

STAFF REPORT: 03/13/2024 MEETING

PREPARED BY: D. RIEDEN

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00019

ADDRESS: 4205 CASS AVE (422 W WILLIS)

HISTORIC DISTRICT: WILLIS-SELDEN LOCAL

APPLICANT/TENANT: AHMED ALWHYSEE

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 02/19/2024

DATES OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 01/11/2024, 02/23/2024

SCOPE: PAINT BUILDING, INSTALL SIGNAGE (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1924, the property at 4205 Cass Ave (422 W Willis), is a single-story modern, commercial building with a storefront facing Willis Street on the northwest corner of Cass Avenue and Willis Street. This proposal is focused only on the west portion of the building, which consists of three commercial bays separated by brick and stone columns. Brick and cast stone are set in rectangular patterns above each bay opening. Cast stone banding separates the upper area from the storefront below. Wood paneling surrounds each storefront casement and the main entrance and sidelights. A series of gooseneck light fixtures, which were installed by a previous tenant and not historic, adorn the brick and cast stone belly band above the storefront. As this proposal will describe, this building was recently stripped of paint with approval by HDC Staff and then repainted without approval in early December 2023. A sign was also mounted without approval and is the subject of this application.



Site Photo1, by Staff January 11, 2024: (North) front elevation, showing current, unapproved paint and sign installation condition.



Site Photo 2, by Historic District Advisory Board, 2011: (North) showing painted masonry conditions at time of designation.



Aerial 1 of Parcel # 02002216 (in gold) by Detroit Parcel Viewer, the applicant has use of the space at 422 W WILLIS, shown in red.

PROPOSAL

The proposed work consists of the following:

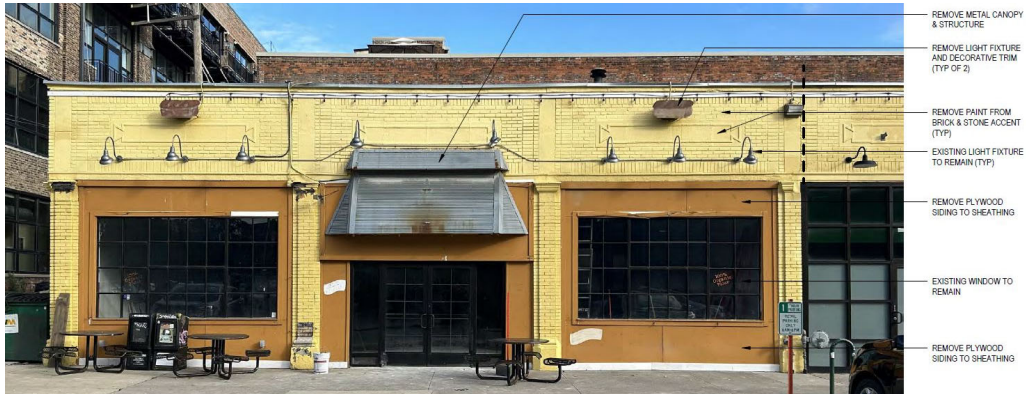
- Paint the previously removed painted masonry surfaces with Behr, Masonry Stucco & Brick Paint Satin Paint, black
- Install one (1) sign, “Kitab Café”, with 1/2” PVC letter that occupies the center area above the main entrance, measuring 132” wide by 17 ½” height.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- This property, which includes the larger building and several storefronts not part of this application, has a property owner with a history of open violations with the Historic District Commission, who is a different party than the applicant. The following violations exist on this parcel, but are located at the corner address, 4201 Cass, “Cobb’s Corner”:
 - August 2022 - Dec 2023, Violations: Installed metal frame with corrugated roof to masonry, installed signage, shelves and chalkboards to masonry, installed metal railing, and spray-washed paint removal to masonry.
 - January 2024, BSEED: Violation cases have failed inspections and have been referred to court.
- The Willis-Selden Historic District was established in 2011. Its Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-217) provide the following guidance:
 - *“Relationship of textures.* On a majority of buildings within the district, the major textural effect is that of brick with mortar joints juxtaposed with cast stone or limestone trim. Patterned brickwork is used to create subtle detail on commercial and apartment buildings, such as spandrels and rectangular panels, and more pronounced textural interest... Rough-cut stone with thick mortar joints creates considerable textural interest on buildings where it exists, while other buildings feature smooth stone with thin mortar joints...”
 - *“Relationship of colors.* Natural brick colors in shades of brown, red, and buff predominate on wall surfaces, while natural stone colors in shades of gray, red, and brown also exist... Brick on commercial buildings is frequently painted in shades of yellow or orange. The original colors of any building, as determined by professional analysis, are always acceptable for that building and may provide guidance for similar buildings.”
 - *“Degree of complexity within the façades.* The façades within the district range from simple to complex, depending upon style. Overall, front façades tend to be simple in their massing and mostly regular in their fenestration, though a variety of window and door shapes, materials,

architectural elements, and details of individual buildings increase the overall level of complexity of the district.”

- Staff issued a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) in late October 2023, for the removal of paint, and non-historic features such as light fixtures and a sign mount. (*See site photo 3.*) Upon receipt of the COA, the applicant removed the paint in early December 2023 and took the photos of the completed work. (*See site photo 4.*) At this point, in staff’s opinion, the applicant completed the COA’s work for paint removal and the precedent of a previously painted masonry building no longer applies to allow the applicant to repaint the building without a new review and approval cycle. The applicant states that they had trouble removing all the yellow and orange paint despite the paint removal process. However, in Staff’s opinion, the work appeared to be removed enough to reveal long-hidden and important historic character and detail.



Site Photo 3, excerpt from applicant’s previously approved application, October 2023: showing conditions prior to paint removal.




Site Photo 4, by Applicant December: (North) front elevation, showing approved paint removed conditions.



Site Photo 5, by Staff February 23, 2024: (North) front elevation, showing current, unapproved paint and sign installation conditions.

- Staff has requested higher resolution and more detailed photos of the work that shows the paint still on the brick but did not receive these photos at the time of this report.
- The applicant continued to work without approval, painting the building and mounting the sign. (*See site photo 5.*) The remaining work shown in this photo was approved by the previous COA. As per the National Park Service (NPS) Guidelines, “applying paint or other coatings such as stucco to masonry that has been **historically** unpainted or uncoated to create a new appearance” **is not recommended.** (<https://www.nps.gov/crps/tps/rehab-guidelines/masonry01.htm>)
- Staff received confirmation that the applicant used water pressure with no abrasives or chemical additives during the paint removal process. Prosooco’s Enviro Klean SafStrip chemical was used for spot treatments. Tuckpoint in some locations was also executed. This work was all under the previously approved COA.
- Staff observed that the paint applied on the masonry has product specifications which state that this is latex paint designed for masonry and brick.
- Staff has the opinion that design, materials, and placement of the sign over the entrance does not interfere with the character-defining features of the building and therefore is appropriate.

TECHNICAL DATA SHEET



MASONRY, STUCCO & BRICK PAINT SATIN PAINT
NO. 280 WHITE

PRODUCT INFORMATION


BEHR® Masonry, Stucco & Brick Satin Paint is a high-quality acrylic latex paint with excellent hiding properties. This interior/exterior, self-priming, mildew resistant finish also provides excellent adhesion and water repellency on properly prepared, smooth, rough and textured masonry, stucco and brick surfaces. This water-based formula is designed to accentuate all textured surfaces while achieving a natural look. It is alkali-resistant up to pH 12.0, easy to apply, and cleans up with soap and water.

RECOMMENDED USES:

Use on properly prepared, interior/exterior, vertical surfaces such as:

- Concrete
- Concrete Block/CMU
- Cement Board Siding
- Brick
- Stucco

Do not use on horizontal surfaces subject to foot traffic.



COMPLIES WITH THE BELOW AS OF 9/1/2014			
SCAQMD	YES	AIM	YES
CARB	YES	LEED v.3 (2009)*	YES
OTC	YES	FLAME SPREAD/CLASS A	YES
LADCO	YES		

*Please see www.usgbc.org/LEED for additional details.

Figure 1, by Applicant: Showing water repellent, latex paint used on masonry. The applicant clarified that the color was tinted black, despite the title used here.

ISSUES

- The work was completed without the Commission’s approval.
- The Elements of Design do indicate instances of painted stone or concrete within the district. However, the NPS Guidelines **do not** recommend “applying paint or other coatings such as stucco to masonry that **has been historically unpainted or uncoated to create a new appearance.**” (<https://www.nps.gov/crps/tps/rehab-guidelines/masonry01.htm>) It is therefore staff’s opinion that the painting of unpainted masonry elements at the building **does not** meet the Standards. The previous “grandfathered” painted condition expired.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Recommendation 1: Paint Building

Staff finds that the painting of historically unpainted masonry on the building does not meet the Secretary of Interior Standards for the following reasons:

- The proposal conflicts with the NPS Guidelines which does not recommend “applying paint to masonry that has been historically unpainted or uncoated to create a new appearance.”

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the above work items, as they do not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standards:

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.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

Recommendation 2 – Install Signage

It is staff's opinion that the installation signage is appropriate. Staff therefore recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work because it meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Willis-Selden Local Historic District Elements of Design.