

STAFF REPORT: 06/12/2024 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: D. RIEDEN

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00320

ADDRESS: 660 WOODWARD (FIRST NATIONAL BANK BUILDING)

HISTORIC DISTRICT: DETROIT FINANCIAL

APPLICANTS: LILLIAN CANDELA, PROJECT ARCHITECT (BEDROCK), BRIAN REBAIN, PRESENTER (KRAEMER DESIGN GROUP)

OWNER: LILLIAN CANDELA, PROJECT ARCHITECT (BEDROCK)

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 05/20/2024

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 05/22/2024

SCOPE: ALTER FAÇADE, INSTALL SIGNAGE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Erected in 1922, this steel-frame, twenty-four story building faced in limestone was designed by Albert Kahn, Inc., architect. Also known as the “First National Bank Building”, this Neo-Classical building is described by the Historic Designation Advisory Board’s (HDAB) Final Report which notes the following:

“Another of the most important of Detroit’s banks historically was the First National Bank of Detroit, which built the building at 660 Woodward in 1920-22. First National was Michigan’s first national bank when it was established in 1863, only a year after the passage of the National Banking Act. That bank became the First and Old Detroit National Bank in 1914 as a result of a merger. The name was shortened back to First National Bank about the time the new building was occupied. First National became part of the above noted Detroit Bankers Company holding company and was a casualty.”

The primary façades front Woodward Avenue and Cadillac Square, featuring ground-level storefronts that are finished with grey granite. The ground-level storefront bays are arranged in a rhythmic pattern and are composed of fixed, steel frame windows that are flanked by 4’-wide pilasters which project approximately 2” from the building’s face. Massive, fluted limestone Corinthian columns *in antis* rise from the second story on the primary facades, repeating/reinforcing the rhythm established by the ground-level granite pilasters. The building’s side elevation, which faces Cadillac Square, and rear, alley-facing façades are finished in limestone and buff-colored common brick. The proposed project area is located at the building’s first story south elevation, facing Cadillac Square to include the building’s five central bays.



Site Photo 1, by Staff May 22, 2024: (facing north) showing existing storefront at northeast corner of the building, facing Cadillac Square.



Figure 1, by Burton Collection, date unknown: (facing southeast) showing corner storefront at northwest corner of Woodward and Cadillac Square, showing original limestone façade surrounding the storefront and main entrance.

PROPOSAL

The applicant represents a tenant who has leased the ground-floor commercial space within the 660 Woodward property. This proposal is focused only on this portion of the building, which consists of 5 commercial bays facing Cadillac Square. Four of the commercial bays will be left as-is, leaving the existing storefront and surrounding granite untouched. One bay would be altered in the following manner: install a new door with an aluminum storefront system. An accessible ramp and stair are proposed at this new doorway, as the retail tenant space is higher than sidewalk level at this easternmost side of the north elevation of the building, using a simple black metal tube-style guardrail as depicted in the submitted drawings and renderings. Signage for the vender is proposed over the storefront entrance and a blade sign between two bays. Drawings are supplied through the applicant by Bedrock and Mayse & Associates, Inc.

- At proposed doorway location per attached drawings, remove existing aluminum window system, while maintaining granite façade rough opening.
- At the proposed doorway location, install new aluminum frame storefront door system in existing storefront opening per attached drawings, finish and material to match existing.
- Install 12'x8' ramp, 10'x8' landing, and 10' wide steps with accompanying black metal tube-style guardrail as depicted in the submitted drawings and renderings.
- Near ramp and steps, install moveable planters as depicted in the submitted drawings.
- Install internally illuminated "Chick-fil-A" 36" channel letter sign on I-beam over the proposed doorway as shown in submitted drawings. The sign will be confined to the width of the storefront bay and mounted to the granite via a method determined by the HDC,
- Install a side-mounted cabinet, double-sided, internally illuminated 2'x2' blade sign, with the vendor's logo. The sign will be centered on one of the pilasters between the storefront bays approximately 12' feet above sidewalk level, mounted to the granite via two bolted plates, and features integrated LED lighting (not color changing).

PROPOSED ELEVATIONS

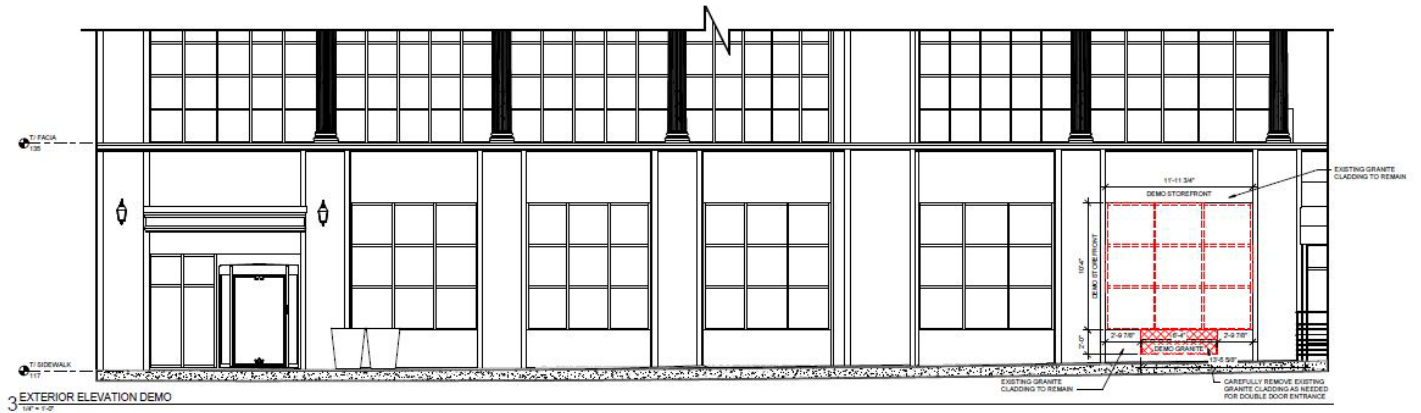


Figure 2, by Applicant: Proposed elevations showing new entry and storefront while retaining existing storefront bays.

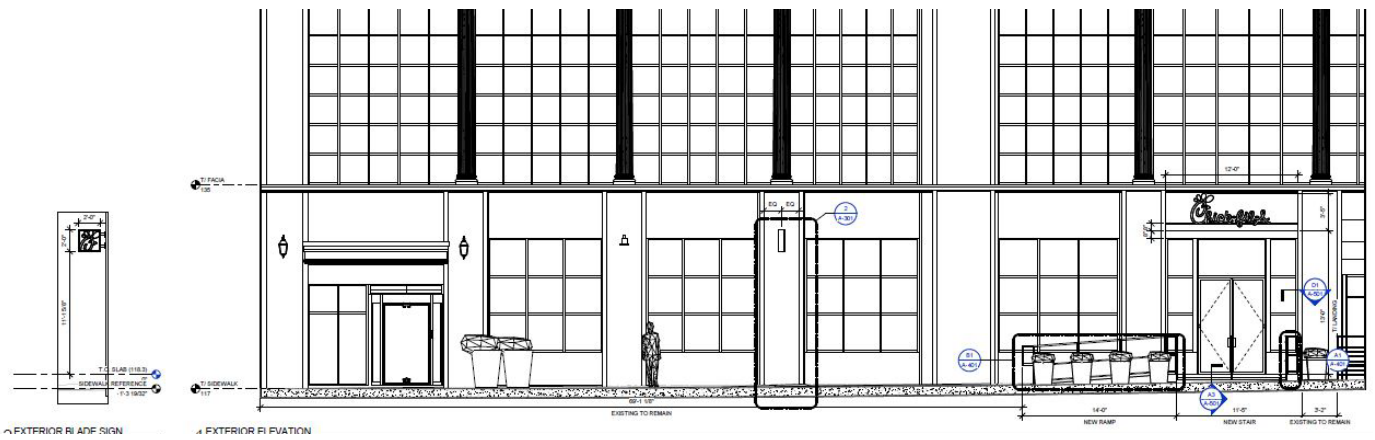


Figure 3, by Applicant: Proposed elevations showing new entry, ramp, stairs, planters, and signage.



Figure 4, by Applicant: Proposed rendering showing new entry, ramp, stairs, planters, and signage. Red lines indicate alignment of the proposed doorway to existing storefront mullion pattern.

PROPOSED PLAN AND DETAILS

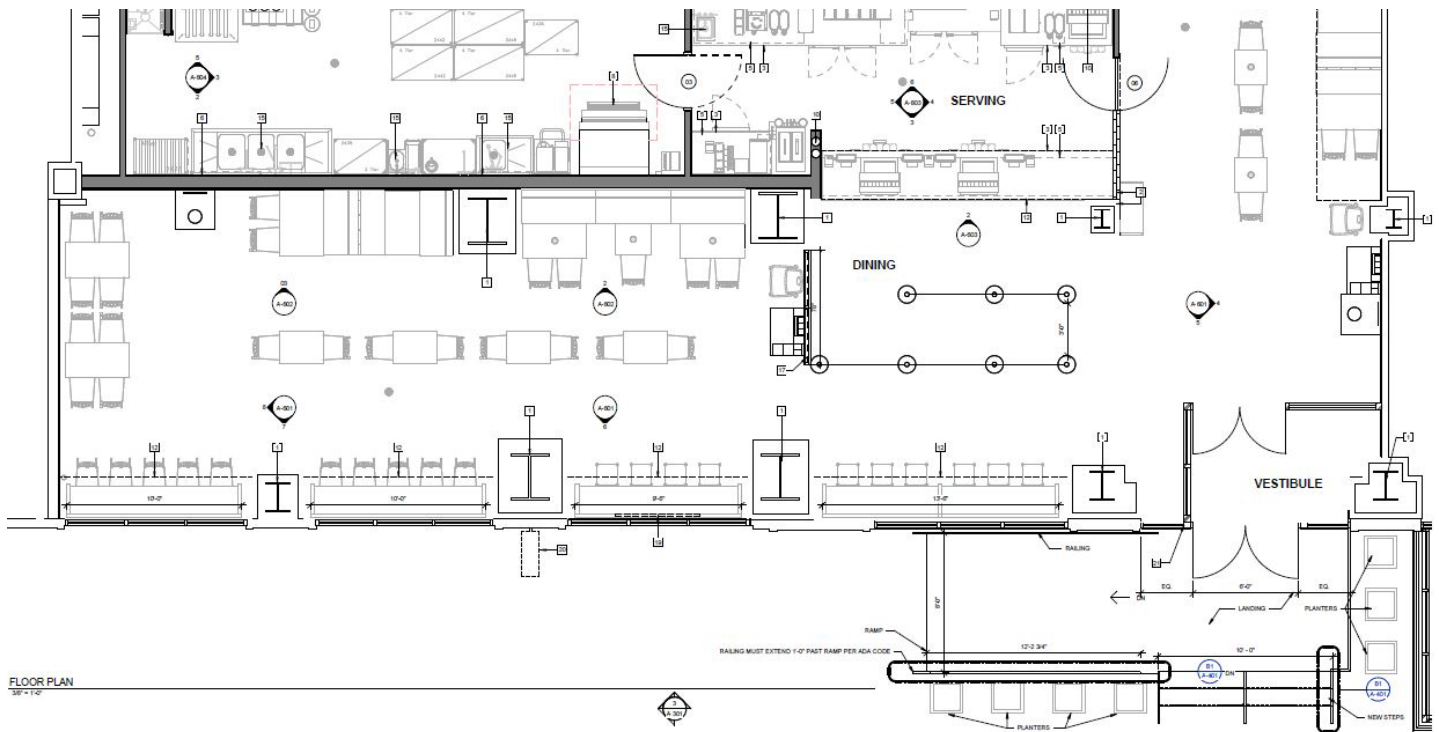


Figure 5, by Applicant: Excerpt of proposed floor plan showing new entry storefront, ramp, stairs, railing, planters, and blade sign location.

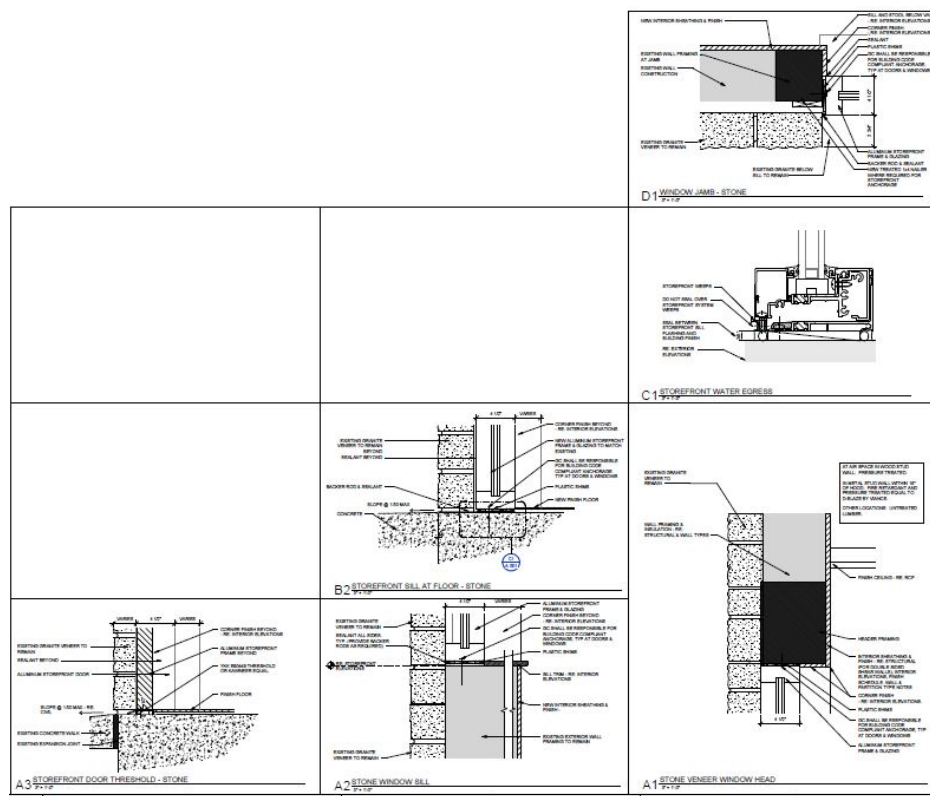


Figure 6, by Applicant: Proposed new entry storefront, showing proposed storefront and retained granite material.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The HDAB report for Detroit Financial HD, enacted in October 2011, offers the following insight:
 - The boundaries for the district are designed to include the concentration of historic bank, office and other downtown buildings, while omitting modern office buildings, parking garages and parking lots that would not currently contribute to the district.
 - Albert Kahn (1869-1942), established Albert Kahn, Architect in 1902 and Albert Kahn, Inc., Architects & Engineers in 1918. One of the firm’s specialties was bank design, many known buildings by the firm in the district include The Vinton Building (1916) and several others, often with monumental porticos and neoclassical detailing like the First National Bank Building: *“The massive First National Bank Building is also Neoclassical, with a three-story Corinthian portico – eighteen columns in all – dominating the base of the twenty four-story three-part façade that faces both Woodward Avenue and Cadillac Square. The massive office building towers over the entire block of Woodward in which it stands, its idiosyncratic shape designed to fit an oddly shaped site that zigzags around the back side of the block. The building otherwise seems more typical of Kahn’s office building work in that, above the portico, the tall façade are kept starkly simple, with large areas of windows.”*
- Staff assesses that the granite ground floor cladding is not original historic material dating to the original construction. Historic images (see figure 1) show that the original material was limestone. City building permit records suggest that the granite cladding was added in 1960. (See figures 1, 7, 8) While not original to construction, the granite cladding was present at the time of historic designation. Staff observed that the proposal retains most granite components within the bay except for the ground floor to allow for the doorway. (See figures 2-4, 6)
- Staff observed that during the period of significance, it was the nature of commercial storefronts to adapt and change over time (See figure 1).
- It is staff’s assessment that the existing storefront window system proposed for removal to accommodate the proposed door system does not have historic significance nor status as a distinctive character-defining feature.
- The Elements of Design for the Detroit Financial HD offer the following insights for this proposal:
 - Proportion of buildings' front façade... *The façades of the Neo-Classical style First National Building at 660 Woodward Avenue follow the irregular footprint of its site, and because of its substantial height, provide a backdrop to the small-scaled buildings adjacent to it on Woodward Avenue.*



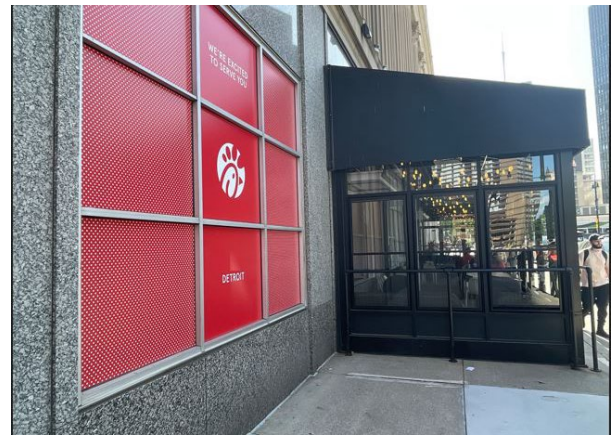
Figure 7, by Burton Collection, date unknown: (facing southeast) showing corner storefront at northwest corner of Woodward and Cadillac Square, showing original limestone façade surrounding the storefront and main entrance.

. Source: Detroit Public Library Burton Collection.

660	OK
Woodward	see permit
34284	1-19-60
	Date
Use	offices, stores & garage
Cons.	Masonry
Remarks	500.00 O.K.
	Sub. applic & plans. See original permit #33245-59. Alter exterior of bldg. & interior alterations as per plan. No
C of D-38-CA-A	Record Card

Figure 8, by Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department, Jan. 19, 1960, showing building permit card that indicates masonry work and exterior alterations were made.

- Proportion of openings within the façades... *The buildings within the Historic Detroit Financial District are each composed of approximately 35 percent to 60 percent openings in their front façades... Entrances are often centered prominently on the front façades with revolving doors set back in the arched, covered area of portico. Large openings above the entrance openings, ground floors, and mezzanine levels in the base of the buildings frequently contain subdivided windows rising through multiple stories. Plate glass storefront and display windows on the ground floors of commercial buildings are commonplace...*



Site Photo 2, by Staff May 22, 2024: (north elevation) showing location of proposed storefront doorway and landing.

- Rhythm of solids to voids in the front façades. *Most buildings in the district are of steel-frame construction, which creates a structure for which windows are inserted in a regular arrangement of columns and rows between the base floor and the attic. The regular rhythm of windows arranged one over the other in a grid pattern prevails throughout the district... The major building materials common to wall surfaces in the district are limestone, brick, and terra-cotta. Many granite bases also exist. Façades are often trimmed with limestone and/or terra cotta. Pilasters, window frames and spandrels of the Industrial Building are bronze. Window frames are of wood or steel; building grates and the framing of storefront windows and doors are generally metal.*



Site Photo 3, by Staff May 22, 2024: (north elevation) showing location of proposed blade sign and new entrance.

- Rhythm of entrances and/or porch projections. *Most primary entrances are prominently centered on their front façades, especially on the Classically-derived buildings, and are commonly recessed within single or multiple ornamental openings. Some buildings have colonnades or monumental porticos with their entrances set behind... Some corner buildings have corner entrances. Most entrances are at grade, with the exceptions of the buildings at 611 Woodward Avenue and 211 West Fort Street, which each feature a set of steps that rise with the slope of their sites, and the Theodore Levin United States Courthouse... which sits on a high basement and has steps leading to its main entrance.*
- Relationship of textures. *The smooth surfaces of glazed or painted brick, glazed terra cotta, polished marble, polished granite, and large expanses of glass contrast with the matte finishes of limestone and unpainted brick with mortar joints. Where the basis of buildings are rusticated, they contrast with the smoother wall surfaces above. Repetitive pilasters and ornamental detail in masonry, terra cotta or metal, primarily on belt courses and cornices, and the fluting of columns, contribute significantly to textural interest. Subdivided window sashes and treatments also contribute to textural interest, as do receding windows and wall planes, resulting in textural effects created by light and shade. Where those International-style buildings have glass bases, a smooth, transparent textural effect results. In general, the district is extremely rich in textural relationships.*

- Relationship of colors. *Major materials or light colors, such as beige, white, and cream, dominate the district. The natural brick colors of red, orange, and buff are also contrasted with beige or light gray trim elements and details... Granite bases, where they exist, are black, red or gray... Window and curtain wall glass is either colorless or tinted in shades of light green, black, or gray. Stainless steel and aluminum are silver in tone; grills and grates are green or black.*
 - Relationship of open space to structures... *Signage bearing the name of the businesses of the Victorian buildings on the east side of Woodward Avenue are situated in a frieze above the first story. Elsewhere in the district, 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... Wheelchair ramps provide access to an entrance ...*
- The proposed features do not conflict with the Elements of Design in materials or design.

ISSUES

- Staff has no issues with the proposed plan.

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 as proposed.