

ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Staff Report

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

DISTRICT: Main Street Historic District

REPORT DATE: January 13, 2022

REPORT PREPARED BY: Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE: January 10, 2022

	OWNER	APPLICANT
Name:	24 Liberty LLC	Ann Arbor Art Center
Address:	112 & 114 W Liberty Ann Arbor, MI 48104	117 W Liberty Street Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Phone:	(734) 845-0005	(734) 994-8004

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).

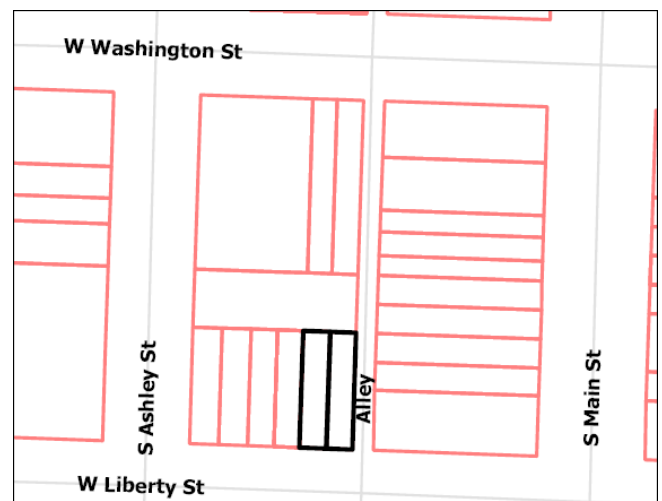
LOCATION: The site is on the north side of West Liberty Street, west of South Main and east of South Ashley. The current tenant is the Alley Bar.

APPLICATION: The applicant seeks HDC approval to install 50+ aluminum bars in mortar joints and 40+ decals on the east wall of the building, facing the alley. Additional decals would be installed on the floor of the alley and sidewalk. The wall and alley floor would be painted in the area beneath the 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 appeared on the December, 2021 HDC agenda but was postponed at the request of the applicant in order to make revisions.
2. Signatures were provided from the 112 West Liberty property owner and the City of Ann Arbor, which owns the alley.

3. This application is for a public art installation on the east wall of 112 West Liberty and on the floor in the adjacent alley. The wall installation consists of approximately 50 two-foot-long painted aluminum bars on the upper 22' of the wall near the street and around 40 foil-based decals on the lower 10' of the wall, with additional decals on the alley floor. The brick wall, alley, and sidewalk beneath the installation would be painted.
4. Each bar weighs approximately 1 lb 6 oz and would be mounted using one concrete screw anchor through an integrated bracket, into a mortar joint. There is no mention of removing the concrete anchors or repairing the holes after they're removed, so staff has included this language in the suggested motion. The mortar used to repair the joints must be an appropriate match for the building as described in National Park Service Preservation Brief #2, *Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings* (<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/2-repoint-mortar-joints.htm>).
5. 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.
6. 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 windows (this is a condition in the suggested motion). 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 (also a condition of approval).
7. Staff believes the work as conditioned is appropriate.

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.)

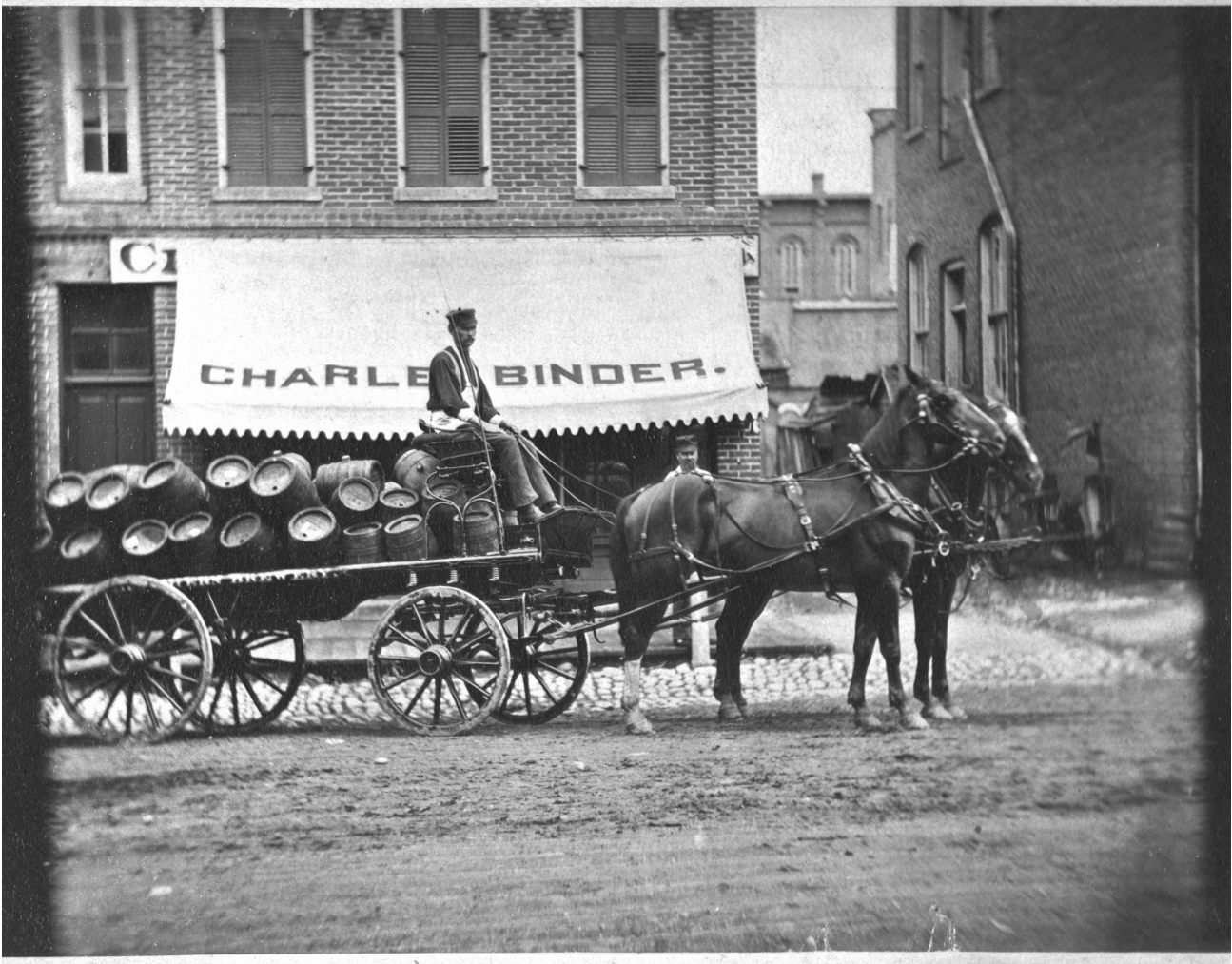
I move that the Commission issue a certificate of appropriateness for the application at 112 West Liberty Street, a contributing property in the Main Street Historic District, to paint a portion of the west elevation and install approximately 50 aluminum bars, mounted in mortar joints, and foil decals on the wall and pavement, on the following conditions: that existing mortar joint deficiencies are repaired with an appropriate mortar match before being painted; that windows and sills remain unpainted; and that all decals and hardware are removed and those mortar joints repaired with an appropriate mortar match when the exhibit ends in a year. As conditioned, 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)

