



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 5/8/2017
Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4
Staff reviewer: Tim Askin
PTS #114249 CCF #161751

Property 627 N. BROADWAY

Owner/Applicant DISTRICT SAVIOR LLC
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Proposal Applicant proposes to construct a historically inspired new facade across all of the Broadway storefronts to return the buildings to tenantable space.

Staff comments

The buildings under consideration today once had a very different appearance. The rather bedraggled facades hide a history that dates back to the 1860s.

The portion addressed as 627-629 North Broadway was once the north part of the building that houses Iannelli's today but was once famous for Marble Hall saloon. The top two floors were removed in 1946 and corrugated transite was applied to the front that same year.

The building addressed as 631 North Broadway was known as Brodhead's Building. The third story was removed in 1946.

The building at 633-635 North Broadway was likewise constructed in the 1860s and then remodeled into a three-story building in 1894. It connected with buildings on Wisconsin Avenue. In 1946, corrugated transite was applied to the exterior and it is presumed that the third floor was removed at this time.

There was common ownership of these three buildings as well as the three buildings west of the Railway Exchange Building along Wisconsin Avenue in 1946. The buildings were interconnected on the interior.

In 2006, exploratory removal of the corrugated siding was conducted to investigate the condition. Since the buildings were determined to be beyond restoration, a temporary plywood enclosure was constructed along Broadway and clad with imprinted aluminum composite panels that resembled storefronts. Under the current ownership, the temporary panels on Broadway were removed and the facades were exposed.

The present owner has revised his plans from temporary cladding that was brought to the Commission last November to a rehabilitation of the facades with period-inspired storefronts. Reconstruction is not viable, as the buildings have had so many alterations that there is no particular historic state can be used. Staff generally supports the proposal, but has a specific critique and a rough counterproposal of a redesign. Staff would also support constructing the design that was proposed for temporary cladding.

Staff has several concerns/recommendations for design changes:

1. Staff recommends consistent use of one brick color throughout the entire facade, Cream City brick being a preferred option. A secondary color could be used for detailing if necessary.
2. In regards to the gabled roof on the center third of the proposal, according to the ESCD Preservation Guidelines, the roof must retain original shape. While staff acknowledges the lack of surviving historic fabric to the building, in keeping with the historic streetscape and surrounding context, the gable seems disproportionate and out of place

3. In place of the gable, the cornice currently abutting the gable in the design could be carried across the whole of the raised roofline, providing a streamline look while still keeping the center façade elevated and distinct from its adjacent neighbors
4. The elevation of the center-most façade has no line to context. In parallel to the previous comment, lowering the roof line a few feet to meet the line of the first protruding cornice of the Railway Exchange building to the North provides adequate proportionality in context
5. The entrance for the center-most one-third façade is inconsistent to the floor plans provided. In the plan, the entrance is shown at center, while the elevations show it to the southern portion of the central façade. Staff recommends the entrance remain at center for a balanced streetscape.
6. For the southern-most one-third façade, the accentuated cornice jutting from the structure competes too heavily with the ornate cornice of Iannelli's to the south and detracts from the overall consistency of the renovation project.
7. The cornice on the northern-most one-third façade is consistent to the context and guidelines of the ESCD, and staff recommends the use of this cornice on the southern-most one-third façade as well, creating a uniformity that suggests unity between the three facades.

Recommendation Recommend HPC Approval

Conditions

Previous HPC action In November 2016, HPC approved temporary cladding that was to be installed when weather allowed.

Previous Council action