



# Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

## LIVING WITH HISTORY

<b>HPC meeting date</b>	<b>12/8/2025</b>	<b>CCF # 251241</b>
<b>Ald. Bauman</b>	<b>Staff reviewer:</b> Tim Askin	
<b>Property</b>	924 E Wells Street	University Club
<b>Owner/Applicant</b>	Northwestern Mutual	Kahler Slater

### Proposal

1. Canopy over formal entrance on Wells Street. The proposed canopy would be constructed of architecturally exposed structural steel members supporting transparent laminated glass. The canopy is designed with an elliptical barrel-vaulted arch. It extends over the sidewalk to provide cover from inclement weather for guests at the main entrance.
2. A second canopy of similar materials and design language is proposed at the non-historic north annex addition porte cochere entry on Prospect Ave. The proportions of that canopy correspond to the drive aisle and opening to the porte cochere entrance.
3. An approximately 8'-0" high addition to the non-historic north annex is proposed to provide additional square footage for the building's programmatic functions. New aluminum replacement windows are proposed to match the previously approved and installed replacement window basis of design. Clay face brick, decorative stone lintels and decorative metal Juliet balconies will match the historic architecture and previously approved and executed scope.
4. A third, smaller canopy is proposed over the loading entrance on the far north end of the non-primary west elevation. The proposed metal panel material finish would match the color of the existing and newly proposed steel/metal elements.

### Staff comments

The University Club was constructed in 1926 to the designs internationally renowned architect John Russell Pope. At this point in his career he had prepared master plans for the campuses of Yale University campus and Dartmouth College, Abraham Lincoln Birthplace Memorial Building, Richmond Union Station, and F. W. Woolworth's Mausoleum. Later major projects included the Jefferson Memorial and the National Archives. This was his only Wisconsin commission and the design was published in a national architectural magazine. However, he was responsible for the first reconstruction of the St. Joan of Arc chapel, forty years prior to its donation to Marquette University.

There are four proposals here that need review, however, only one has the potential to have significant impact to the building.

#### *Wells Entrance Canopy. Guidelines*

##### *D. Terrace*

*The open terrace along the Prospect Ave. and Wells St. elevations of the University Club shall not be enclosed or filled in or removed, as this is a major design feature of the building...*

##### *E. Trim and Ornamentation*

*There should be no changes to the existing trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition...*

##### *F. Additions*

*No additions will be permitted on the Wells St. (south) or Prospect Ave. (east) elevations of the building, as these are the primary facades.*

The canopy is tucked under the decorative balcony and sits above the main entry... It is primarily glass and will be approximately 15' above sidewalk grade. It is 18' wide and proposed as nearly 25' deep. The design can be loosely called neo-Art Nouveau based on the precedent images offered in the application materials. It is thus sufficiently differentiated from the historic Georgian style of the building.

#### *Other canopies and north annex renovation*

As noted in the application, the north annex is not historic and dates to the 1970s. At present it is somewhat awkwardly squat. The proposed alterations increase the height, provide a heretofore absent rhythmic fenestration and incidentally add a canopy to the parking entrance. The alterations improve the awkward size and create a more coherent overall design with the original building. The canopy for the parking entrance is expansive (13' deep x 37' wide), it is deeply set back from the sidewalk and is thoughtfully designed. It does not have any potential to alter the character of this addition or the historic building significantly. The rear entrance canopy is 15' x 20' and also deeply recessed from the sidewalk. It is of simple design and fits well into this already existing service area. The alterations to the north annex and the rear entrance are well designed and do not have a consequential impact to the overall character of the University Club. For the north annex, the proposal promises a noticeable improvement in design quality.

#### **Recommendation**

Approve north annex height increase. Approve parking entrance canopy at north annex. Approve rear canopy for loading.

A determination on the Wells entrance canopy is left to the discretion of the Commission. It is unclear if this canopy meets the definition of "addition" in the sense intended by the designation report.

If the Commission chooses to approve the canopy, the following conditions are recommended:

- a) A structural engineering report of quality that is satisfactory to the Department of Neighborhood Services which indicates that building is capable of bearing the loads indicated without ground support.
- b) Provide for storm water disposal per MCO 245-10-6-d and obtain staff approval of any necessary design alterations to implement such.
- c) Comply with all other requirements of MCO 245-10