

REVISED STAFF REPORT: 3/8/2023 REGULAR MEETING PREPARED BY: J. ROSS
ADDRESS: 267 E. GRAND RIVER (311 E. GRAND RIVER, AKA THE HARMONIE CLUB)

APPLICATION NO: #23-8241

HISTORIC DISTRICT: MADISON-HARMONIE

APPLICANT: MATHEW KARR/LIGHTHOUSE IMMERSIVE

OWNER: ROGER BESMAIJAN

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 2/28/2023

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 2/13/2023

SCOPE: INSTALL VINYL FILM SIGNAGE AT FENESTRATION

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Erected in 1895 and designed by architect Richard Reseman, the building at 267 E. Grand River is known as the Harmonie Club. Per the Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board:

The design for the Harmonie Club reflects the classical, Beaux Arts style that was becoming popular for public buildings in the 1890s. The use of buff-colored brick and the rather heavy, overscaled quality of the ornamental features are typical of this period. Reseman imbued his design with the solid, monumental character appropriate to a prominent German social club while reflecting contemporary opera house and theatre design in the facade to symbolize the organization's primary interest in musical entertainment. Today, the Harmonie Club is one of the finest and least altered structures of its kind in Detroit, as well as one of the city's earlier surviving examples of Beaux Arts design.

The building is a rectangular, four-story, hip-roofed, buff-colored brick structure of Beaux Arts design approximately 75' x 100' in size. The two elevations are unified by a large curving corner section.

Above the low basement of rusticated stone, the brick first and second stories are banded while the third and fourth stories are faced with flush brick masonry articulated with colossal pilasters on pedestals. The one-over-one fenestration is symmetrically arranged. The windows on the first and second levels have elaborate splayed lintels of banded brick while those of the third and fourth stories are unarticulated. The fourth story windows have arched tops.

The symmetrical facade on East Grand River Avenue is formally composed along classical lines. The central Ionic ordered entrance is under a broad arch extending through the second floor. Above the projecting molded metal course separating the second and third levels is a pedimental three-bay pavilion set off by brick pilasters and ornamented with a balustraded stone balcony centered over the entrance arch. The pediment contains a high relief, triumphally-articulated, foliated cartouche.

The Center Street elevation is less formally composed with fenestration located to respond to floor plan requirements.



267 E. Grand River, current photo , staff photo taken 2/28/2023

PROPOSAL

Per the current submission, the applicant is seeking the Historic District Commission's approval to install new signage at the building. Specifically, the project includes the following scope:

- At the first story, east elevation primary entrance
 - Install two 84" tall vinyl file signage in door sidelites
 - Install three 31" tall vinyl film signage in door transom
- At the first story, east elevation, install 90"x41" vinyl film signage in each of the four existing windows
- At the second story, east elevation, install 90"x41" vinyl film signage in each of the four existing windows

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The signage which is the subject of the current application has already been installed at the building. Specifically, please note that in May 2022 HDC staff issued a Certificate of Appropriateness (#22-7834) for the installation of the above-listed 13 window and door films to allow for them to remain for six months. In September 2022, HDC staff extended the initial approval of the 13 signs for a second six month timeframe (#22-8023). As the

second temporary approval has now expired, the applicant is seeking Commission approval for the permanent installation of the signage. See the attached COAs for reference.

- ~~Please note that in addition to scope items/13 vinyl signs listed in this staff report's proposal narrative, the current application materials/deck includes a proposal to install signage at the building's front/east elevation entry's vestibule doors. This item is not subject to the Commission's review purview as this location/doorway is at the building's interior. The application also includes a proposal to install a 36" x 48" sign at the building's southeast corner. Note that HDC staff approved this sign without time constraints under application #22-7834 in May 2022. Therefore, this sign is also not subject to the current Commission review (see below photos).~~



The subject signage which was approved by HDC staff for temporary installation within the eight double-hung windows and the front doorway within the sidelites and transom. This signage is the subject of the current application. Staff photo taken on 2/28/2023



~~This sign was approved by staff in May 2022 without time limits via COA #22-7834. It is therefore not subject to the current Commission review~~

~~Vestibule Doors~~

~~Material - PVC~~



~~This signage is proposed for installation at the building's interior/vestibule doors and is therefore not subject to HDC review due to its location~~

- Clear/transparent glazing at fenestration is typical at primary elevations within the historic district. As 267 E. Grand River's east façade is a primary elevation, any effort which might permanently introduce opacity to windows and/or storefronts at this location is not recommended. Staff did visit the site and noted that the proposed fenestration film is reversible and has been installed in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential integrity of the property and its environment would be unimpaired. Therefore, staff does support this project but recommends that any approval be conditioned upon the owner removing all of the proposed vinyl film signage from the building's fenestration once the current tenant/Lighthouse Immersive no longer hosts events within the building.

ISSUES

- None

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78. Determination of the Historic District Commission – Certificate of Appropriateness

It is staff's opinion that the project generally conforms to the Elements of Design for the Corktown Historic District and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work with the following condition:

- The owner shall remove all the proposed vinyl film signage from the building's fenestration once the current tenant/Lighthouse Immersive no longer hosts events within the building. Clear/transparent glazing at fenestration is typical at primary elevations within the historic district. As 267 E. Grand River's east façade is a primary elevation, any effort which might permanently introduce opacity to windows and/or storefronts at this location is not recommended.