



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 1/10/2022
Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4
Staff reviewer: Tim Askin
PTS #115233 CCF #211397

Property	135 W. WELLS ST.	Germania Building
Owner/Applicant	GERMANIA HISTORIC LLC 901 S 70TH ST WEST ALLIS WI 53214	RCL Engineering
Proposal	The building requires significant repairs to the top of the cornice and parapet areas, including new roofing for the parapet area, reattachment and reinforcement of terra cotta pieces. Roofing will primarily	
Staff comments	<p>The proposal appears to be properly engineered and thoughtful of preservation best practices. The membrane roofing approach is acceptable, if not ideal. It should have many years of service as proposed. Section drawings indicate the original cornice design appears to have created built-in box gutters that would not serve a major functional purpose. This approach can sometimes lead to water infiltration concerns, particularly when the gutter needs to function for a pitched roof. In this case, the building is subject to the façade inspection ordinance, and maintenance observation is therefore mandated every few years.</p> <p>One detail lacking from the submission is patching mortar for covering helical ties to re-secure cracked terra cotta to the building. This should be called out and reviewed by staff as to technical sufficiency and color match.</p>	
Recommendation	Recommend HPC Approval with conditions	

Conditions

1. Patching mortar or similar for reattached terra cotta façade panels, to be reviewed by staff for technical sufficiency and color match
2. Standard masonry conditions

Masonry

New mortar must match the original mortar in terms of color, texture, grain size, joint width, and joint finish/profile. The compressive strength of the repointing mortar shall be equal or less than the compressive strength of the original mortar and surrounding brick or stone. The replacement mortar shall contain approximately the same ingredient proportions of the original mortar. Mortar that is too hard is subject to premature failure and could damage the masonry. See the city's books *As Good As New* or *Good for Business*, Masonry Chapters, for more information. In most cases, this means a lime mortar with natural hydraulic cement rather than Portland cement. No joint of a width less than 3/8" may be cleaned of damaged/decomposed mortar with power disc grinders. No over-cutting of the joints is permitted. Remove decomposed mortar back into the wall 2.5 times the height of the joint before repointing. When installing new flashing at a masonry feature, the flashing must be stepped or cut into the mortar joints. The bricks may not be cut to install flashing at an angle.

New brick/stone/terra cotta must match as closely as possible the color texture, size, and finish of the original.

A sample panel of the masonry materials and their mortar must be reviewed and approved by HPC staff prior to general installation of the material.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHALL UNPAINTED MASONRY BE PAINTED, BE GIVEN A WATERPROOFING TREATMENT, OR CLEANED BY ABRASIVE MEANS.

Masonry Cleaning

Abrasive cleaning methods are prohibited on historic buildings by Wisconsin state law. Exceptions can only be granted in writing by the Wisconsin Historical Society. Chemical and power-washing are acceptable methods of cleaning that the city can approve. Pressure washing is to be conducted **ONLY** with fan tips with a spread of 15-50 degrees, maximum 800psi at the tip, flow rate less than 8gpm, and from a distance from the surface of a minimum of 12" inches. PSI of 400-600 is typically adequate, though it may take more time and more passes than higher pressures.

Previous HPC action

Previous Council action