

ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Staff Report

ADDRESS: 208 West Liberty Street, Application Number HDC22-1160

DISTRICT: Main Street Historic District

REPORT DATE: September 8, 2022

REPORT PREPARED BY: Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE: Tuesday, September 6, 2022

	OWNER	APPLICANT
Name:	Jeanne Properties LLC	Marygrove Awning Company
Address:	210 S Ashley St Ann Arbor, MI 48104	12700 Merriman Rd Livonia, MI 48150
Phone:	(586) 925-0894	

BACKGROUND: The single-story Labor Hall was constructed in 1930. It features a deep brick cornice, arched transoms, steel casement windows, and brick and stone trim. A job ad in the Saline Observer on October 3, 1946 seeks carpenters who should inquire at Labor Hall (at this address). In 1973, John Sinclair's Rainbow Multi-Media Corporation (RMM) consolidated its offices in the building. Per survey notes, the brick and CMU building was painted in 1976. By the late 1980s, Architects Four Inc. and several other businesses had offices here. In the 2000s, it was used as the Union Hall Kitchen, where cooking was done for the former Mark's Carts. When the carts closed in 2017 the space was converted into Chow restaurant.

LOCATION: The site is located on the north side of West Liberty Street, just west of the Downtown Home & Garden parking lot.

APPLICATION: The applicant seeks HDC approval to install a fabric awning with an aluminum frame on the storefront.

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.
- (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

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; using new illuminated signs.

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

Awnings

Appropriate: Mounting a standard storefront awning so that the bottom of the fixed frame is at least 7 feet above the sidewalk, although 8 feet is preferred. Consideration should be given to the height of neighboring awnings.

Projecting the awning from the face of the building no more than 4 feet.

Attaching the awning just below the storefront cornice and fitting it within the storefront opening.

Using canvas, vinyl-coated canvas, or acrylic fabrics for awnings and banners.

Mounting the awning on masonry structures through the mortar joints and not through brick, stone, or terra cotta.

Not appropriate: Using translucent, backlit awnings.

Using "box" or curved or "waterfall" shaped awnings.

STAFF FINDINGS:

1. New awnings are proposed on the six round-topped windows on the south elevation facing the street. These windows are 8-over-8 hung sashes with a fixed half-round sash above. The half-round sash has a unique muntin pattern. The awnings are each 4'5" wide, 2'6" tall and 2'2" deep. The awnings fit on top of and align with the outer brick arch over each window. Within these arches is another shallower brick arch abutting the windows. They are black fabric with a 6" valence printed with EVERGREEN in white. An existing CHOW sign would be removed as part of the project. There are no buildings in close proximity with streetfront awnings with the exception of a building at the corner of South First and West Liberty that is outside of the district.
2. The awnings are fairly short and shallow to match the curvature of the window. The *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines* state that curved or "waterfall" shaped awnings are not appropriate. That is true for traditional storefronts like 107 East Liberty, which has inappropriate large round awnings over rectangular cornices. Staff believes this does not apply to arched or half-round topped individual windows, where

a curved awning matches the shape of the opening. This building doesn't have storefront windows or a cornice, so the design guidelines for storefront awnings don't work perfectly. Staff feels that because they fit the shape of the window and are short enough that the half-round windows will be easily visible to pedestrians while still providing shading, the awnings are appropriate.

3. The awnings are to be mounted through mortar joints (shown on the drawing) on steel and aluminum frames.
4. The proposed new awnings are compatible with the building and do not detract from the historic character of the building. Staff recommends approval

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 208 West Liberty Street, a contributing property in the Main Street Historic District, to install six new awnings 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 9 and the guidelines for storefronts, and the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines* for awnings.

MOTION WORKSHEET:

I move that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work at 208 West Liberty 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.

208 W Liberty St, c.1930 (courtesy AADL Old News)



208 W Liberty, 1973 Survey Photo



1981 Survey Photo

