Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission
Staff Report

Living with History

HPC meeting date: 7/14/2015
Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4
Staff reviewer: Carlen Hatala
PTS #104168

Property	225 E. MICHIGAN	East Side Commercial Historic District

Owner/Applicant

225 EAST MICHIGAN ST LLC
207 E MICHIGAN ST # 500
MILWAUKEE WI 53202

Continuum Architects & Planners
P.O. Box 510663
Milwaukee, WI 53203
Phone: (414) 303-4422

Proposal

This building was historically known as the Chamber of Commerce Building and was built by Alexander Mitchell to lease to the Chamber of Commerce. It was built in 1879-1880 and designed by the celebrated Edward Townsend Mix. The bull and the bear, symbols of the market, appear on the building. It made a fitting companion to the building constructed by Mitchell next door to the west, the Mitchell Building that was completed in 1876 and also designed by Edward Townsend Mix.

The owner is using historic tax credits for a mixed use development that will include the existing Grain Exchange Room, new apartments, some offices and retail.

As part of the adaptive use project, the primary historic spaces like the stair hall and Grain Exchange room will be preserved but the secondary spaces will be altered for new uses.

Exterior work includes:
cleaning the building and repointing the masonry
building a freight elevator
repairing 4 metal bridges that cross over to the Mitchell Building
building an exterior stair tower
repairing historic windows
repairing and re-glazing three skylights
replacing missing and damaged slate at the clock tower roof with new slate
the existing elevator penthouse will be extended 7 feet at the roof and a new elevator stop will be constructed at the roof
the statue of Commerce will be brought back from Jackson Park and reinstalled at the building
current HVAC systems will be removed, steam heat will be removed from the building and new electric and air exchange systems installed with internal ductwork routed within rated shaft
the kitchen exhaust fan from the Swinging Door Restaurant will be removed from the alley and new systems will be located to the lower roof to the south of the building.

Staff comments

This very large undertaking will address some of the long deferred maintenance issues, foundation issues (pilings) and code requirements dictated by the adaptive use of the building.

Masonry cleaning and repointing of the Halderman Blue Ohio limestone and Minnesota granite on the north and east facades will greatly enhance the character and details of the building. Sure Klean Heavy Duty Paint Stripper manufactured by PROSOCO will be used to remove the layers of paint, algae and environmental build up on the exterior, especially the north/Michigan Street façade.

Repointing work will utilize heritage Hydraulic Lime Mortar NHL 3.5 produced by US Heritage Group.

The existing annex at the rear of the building was constructed at the same time as the Chamber of Commerce. The new 2-stop freight elevator will service the Grain Exchange Room and its kitchen. It will be installed in the western portion of the annex. It will not be visible on the exterior.

The new stair tower will be constructed of concrete block that will be painted upon completion. It will rise three levels at the southwest corner of the building and obscure the end (west) of the annex structure. This will necessitate elongating one existing window on each of levels 1 and 2 to provide access to the stairs. The arched upper portion of the windows along with their sash will remain intact. The design of the stair tower is utilitarian in nature. It is visible from Broadway and Clybourn Street.

Windows will be repaired and reglazed as needed. They will remain shut and inoperable as at present. They will be repainted. A new ground level glass entry door will be added to one of the storefront openings on the Broadway side, as required by code, to accommodate a new internal exit stairway.

The 4 metal bridges that connect the Chamber of Commerce Building to the Mitchell Building will be scraped and painted and new insulated aluminum windows will be installed to match the existing.

The clock tower's clock is currently non-functioning and the clock face is missing. The tower's slate roof will be repaired.

There are three skylights at the building's rooftop. The central skylight over the Grain Exchange Room has glazed panels at level 4 and another at the rooftop. The lower skylight once had cathedral glass but now has wire glass. Glazing is cracked, with tar used as repair. Glazing will be replaced with insulated glass and the deteriorated framing will be repaired/replaced with matching materials.

The main roof is EPDM and will be repaired/replaced by Langer Roofing.

The statue of Commerce, relocated from this building to Jackson Park (then Reynolds Park) in 1909 will be returned to the bulding when the exterior is completed.

Recommendation

Approve with the following conditions

Conditions

All work shall follow the preservation practices indicated in the HPC submission package.

Masonry cleaning cannot begin until three test samples (recommended by the paint stripper manufacturer) are prepared and approved by Historic Preservation staff as well as the SHPO office. Test panels need to be located at inconspicuous places on the facade such as the southeast corner or northwest corner of the building.

Retaining joint width is crucial with masonry work and joints should not be ground out to the point that the stone is cut or damaged. Mortar sample panels need to be prepared and approved by Historic Preservation staff as well as SHPO staff before work can begin.

Design of the clock face in the clock tower should match the original, a dark face with light numerals.

Details of any redesign of the main entry doors and entry area need to be reviewed with HPC staff before a Certificate of Appropriateness can be issued.

The new rear stair tower will have smooth concrete block, with concave tooled masonry joints and be painted to match the exterior of the Annex wall.

Previous HPC action

Previous Council action