a Denial for the work as proposed because it does not meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Elements of Design for the district, specifically Standard:

*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.*