

## ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

### Staff Report

**ADDRESS:** 311 E Liberty Street, Application Number HDC23-0154

**DISTRICT:** State Street Historic District

**REPORT DATE:** September 14, 2023

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

**REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE:** Monday, September 11, 2023

<b>OWNER</b>	<b>APPLICANT</b>
<b>Name:</b> Bead Gallery [Vahan Basmajian]	Carl O. Hueter
<b>Address:</b> 311 E Liberty St Ann Arbor, MI 48104	1321 Franklin Blvd Ann Arbor, MI 48103
<b>Phone:</b> (734) 945-2432	(734) 276-8175

**BACKGROUND:** This two-story Queen Anne was built circa 1890, and moved to this site in 1907. It features a cut stone foundation, multiple gables, and at least four windows that have colorful glass edging the upper sash. The siding is vinyl and some of the trim is new wood; the fan detail in one of the front gables is not historic (though originally it had different fan trim and small brackets). Vertical slat screening wrapped the front of the building in the 1970s. Modern alterations to the storefront that are present today occurred in 1987.

**LOCATION:** The site is located on the north side of East Liberty Street, between South Fifth Avenue and South Division Street.

**APPLICATION:** The applicant seeks HDC approval to install a barrier free ramp along the east side of the building and install a new door in a historic location.

### APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

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

- (1) A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
- (9) New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
- (10) New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

**From the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (other SOI Guidelines may also apply):**

**Entrances/Porches**

*Recommended:* Designing and installing additional entrances or porches when required for the new use in a manner that preserves the historic character of the buildings, i.e., limiting such alteration to non-character-defining elevations.

**From the Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines (other Guidelines may apply):**

**Barrier Free Accommodations, Safety Codes, and Fire Escapes**

*Appropriate:* When required, installing barrier free access ramps, stairways, and elevators that do not alter character-defining features of the building, keeping historic building materials intact, and that if removed in the future keep the historic building intact.

**STAFF FINDINGS**

1. This building currently has no barrier free entrance. Earlier in 2023, staff approved a ramp with a different layout that wrapped around the back of the building. That design wasn't acceptable to the Building Department. This new, more visible design requires approval by the Historic District Commission instead of staff. The architect has explored numerous ways to provide barrier free entry, and this is the only option that seems feasible at this time. Please note that the photographs included in the attachments have text that was intended for the earlier application. Staff has redlined that text since it does not apply to this application.
2. The proposed ramp is 5' wide and metal. It starts at the southeast corner of the building near the front entrance and runs along about 2/3 of the east side of the building. A new door is proposed in an original opening. No details on this door or why the opening is thought to be original is provided. Another door at the back of the house on the east side would remain. It is an entrance to the third floor.
3. Barrier free accommodations are a positive feature that can be difficult to incorporate in an unobtrusive way. The ramp would be a significant change affecting the character of the historic structure. Staff believes that the work is lacking in visual integrity, but it does keep the historic building materials intact and those materials would remain intact if removed in the future. Since options for accessibility here are extremely limited, staff believes the proposed work meets the intent of the Standards and Guidelines and recommends approval of this application.

**POSSIBLE MOTIONS:** (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 311 E Liberty Street, a contributing property in the State Street Historic District, to construct a new barrier-free ramp along the east side of the building and install a new door in a new opening, as proposed. The work is compatible in exterior design, arrangement, texture, material and relationship to the rest of the house and the surrounding area and meets *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, in particular standards 1, 9 and 10 and the guidelines for Entrances and Porches, and the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines for Barrier Free Accommodations*.

**ATTACHMENTS:** application, drawings, photos.

311 East Liberty Street, 1974 (AADL Archives)



331 E Liberty, 1985 (Susan Wineberg/Creative Commons)

