MILWAUKEE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

Date	12/1/2026	Ald.	Perez
CCF	251517	Reviewer	Tim Askin
Address	1135 W. Historic Mitchell Street	Owner	Amit Ray
District	Mitchell Street	Applicant	Schultzwerk

PROPOSAL

Renovate Mitchell Street building for conversion to apartments. This involves several consequential and minor changes. Replacement of an old, but non-historic fire escape with a much smaller modern, metal fire escape. No changes will be made to the main commercial storefront and entry.

1. Replace windows throughout upper levels
2. Enclose side street recessed loading dock with overhead and convert to access ramp for basement parking.

STAFF COMMENTS

Originally a speculative retail building, the first major tenant was Waldheim Furniture, however, its major fame on Mitchell Street was when it served as J. C. Penney for 40 years from 1937-1979. In recent years it has served as a Foot Locker shoe store. It is noteworthy that this is a commercial building that has only ever had metal windows.

The fire escape is easily settled. The original fire escape was on another façade and is long demolished. The present fire escape is in poor condition and unsafe. The proposed new fire escape is competently designed and obscures less of the building façade.

The enclosure of the loading bay is an effectively similar issue. It is a service area that can serve a better purpose in the new use. A metal overhead door is proposed to enclose this space and reasonable, given that this was always an automotive bay. Care must be taken not to harm the terra cotta trim when installing the new door.

Former openings on the rear façade will be partially re-opened to insert new windows. The openings were the exits from the first fire escape. On this rear, plain façade, such alteration is acceptable. The proposed aluminum Quaker window is appropriate here and at all other new openings, such as on the east facade.

It is unclear if the windows on the upper floors are original. They largely match the original construction drawings, but the detailing seems off for the 1920s. The present windows do not appear to be operable and the original drawings do not indicate operability. Regardless, the top floor windows appear to be heavily rusted and minimally detailed. In principle they merit replacement in this change of use. Further detail and drawings are needed to indicate how close they can come to the existing steel sash. Modern aluminums windows are extremely chunky with oversized rails, stiles, and mullions compared to steel sash. An exact match is not needed, but a profile that is thinner than standard is certainly necessary.

The second floor windows are a more complicated matter. If they are not intended to be operable, they should be left in place. If they do need to be operable, these windows have a level of profile detail that impacts the overall feel of the building and needs a much more careful match in detailing and the upper floor. Full drawings are needed before granting approval of their replacement.

Guidelines

Retain existing window and door openings that are visible from the public right-of-way. Retain the present configuration of panes, sash, lintels, keystones, sills, architraves, pediments, hoods, doors, shutters and hardware except for the restoration to the original condition. Avoid making additional openings or changes in the principle elevations by enlarging or reducing window or door sizes. Avoid changing the size or configuration of windowpane

RECOMMENDATION

Approve with conditions

1. Approve fire escape replacement
2. Approve all new proposed window openings and to use the proposed metal Quaker Window product in them.
3. Approve enclosure of loading bay with overhead door
4. Work with staff on window details as discussed above. If it can be demonstrated the second floor windows are not original, they need not to be retained, but detailed drawings are needed regardless. They should replicate those found in the original drawings to the extent feasible.

PRIOR ACTION

N/A