

STAFF REPORT: MARCH 8, 2023 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO

APPLICATION NUMBER: 23-8232

ADDRESS: 1427 RANDOLPH

HISTORIC DISTRICT: MADISON-HARMONIE

APPLICANT: ROMAN BONISLAWSKI

PROPERTY OWNER: RANDOLPH CAPITAL PARTNERS LLC

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: JANUARY 26, 2023

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: FEBRUARY 21, 2023

SCOPE: ALTER STOREFRONT, ADD PATIO, ADD SIGNAGE

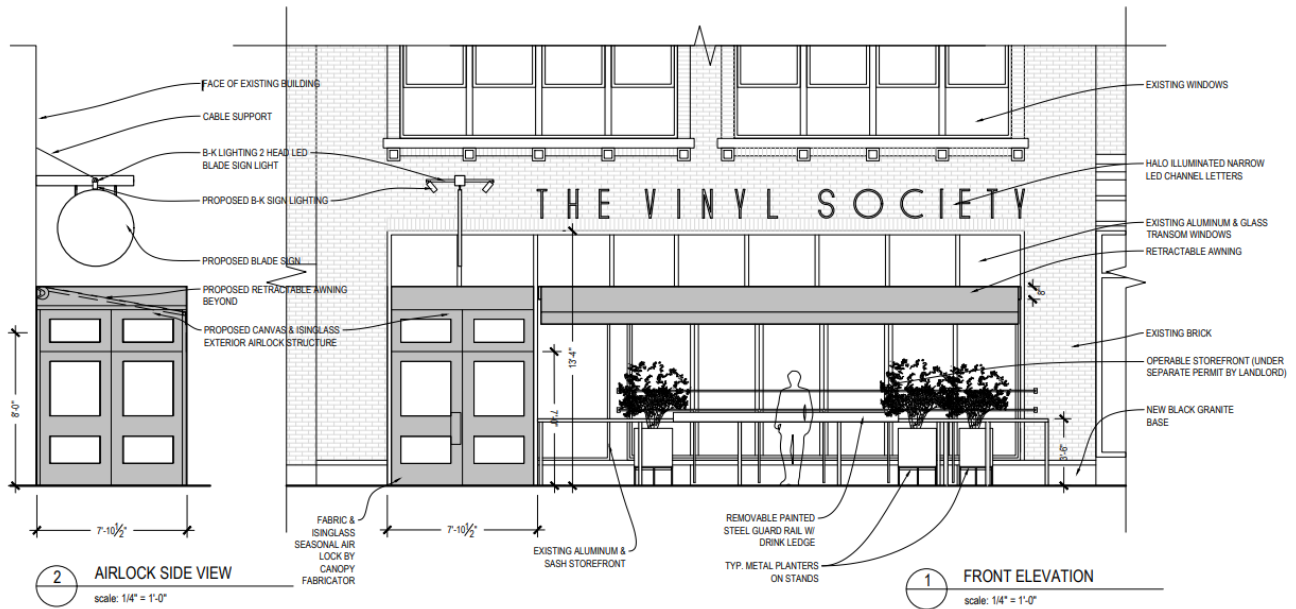
EXISTING CONDITIONS

The building at 1427 Randolph Street is a three-story, brick, commercial building, facing east onto the street. The building sits across from, and facing, Harmonie Park. Its architecture shows a subtle Prairie influence, though a cornice is missing and the storefront has been reconfigured at least twice in the building's history. Although the fenestration on the upper stories is articulated into two bays, the ground floor consists of a single, wide bay, with tall window openings topped by transoms.



View from Randolph St. looking west towards building. February 2023 photo by staff.

PROPOSAL

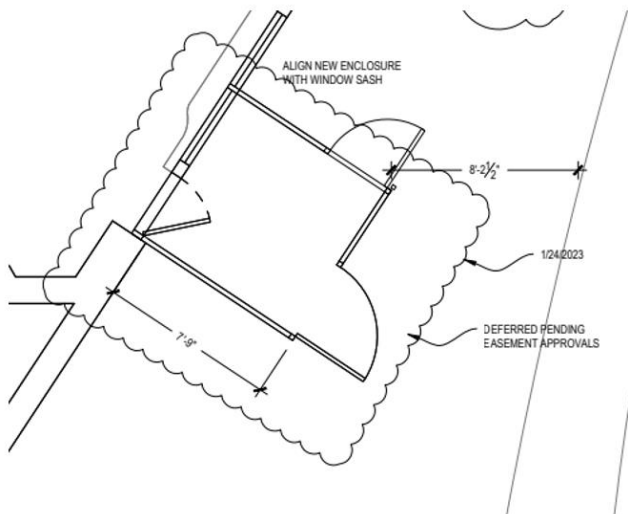


Elevation showing proposed work. Image from application documents.

The proposal includes several work items:

Entrance vestibule

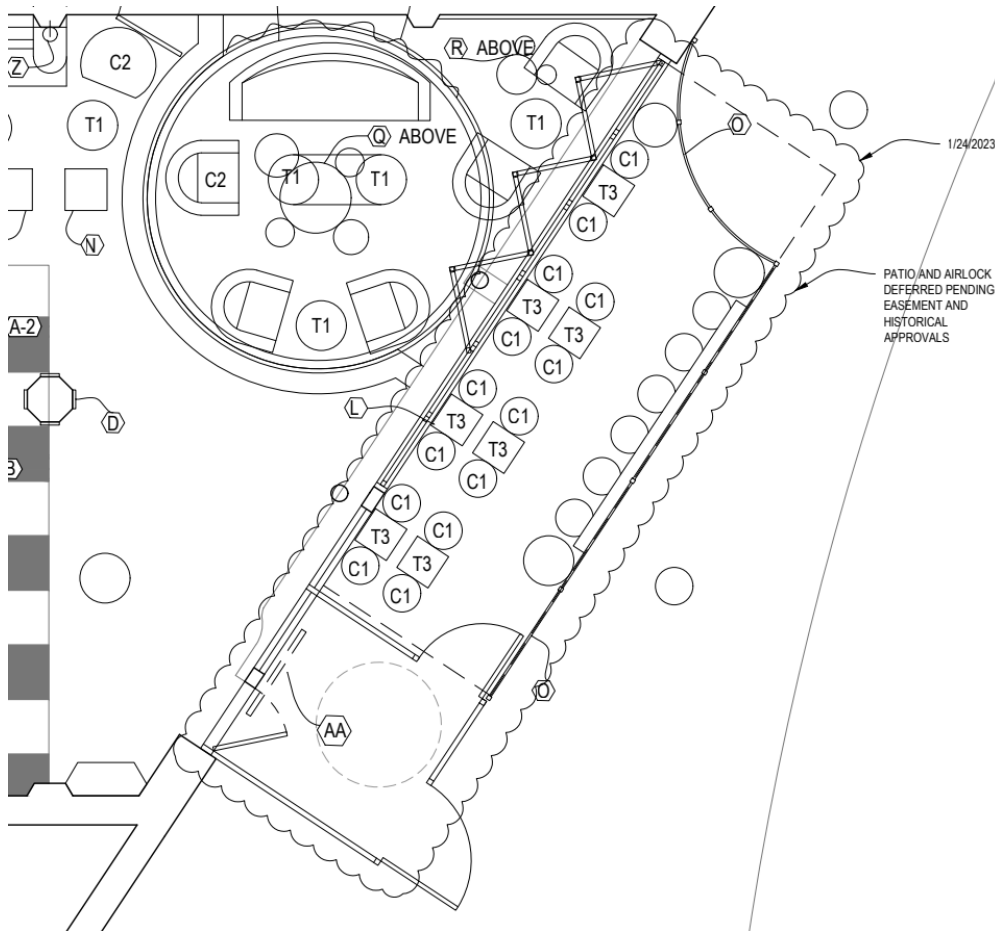
The application proposes a removeable, seasonal entrance vestibule, described as an “exterior canvas and isinglass airlock.” It would be at the south end of the façade. Fabric type and color are not specified. The projection extends 7’9” into the sidewalk, leaving 8’2½” of open pedestrian space between the projection and the curb.



Left: elevation of the proposed airlock. Note that the adjacent proposed patio is not depicted. Image from application materials. Right: Photo of a similar enclosure on another building. Photo provided by applicant.

Patio

Also proposed is a “patio with metal rail and planters.” The patio projects 7’9” from the façade, leaving about 4 feet of pedestrian space between the rail and the curb at its narrowest point. The rail is to be steel with a drink ledge.



Awning

A “canvas retractable awning” is proposed between the storefront and transom.

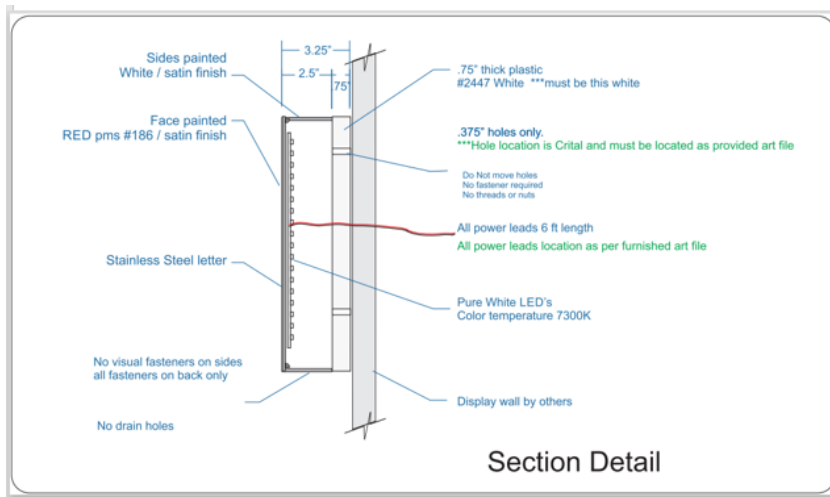
Stone base

An existing stone base runs along the front façade approximately 1’ high. It is cracked with missing sections. The application proposes to replace it with black granite.

Signs (2)

Above the front door is proposed a projecting, externally illuminated sign, centered above the main (east façade) entrance. It is to be approximately 4’ in diameter and circular. An image for the proposed sign is not provided.

Halo-lit letters approximately 18” tall are proposed to be affixed to the building above the storefront, extending the length of the storefront windows. The letters are to be Pantone 186 Red with bright white lighting.



Left: Section from application showing dimensions. Right: Pantone 186. Image from myperfectcolor.com

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Madison-Harmonie Historic District was enacted by Ordinance 11-88 in 1988. The Historic Designation Advisory Board Final Report mentions sixteen contributing buildings from 1895 through 1924, suggesting a Period of Significance. 1427 Randolph, the subject building, is listed as a contributing resource. The Final Report emphasizes the architectural significance of the buildings of the district and their spatial relationship to Harmonie Park, which sits directly across from the subject building.
- The Elements of Design describe the buildings surrounding Harmonie Park as a distinct area within the district, and provides the following guidance that pertains to buildings fronting on Harmonie Park:
 - “In general, commercial structures around Harmonie Park have large areas of display window openings on their first stories. . . . [w]indows are frequently arranged in groupings of several window units within one opening.”
 - “Openings within the facades are generally regularly arranged.”
 - Buildings facing Harmonie Park are “utilitarian in appearance and reflect the modernistic tendencies popular in the early twentieth century.”
 - “Entrances to the commercial buildings facing Harmonie Park are either centered or on either side of the front façade; some contain more than one entrance due to multiple storefronts.”
 - The major wall of continuity is created by the façades of the buildings themselves. Uniform setbacks within blocks exist throughout the district. Where buildings abut, a continuous wall exists.
 - The brick commercial buildings facing Harmonie Park are small to moderate in scale; elements and detail within are generally small in scale.

Most of the commercial buildings facing Harmonie Park are vertical in directional expression when taken individually.

- By 1988, the ground floor of the building was “severely altered” according to the Final Report. The current version of the storefront dates from a 2021 Certificate of Appropriateness. None of the proposed work removes or damages historic materials.
- The proposed seasonal airlock vestibule obscures the front entrance, but the front entrance is not a historic, defining feature. The overall spatial characteristics of the storefront, issued a Certificate of Appropriateness in 2021, will remain intact. Due to its small scale and the fact that it is composed of temporary, soft materials, staff opines that it meets Standard #9 of the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation*, in that it is clearly “differentiated” and “compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features” of the building. It is also removeable, meeting Standard #10.
- The proposed patio is likewise differentiated, compatible, and removeable.
- The location and dimensions of the proposed awning meet the *Signs and Awning Guidelines*.
- The stone base proposed for replacement does not appear to be a historic feature of the building. The proposed new stone base is appropriate with respect to the character of the building. Other than the stone replacement, all other work is reversible.
- The Elements of Design do not provide specific guidance for signs within the district. The proposed signs generally meet the *Signs and Awning Guidelines* and complement the character, and architectural style of the building and the district, although the information regarding the projecting blade sign is not complete (see below).
- Bright red lettering is consistent with the district, as shown in the photos below.



Prominent historic Madison-Harmonie signs (the Madison-Lenox has since been demolished). Photos: Wikipedia Commons (left), historicdetroit.org (right).

- The proposed signs are sized and placed in a matter that does not obscure, distract from, or overwhelm architectural elements of the facades. Staff therefore suggests that they are “compatible with the massing, size, [and] scale” of the façades (Standard #9) and they do not “alter features or spaces that characterize the property” (Standard #2).

ISSUES

- The finish and color of the proposed steel rail is not specified.
- The appearance of the proposed planters is not shown.
- The color of the proposed awning is not specified.
- The *Signs and Awning Guidelines* provide direction on typeface, legibility, and color. Because an image for the blade sign is not provided, staff is unable to determine the appropriateness of the sign.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78: Determination of Historic District Commission

Staff recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work as it meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, with the following conditions:

- The finish and color of the proposed steel rail, the selection of proposed planters, the color of the proposed awning, and the final appearance of the proposed blade sign shall be subject to approval by staff.