

## ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

### Staff Report

**ADDRESS:** 304 South Main Street, Application Number HDC13-227

**DISTRICT:** Main Street Historic District

**REPORT DATE:** January 9, 2014

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

**REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE:** January 6, 2014

#### OWNER

**Name:** Liberty Main LLC  
**Address:** 19727 Allen Rd, Suite 11  
 Brownstown Twp, MI 48183  
**Phone:**

#### APPLICANT

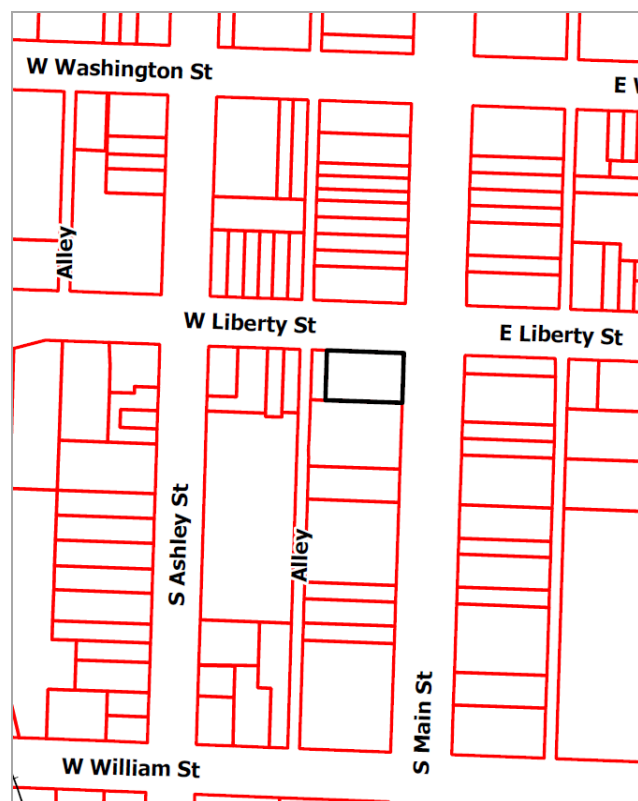
Mitchell & Mouat Architects, Inc  
 113 South Fourth Avenue  
 Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
 (734) 665-6070

**BACKGROUND:** This three-story brick Italianate commercial block dates to the 1890s and was originally the Koch & Haller Furniture Company. It has been remodeled twice: once after a major fire destroyed the Mack & Co Furniture Store in 1910, when the original single windows were replaced by the present bands of multiple windows, and again in 1976 when the roof was raised to accommodate the Downtown Racquet Club on the third floor (which has since been remodel into condominiums). In 1923 Schlanderer & Seyfried Jewelers moved into the storefront at 304 from its former location at 113 East Liberty, and Seyfried Jewelers occupied the storefront from 1931 to 2013.

The art deco storefront is clad in black spandrel glass and features aluminum trim and signage. The current storefront was installed after 1942 (see photo B in the application, which was taken in 1942) and before 1950-'51 (see photo C). Seyfrieds received an HDC Rehabilitation Award in 2010 for restoring their aluminum sign and replacing the spandrel glass following damage from a vehicle.

**LOCATION:** The building is located on the southwest corner of South Main Street and West Liberty Street. This Main Street storefront is the third one south of the corner.

**APPLICATION:** The applicant seeks HDC approval to alter the existing storefront by reconfiguring the display windows and pulling the entry door forward.



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

- (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.
- (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.

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

Recommended: Designing and constructing a new storefront when the historic storefront is completely missing. It may be an accurate restoration using historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the size, scale, material, and color of the historic building.

Not Recommended: Introducing a new design that is incompatible in size, scale, material, and color.

Using inappropriately scaled signs and logos or other types of signs that obscure, damage, or destroy remaining character-defining features of the historic building.

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

Appropriate: Designing and constructing a new storefront when the historic storefront is completely missing. It may be an accurate restoration using historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or may be a new design that is compatible with the size, scale, and material of the historic building. New designs should be flush with the façade and be kept as simple as possible.

Not Appropriate: Removing or radically changing storefronts and their features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the building so that the character is diminished.

**Signs**

Appropriate: Installing signage that is subordinate to the overall building composition.

Not Appropriate: Installing signs that are too large or that are made from a material that is incompatible with the historic building or district.

**STAFF FINDINGS:**

1. The applicant provided photographic evidence that the current storefront was installed after the period of significance for the Main Street Historic District, which is 1840-1941. A photo of the previous storefront (photo B in the application) includes a car with a WWII gas rationing sticker in the windshield that was issued in 1942 or later. The storefront is therefore a non-contributing resource, since it did not exist during the period of significance.
2. The proposed changes to the storefront windows will provide greater display space and allow natural light into the store. The current design is specific to displaying small objects at chest height, which works well for jewelry but not so well for general merchandise. Since the proposed alterations to the non-contributing storefront will continue its art-deco spirit while facilitating a new use, staff believes the entry and display window modifications are appropriate and meet both sets of design guidelines for storefronts.
3. The proposed flat signage is 14' wide with less than 3' tall pin-mounted letters, and is complementary to the storefront. The 3 ½' diameter projecting sign extends on two arms an additional 12" from the face of the building. Staff's opinion is that the design of the sign is appropriate, but that the sign itself is too large for secondary, pedestrian-oriented signage. Staff suggests that the sign be limited to 24" in diameter, similar to the 18" x 24" Rock Paper Scissors sign at 216 South Main or the 19" x 23" Pura Vida sign at 206 South Fourth Avenue. Staff has fashioned the suggested motion to include conditional approval based on a 24" sign.
4. Staff believes the modifications to the storefront display windows and entry and the new signage as conditioned in the proposed motion meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines* and the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines*.

**POSSIBLE MOTIONS:** (Note that the motion 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 304 South Main Street, a contributing property in the Main Street Historic District, to alter the storefront windows, install a new door, and install two signs, on the condition that the projecting sign does not exceed 24" in diameter. The work as conditioned 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 9, and the guidelines for storefronts, as well as the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines*, particularly as they pertain to storefronts and signs.

**MOTION WORKSHEET:**

I move that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work at 304 South Main Street in the Main Street Historic District

\_\_\_\_\_ Provided the following condition(S) is (ARE) met: 1) STATE CONDITION(s)

The work is generally compatible with the size, scale, massing, and materials and meets the

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, standard(S) number(S) (*circle all that apply*): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

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

304 South Main Street, at right (Photo 1942 or later – Sears opened in 1942)

