

ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Staff Report

ADDRESS: 300-302 S Main Street, Application Number HDC24-0109

DISTRICT: Main Street Historic District

REPORT DATE: September 12, 2024

REPORT PREPARED BY: Mariana Melin-Corcoran, Associate Planner

REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE: Monday, August 5, 2024

OWNER
Name: Reza Rahmani
Address:
Phone: (734) 657-3000

APPLICANT
 Keith Russeau
 The Collaborative
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 (734) 652-0830

BACKGROUND: This three-story brick Italianate commercial block has been remodeled twice: once after a major fire 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. At the same time the storefronts at 300 and 302 were both remodeled with darker brick facing and dark aluminum store window frames.

In April 2008, the Black Pearl applied for the existing awning and sign at 302 S Main. More information was requested, and the application was postponed until the May HDC meeting and then approved. According to building permits, the existing canopy at 300 S Main was added in 1996.

The previous sign at 300 S Main, a Starbucks sign, featured internally illuminated channel letters. This was approved in 2004 under a previous ordinance and was removed in late 2023/early 2024 when Starbucks closed this location.

LOCATION: The site is on the southeast corner of South Main Street and East Liberty Street.

APPLICATION: The applicant seeks HDC remove an existing awning at 302 S Main to add a large, fixed canopy, matching the existing canopy at 300 S Main. The applicant also proposes new signage on the existing canopy at 300 S Main.



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

- (1) A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
- (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.
- (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):**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.

District or Neighborhood Setting

Not Recommended: Introducing new construction into historic districts that is visually incompatible or that destroys historic relationships within the setting.

Storefronts – Identify, Retain, Preserve

Recommended: Identifying, retaining, and preserving storefronts – and their functional and decorative features – that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building such as display windows, signs, doors, transoms, kick plates, corner posts, and entablatures.

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

From the Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines:**Commercial Awnings, Canopies and Banners**

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.

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

Lighting awnings and banners from above.

Installing banners and awnings so they do not cover or require the removal of any historic detail.

Signs

Appropriate: Installing signage in the historic sign band area of the building, typically the area above the transoms or just above the storefront

Installing signage that is subordinate to the overall building composition.

Mounting signs to fit within existing architectural features using the shape of the sign to help reinforce the horizontal lines of moldings and transoms seen along the street.

STAFF FINDINGS:

1. The Black Pearl (currently located at 302 S Main) is expanding into the space at 300 S Main. This primarily includes interior work, besides the new proposed canopy and sign. The existing non-historic canopy above the storefront of 302 S Main St is proposed to be removed (installed in 2008), and the existing non-historic canopy above 300 S Main St will be retained (installed in 1996). A new canopy will be installed at 302 S Main St. It will match the existing at 300 S Main St in design and will be located 1' 7.25" south of the existing. There are no proposed changes to the storefronts or elevations besides painting the existing window frames and trim.
2. The proposed canopy is flat and perpendicular to the Main St elevation. It is 5' 8.5" wide and 18' 7" in length. It will be metal framed, and the soffit will be wood. The new canopy will be supported from above by cables, and all structural fasteners will occur within mortar joints. It will be located 10 ft above the ground, aligned with the height of the existing. Both the existing and the new canopies will be painted black. The existing downlights below the canopy at 300 S Main will be replaced with new surface-mounted downlights.
3. The applicant is proposing two new, identical signs. They will read "BLACK PEARL" in channel letters with a circular disc, visually evoking a black pearl, between each word. The channel letters will be internally illuminated. The faces of the letters will be opaque, and the edges will be translucent, revealing the concealed internal LEDs. An existing example of this type of edge-lit signage approved by the HDC is the Chase Bank signs on the Glazier Building at 100 South Main Street. On each sign, the circular disc will be polished black metal and will not be illuminated. Both signs will be atop the existing canopy, one facing Liberty St and one facing Main St. Overall, each

sign will be 15 ft long and 2 ft tall. Because the channel letters will be attached to the non-historic canopy, signage will not affect the historic materials.

4. The canopy will be attached to the building in a way that is minimally invasive, and if removed, would cause no significant damage to the historic building. The canopy's height and placement along the storefront is compatible with surrounding buildings. The majority of businesses along this portion of Main St have either only signs or awnings, and there are other examples of the flat canopy supported by cables. Staff believes the canopy is appropriate and meets the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines*, and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. Staff is hesitant about the proposal for internally illuminated signage. Though the faces of the letters will be opaque, internal illumination does not follow the Design Guidelines. A condition is included in the suggested motion to change the lighting to external illumination. The HDC will determine whether this proposal is appropriate for this building and location.

POSSIBLE MOTIONS: (Note that the motions are 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 300-302 South Main Street, a contributing property in the Main Street Historic District, to add a fixed canopy as proposed and new channel letter signage, on the condition that the signage is externally lit. 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 *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines* for all additions, and *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, in particular standards 1, 2, 9 and 10 and the guidelines for building site, district or neighborhood setting, storefronts, commercial awnings, and signs.

ATTACHMENTS: drawings, photos.

Photo courtesy Google Street View (2020)



MAIN & LIBERTY



MAIN

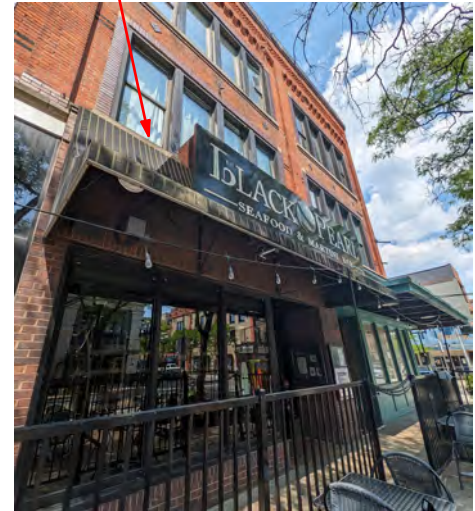


EXISTING CANOPY TO BE REMOVED

LIBERTY

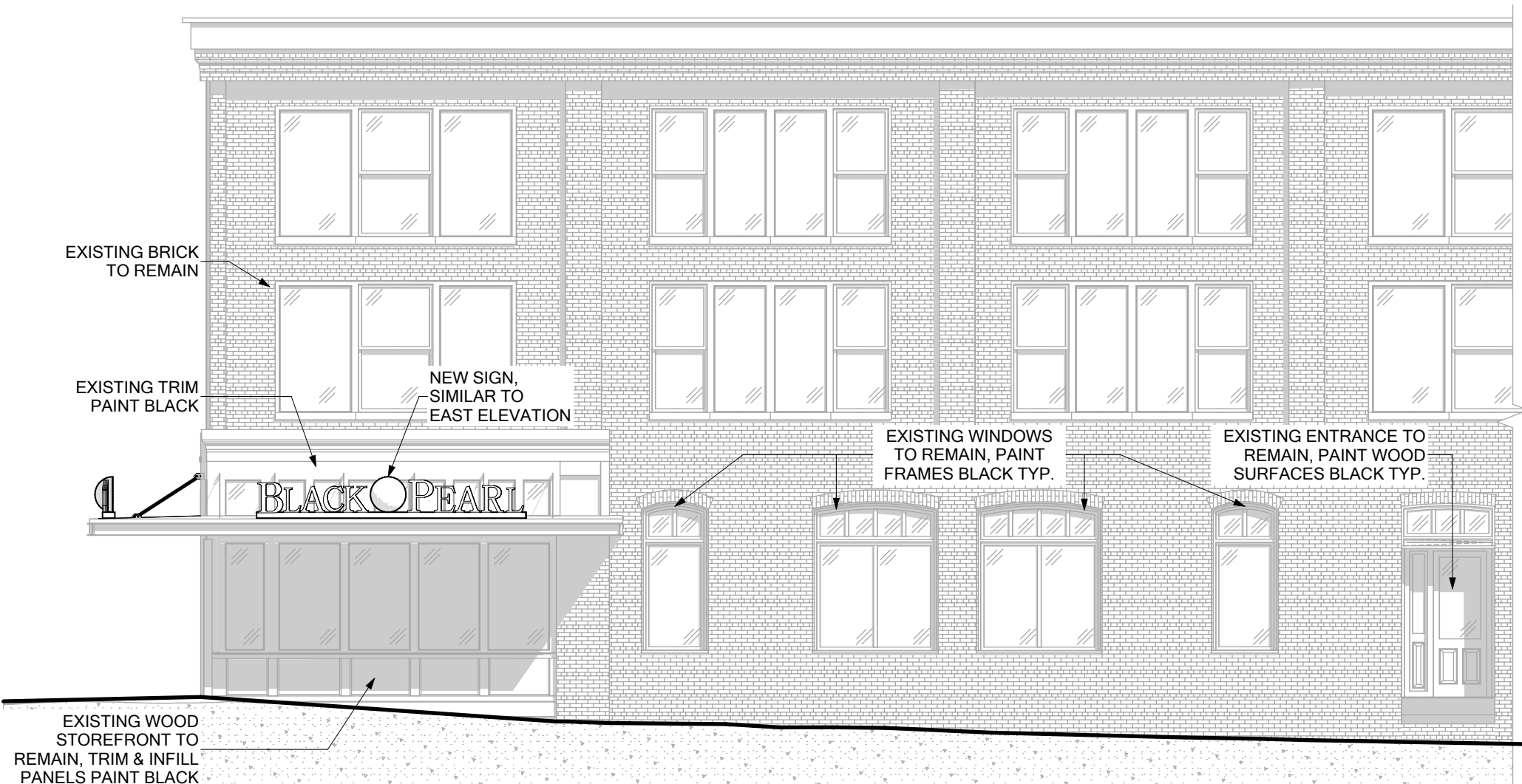


EXISTING CANOPY TO BE REMOVED



THE
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ORATIVE

Black Pearl Expansion / Kafei Building Group



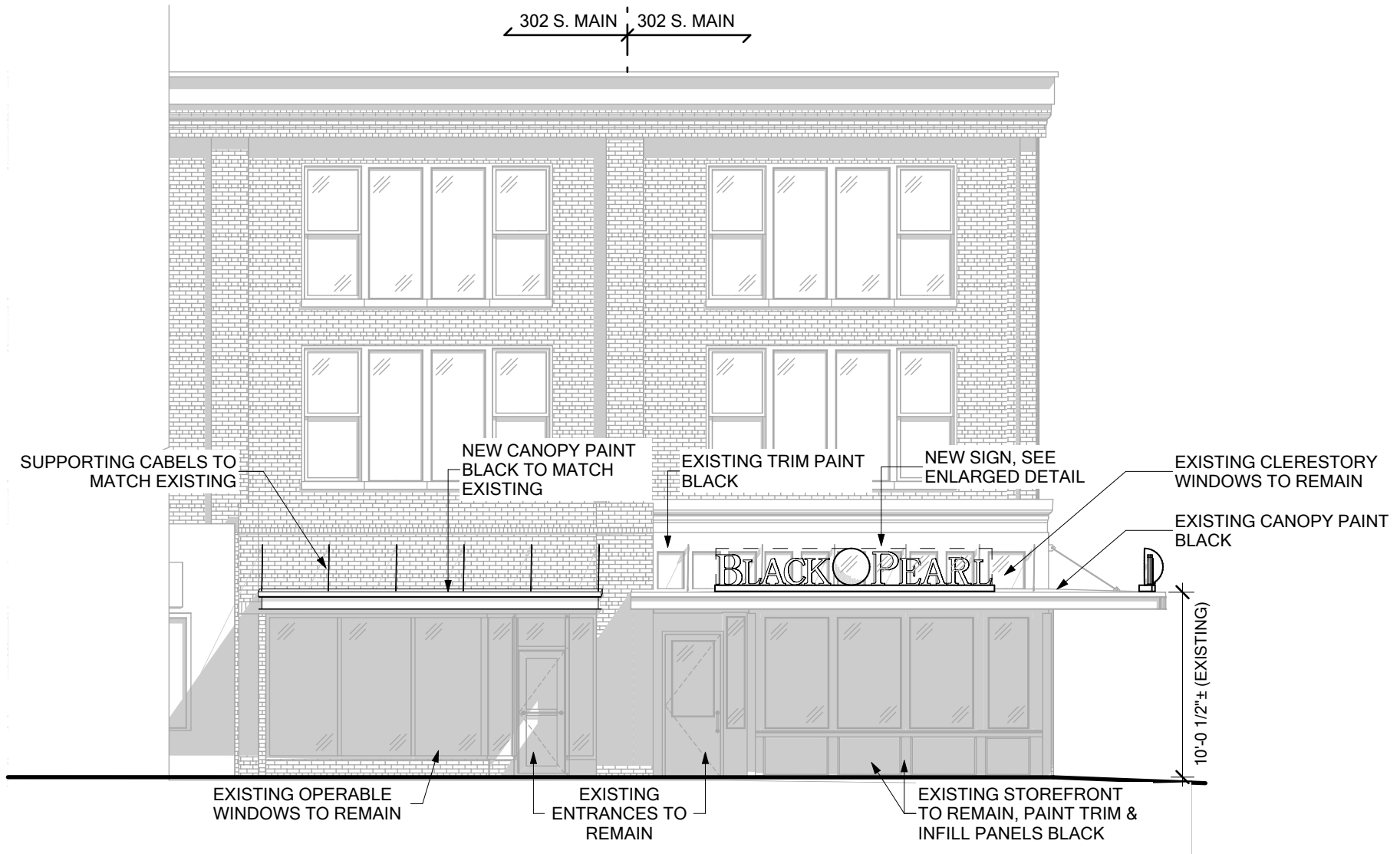
1

304 S. MAIN - NORTH

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

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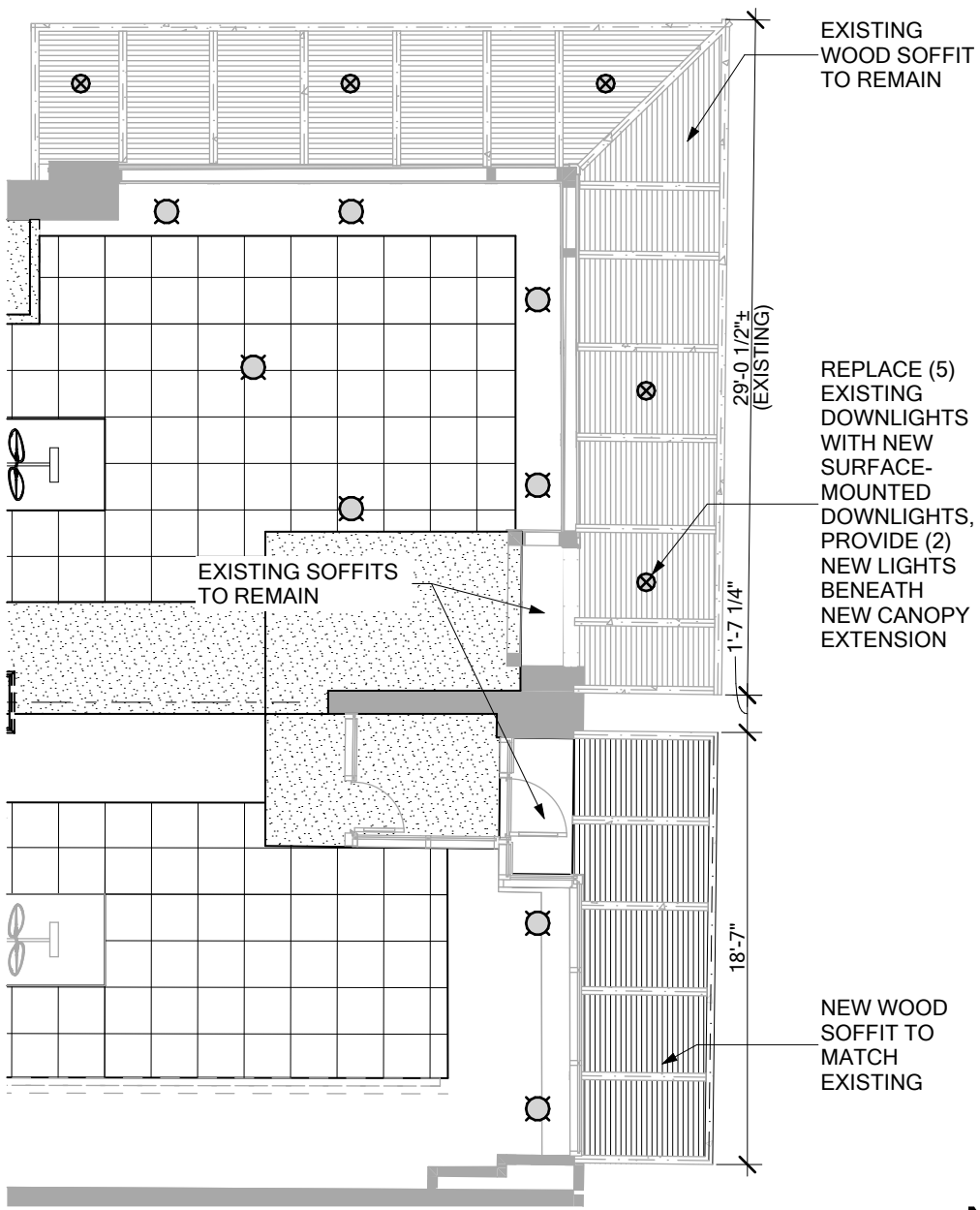
Black Pearl Expansion / Kafaei Building Group



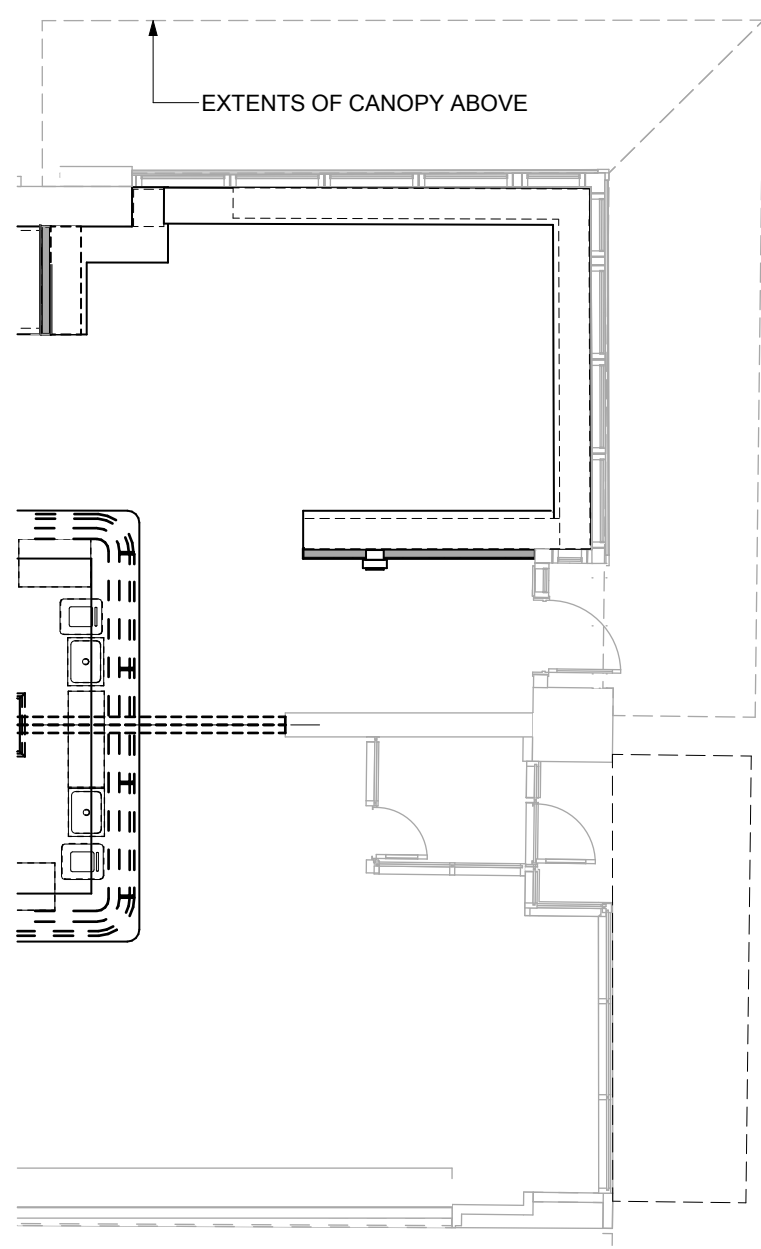
1 **302 & 304 MAIN ST ELEVATION - EAST**
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

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 ORATIVE

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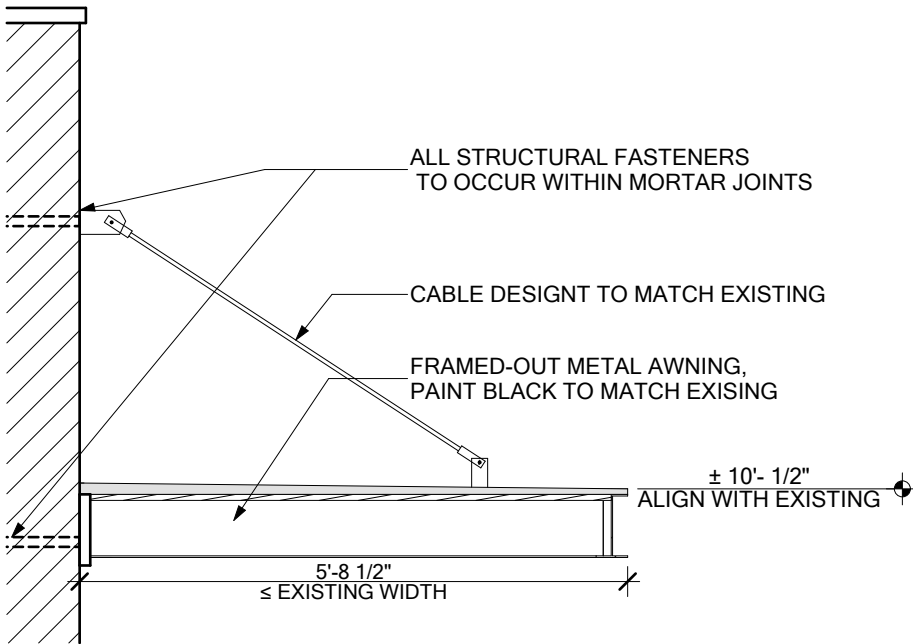


2 **FIRST FLOOR RCP**
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"
 THE COLLABORATIVE

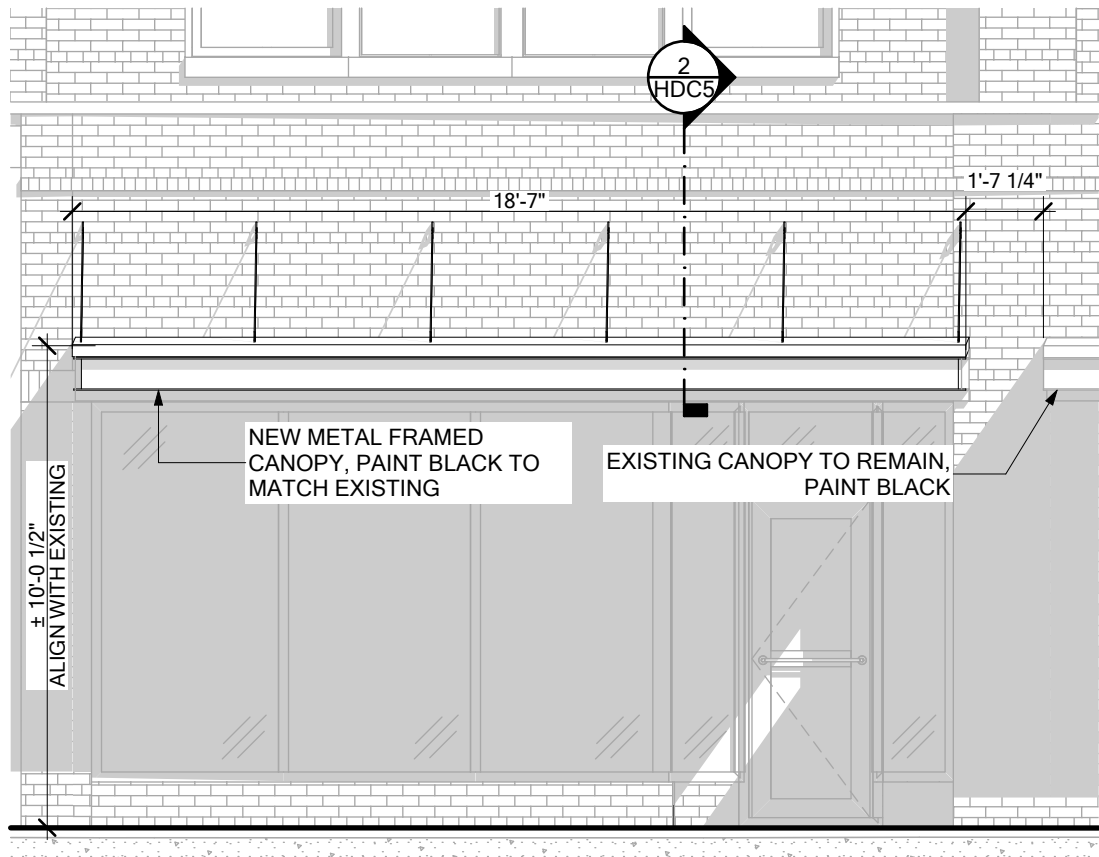


1 **FIRST FLOOR PLAN**
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

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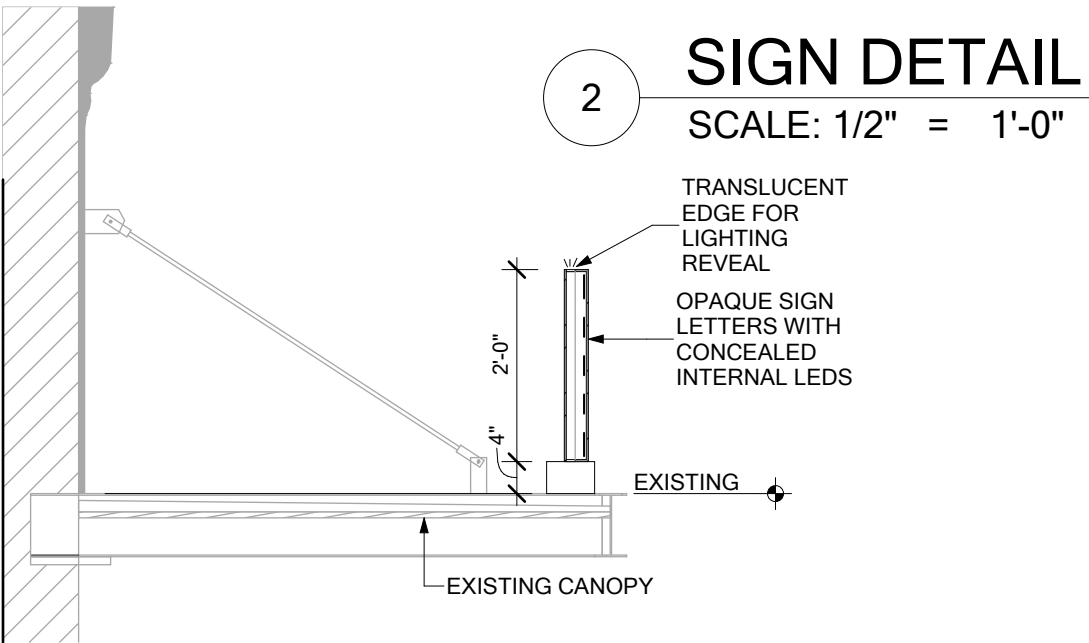
2 **CANOPY DETAIL**
SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



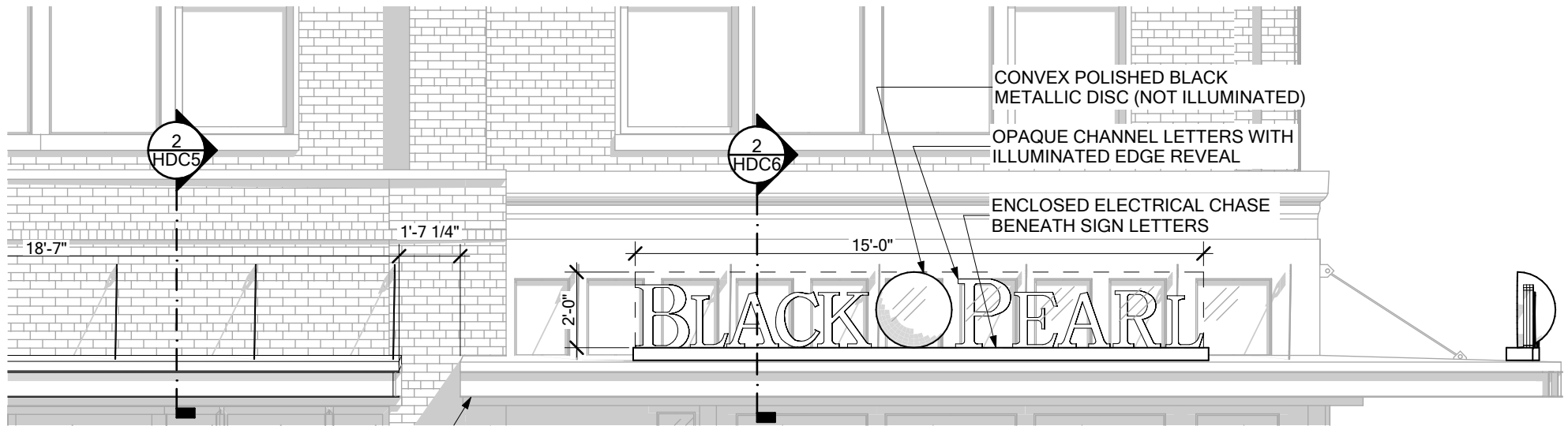
1 **EXTERIOR ELEVATION**
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

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2 **SIGN DETAIL**
SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



1 **EXTERIOR ELEVATION**
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

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CANOPY CONCEPT
Remove existing awning and construct new rigid canopy, separate from but similar to canopy at former Starbucks

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Remove existing awning and construct new rigid canopy, separate from but similar to canopy at former Starbucks

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CANOPY EXTENSION DETAIL
PAGE HDC 8



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CONCEPTUAL SIGN RENDERING - LIBERTY ST
PAGE HDC 9



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CONCEPTUAL SIGN RENDERING - MAIN ST
PAGE HDC 10