



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: March 2, 2020
Ald. Jose Perez District: 12
Staff reviewer: Tim Askin
PTS #114922 CCF #191661

Property	723 - 725 W. HISTORIC MITCHELL ST.	
Owner/Applicant	Shane McAdams Studio LLC PO Box 238 Cedarburg, WI 53012	Stack Design Group, Inc. 413 N 2nd St Milwaukee, WI 53203
Proposal	Remove metal overlay on facade of both buildings. Restore appearance of upper levels of both buildings to the early 1920s. This will add a significant number of windows to the Mitchell Street elevations.	
Staff comments	<p>The shorter building is much easier to work with on a rehabilitation based to some degree on speculation. Documentation is limited, but scars on the facade give the general idea of what was there and that it was a fairly simple building of which there are countless similar examples throughout the city. Three windows are proposed to be reinstalled on the second floor. As proposed, they are too short for the style of architecture.</p> <p>The three-story building has a confusing history, but yet more thorough documentation. It has been through several facade alterations. For most of its history, it was known as the Park Theater, which consistently only used the upper floors. No early photos survive of this building, which may date back to the 1880s in portions. The best documentation for its early appearance is a 1923 classified ad listing the building for sale with a photograph that has not reproduced well on microfilm.</p> <p>Staff does not believe it is necessarily realistic or appropriate to bring back the 1920s facade. After looking through permit records and historic photos, there appears to be far too much damage to the original façade. Corner windows create expensive structural concerns and the cornice is not drawn as the arch it was now known to be. The lack of basis other than one poor quality photo and partial demolition plans from the Vitrolite re-facing is not good preservation practice. Our ordinance and rehab standards require us to respect changes that have “acquired significance in their own right”. The design is a rare example of Art Moderne in the city and one of only two known designs in this mode by George Zagel. The other example was the Geiser’s Potato Chip Factory on W. Burleigh which was demolished a few years ago. Both were designed in 1946.</p> <p>Per the plans, the 1946 design was created for Bilt-Rite Furniture, which applied for occupancy while this façade was under construction. The theater closed in 1953 due to financial trouble. The existence of the theater is not indicated on the remodel plans.</p> <p>Both designs need further elaboration and details before approval. The two-story 725 building needs taller windows and further detailing of the elevation to make it fit the Italianate it appears to have been built in.</p> <p>Removal of the current metal panels is recommended and approvable at this time.</p>	
Recommendation	Approve removal of metal cladding. HOLD other work for further design work and exposure of the façade under the metal panels. Require section drawings for each building.	
Conditions	1. If approving further design work towards 1920s storefront appearance, require that corner windows be rebuilt to match photograph.	