

STAFF REPORT: 4/12/2023 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

ADDRESS: 1550 WOODWARD

APPLICATION NO: 2023-8279

HISTORIC DISTRICT: LOWER WOODWARD

APPLICANT: BRIAN REBAIN/KRAEMER DESIGN GROUP

ARCHITECT: MCINTOSH PORIS ASSOCIATES

OWNER: IAN DONALDSON/1550 WEBWARD LLC

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 4/3/2023

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 3/17/2023

SCOPE: DEMOLISH SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF BUILDING. CONSTRUCT NEW COMMERCIAL BUILDING

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The building located at 1550 Woodward was erected in 1965 to house the Tall-Eez shoe store. The building is one-story in height. The rear elevation is painted brick, while the side/south elevation is unpainted concrete block. Painted plywood panels and a single set of paired metal doors with concrete and metal awnings above is located at the front elevation. The roof is flat and is topped with a single concrete-block penthouse. The Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board (HDAB) designation report for the district states that the building does not contribute to the district.



1550 Woodward (staff photo taken 4/4/2023)

PROPOSAL

With the current proposal, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval to undertake a major rehabilitation of 1550 Woodward to include the following exterior scope of work per the submitted documentation:

- Demolish the existing front/west façade
- Demolish the roof with the exception of the existing stair penthouse
- Per the submitted narrative, demolish most/all of the north/side and rear/east walls. Reconstruct with concrete block (painted grey at the exterior). Note, that elevation drawings depicting these conditions have not been submitted.
- Build a new front/west façade to be clad with brick with a granite base. Windows and storefront shall be aluminum and will be framed by a Glass Fiber Reinforced Concrete (GFRC) "brow". A GFRC cap will top the wall's parapet.
- At the roof, install a new masonry deck and a one-story, roof-top enclosed terrace/penthouse. The terrace enclosure will feature an aluminum and glass roof and sliding aluminum and glass storefront at the west elevation. Standing seam metal siding shall clad the rear and side elevations. Standing seam metal siding will also be added to the existing rooftop stair penthouse's exterior walls

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- As noted above, the building was erected in 1965. The HDAB considered the building to be a noncontributing element when the district was designated. HDC staff concurs with the HDAB's assertion that the building does not contribute to the district due to the numerous unsympathetic alterations of the building's main/front elevation.
- Note that the development team currently has submitted a permit application to the Detroit Building, Safety, Engineering, and Environmental Department (BSEED) for the selective demolition of the building (see attached drawings associated with Permit #BLD2023--00363). Final permit drawings for the reconstruction of the building, to include the new rooftop penthouse, have not yet been submitted to BSEED.
- It is staff's opinion that the proposed building reconstruction is compatible with the district's historic character and the rooftop addition appears to be of a scale that is appropriate to the district.

ISSUES

- Note that staff did request that the project's architect of record supply dimensioned full elevation drawings (unobstructed by the parapet) of the front, side, and rear facades of the rooftop penthouse/enclosed terrace structure. This information has not yet been supplied to staff as of the date of this report's completion.
- Also, please note that the submitted renderings indicate that the current side/north and rear/east walls will be maintained. However, per the submitted narrative, the applicant has revised these aspects of the project to note that these walls are in poor condition and will likely need to be demolished and rebuilt from concrete block. The new side and rear walls will then be painted grey. The current proposal does not provide a rendering/elevation drawing which demonstrates these conditions. As noted previously, the building is noncontributing to the district and the submitted conceptual renderings indicate that the new building will be compatible with the district. Therefore, in this specific situation, staff does recommend that the Commission approve this project.

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 district and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for the project.