

**ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**

**Staff Report**

**ADDRESS:** 112 W Liberty Street, Application Number HDC21-297

**DISTRICT:** Main Street Historic District

**REPORT DATE:** December 9, 2021

**REPORT PREPARED BY:** Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

**REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE:** December 7, 2021

	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>APPLICANT</b>
<b>Name:</b>	24 Liberty LLC	Same
<b>Address:</b>	112 & 114 W Liberty Ann Arbor, MI 48104	
<b>Phone:</b>	(734) 845-0005	

**BACKGROUND:** 112 W Liberty is a three-story brick Italianate commercial building featuring double-hung four-over-four windows and round and segmented arches over the windows. It is part of a matching six-storefront row with 114, 116, 118, 120, and 122 W Liberty. The row was built by Adam and Anton Schaeberle beginning in 1866. 112 was remodeled to match the other five in the row in 1883. 112's original occupant was the Charles Binder Saloon in 1866 (see photo at end of report).

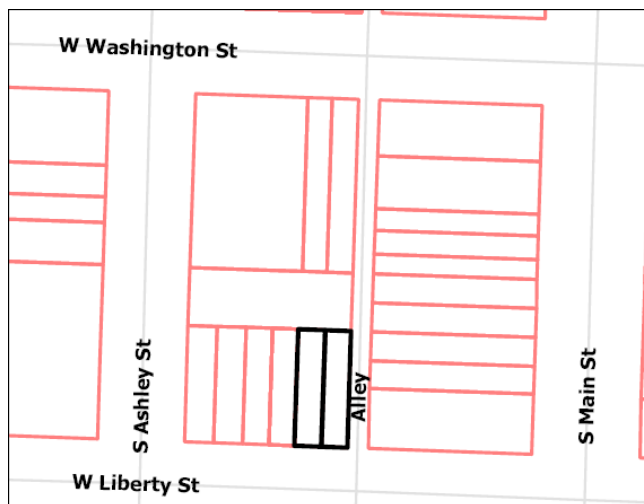
**LOCATION:** The site is on the north side of West Liberty Street, west of South Main and east of South Ashley. The current tenant is the Alley Bar.

**APPLICATION:** The applicant seeks HDC approval to install five banners that span the alley as part of a one-year public art installation.

**APPLICABLE REGULATIONS:**

**From the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:**

- (2) The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.



- (10) New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property will be unimpaired.

### **From the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings:**

#### **Building Site**

Recommended: Designing new exterior additions to historic buildings or adjacent new construction which is compatible with the historic character of the site and which preserve the historic relationship between a building or buildings, landscape features, and open space.

Not Recommended: Introducing new construction onto the building site which is visually incompatible in terms of size, scale, design, materials, color and texture or which destroys historic relationships on the site.

#### **Masonry**

Recommended: Identifying, retaining, and preserving masonry features that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building such as walls, brackets, railings, cornices, window architraves, door pediments, steps, and columns; and details such as tooling and bonding patterns, coatings, and color.

Not Recommended: Removing or radically changing masonry features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the building so that, as a result, the character is diminished.

Applying paint or other coatings such as stucco to masonry that has been historically unpainted or uncoated to create a new appearance.

### **From the Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines:**

#### **Signs**

Appropriate: Attaching signage through masonry joints, not masonry units, or through materials that can be easily repaired, such as wood, when the signage is removed.

### **STAFF FINDINGS:**

1. This application is for a public art installation on the east wall of 112 West Liberty and on the floor in the adjoining alley. The wall installation consists of approximately 85 two-foot-long painted aluminum bars affixed to the wall with an integrated bracket mounted with two anchors. Each bar weighs 1 lb 6 oz. The brick wall behind the bars would be painted. On the alley floor, the pavement and part of the sidewalk would be painted and foil-based decals applied to the pavement. Signatures were provided from the 112 West Liberty property owner and the City of Ann Arbor, which owns the alley.

2. This wall was damaged by a previous mural installation that drilled through bricks and mortar joints to mount six large panels. It has not been repaired since the mural was removed. There are numerous holes in both the bricks and the mortar, and a number of bricks in the project area are in poor condition. The lower of the two windows closest to West Liberty has a broken pane of glass that needs to be replaced.
3. The area of paint is specified on the drawings. This wall has paint on it, but it is not even or consistent and much of it appears to be in response to graffiti. The Historic District Commission will need to determine whether it is appropriate to paint the brick wall. It would not be appropriate to paint over the sills or the window glazing. If painting the masonry units is allowed, the wall should at a minimum be repointed before being painted so the paint doesn't hide existing problems.
4. This alley is notorious for wall damage (visible in photos) caused by turning trucks. The colorful bars must be installed in such a way that if pulled off the wall by trucks or other vehicles, the anchors will not harm the brick.
5. There is a document in the application called Masonry Notes that says:

Due to the irregularity in dimensions of the hand-pressed bricks and hand-laid masonry construction, the mortar joints between bricks range from ¼" to 5/8" wide. Therefore, anchoring within the mortar joints may cause more damage to the brick wall than anchoring through the brickwork. Attempting to drill into thin mortar joints may cause damage to the edge conditions of the brickwork surrounding the drilling, while anchoring through the center of a face brick should not cause as much damage to the brick. When the anchors are removed, the center of the bricks can be easily patched with a mortar that can be tinted to blend into the surrounding masonry. We recommend that the contractor test the installation process of the anchors to determine which installation process will not harm the historic character and material of the walls. This can be completed during the anchor load testing (see note 3).

Proposing to drill through brick is not preserving masonry and not appropriate. If the mortar joints are too small, uneven, or otherwise unsuitable for this proposed project, or if the edges of bricks are endangered by the work, the project should not be installed.

6. Staff believes the work is inappropriate based on the proposed method of installing the steel brackets and should be denied. The Masonry Notes are clear that installing anchors in the masonry joints would likely damage the bricks; therefore, staff has not conditioned the motion on installation only in masonry joints.

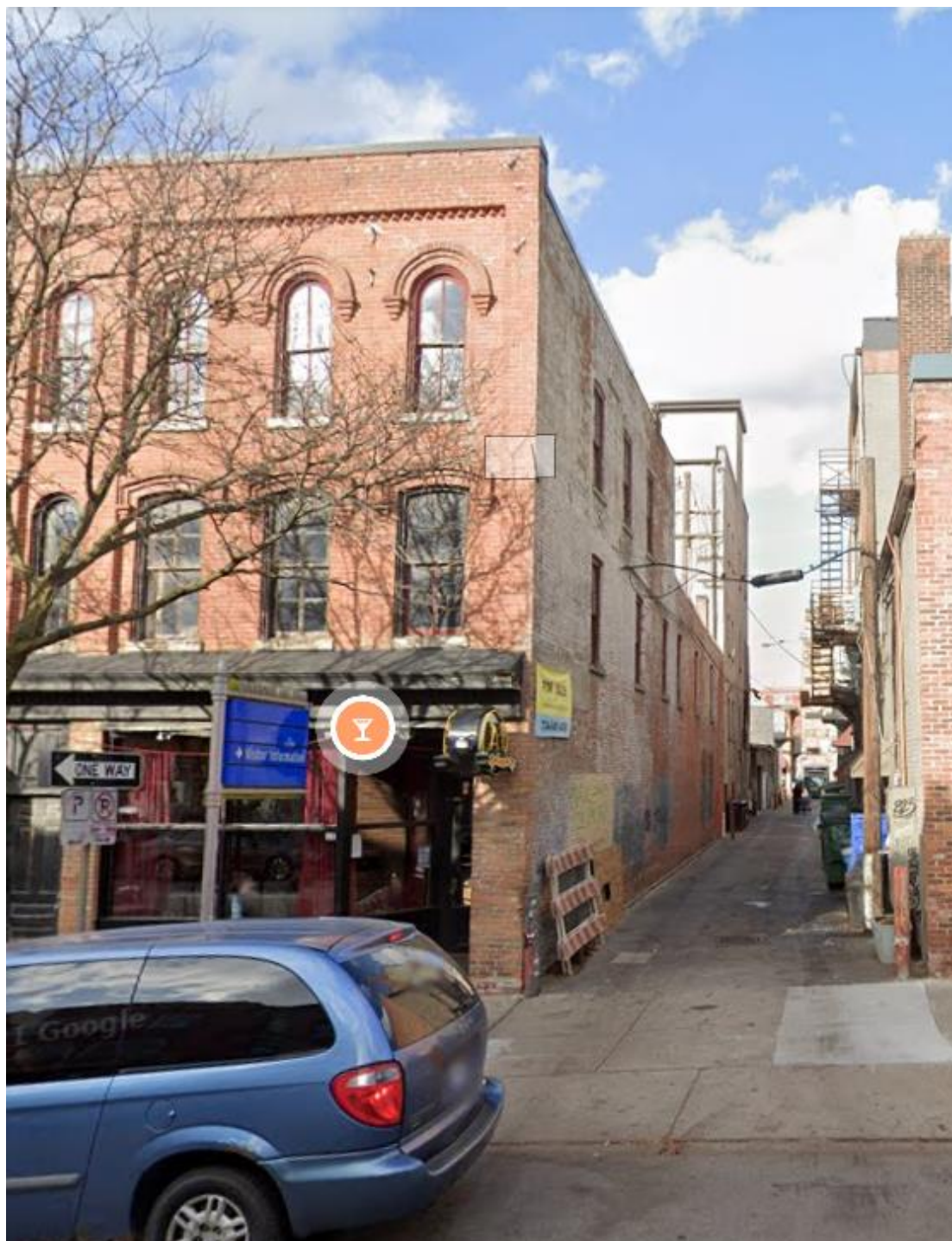
**POSSIBLE MOTION:** (Note that the motion supports staff findings and is only a suggestion. The Review Committee, consisting of staff and at least two Commissioners, will meet with the applicant on site and then make a recommendation at the meeting.)

I move that the Commission issue a certificate of appropriateness for the application at 112 West Liberty Street, a contributing property in the Main Street Historic District, to paint a portion of the west elevation and install approximately eighty-five aluminum bars mounted in mortar joints or masonry units, as proposed. The work is compatible in exterior design, arrangement, texture, material and relationship to the rest of the building

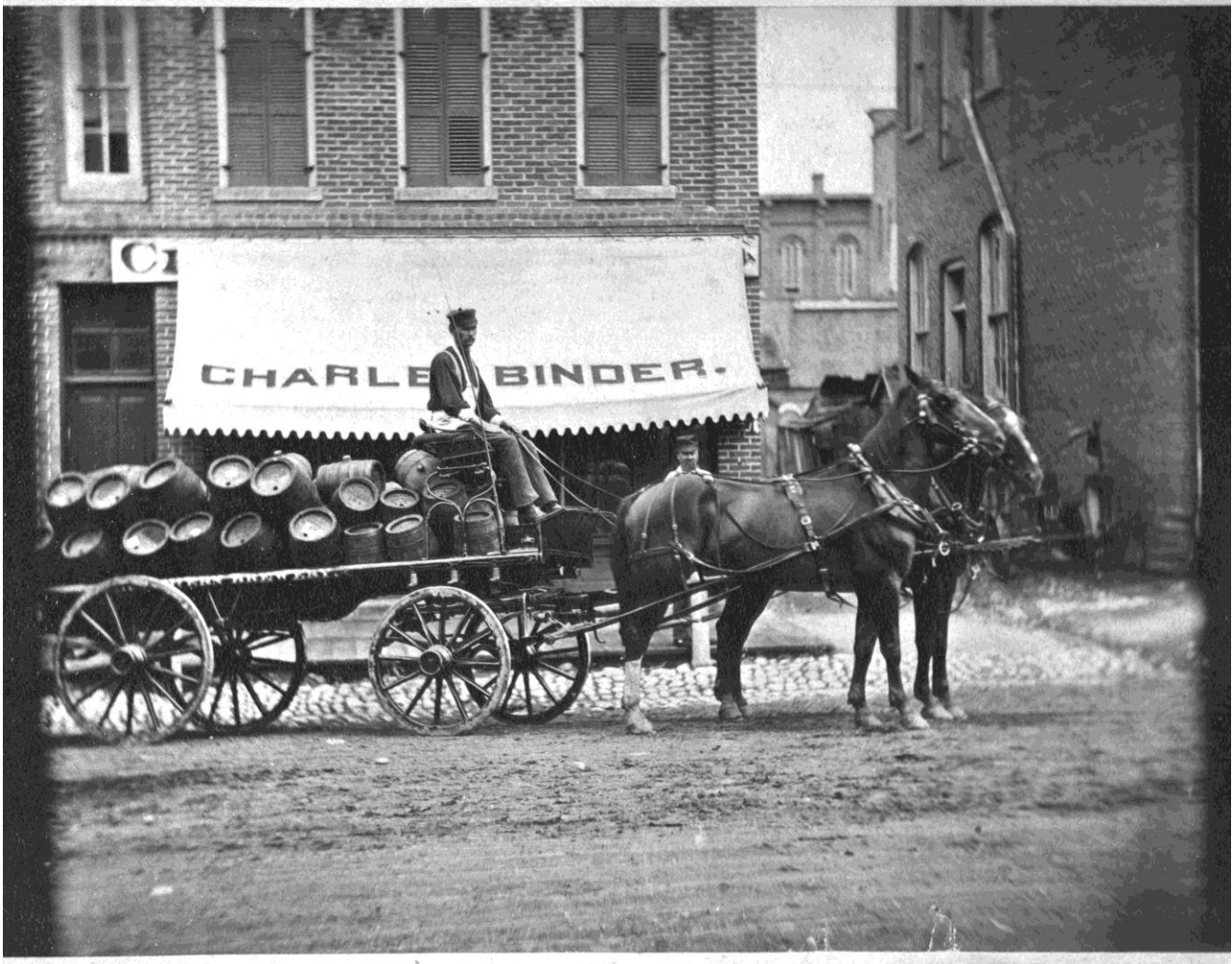
and the surrounding area and meets *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, in particular standards 2 and 10, and the guidelines for building sites and masonry, and the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines*.

**ATTACHMENTS:** application, project information

112 W Liberty (2020 Google Streetview)



112 W Liberty, c.1880 (courtesy AADL Old News)



112 W Liberty, previous mural, 2014 (courtesy Google Street View)

