

Elmer, Linda

From: Kay Wosewick <kwosewick@wi.rr.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 5, 2022 12:25 PM
To: Elmer, Linda
Subject: Re: File # 220279, proposed addition to St Mark's

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To: Historic Preservation Commission members: Alderman Bauman, Ann Pieper Eisenbrown, Matt Jarosz, Nicholas Hans Robinson, Patricia Keating Kahn, Rafael Garcia, Sandy Pelts

As a resident of 2633 N Hackett Ave, I'm writing to present objections to the proposed addition to St Mark's (**hereafter referred to as ADD**) as they specifically relate to the Downer Historic District (**hereafter referred to as DND**) Guidelines for New Construction. The Guidelines are presented below, one at a time, in bold, followed by my comments. When my comments reference specific wording in the Guidelines, those are also in bold.

But first: In his Zoom presentation on June 13 to nearby residents, architect Jim Shields stated at least twice that the design of the proposed addition (ADD) is in line with National Historic Trust guidelines. This statement seems to be Shields' justification for designing, in his words, a "modern" and "contemporary" looking addition for St Mark's. **IMPORTANTLY**, the National Historic Trust guidelines are **NOT RELEVANT**. The proposed addition is in the Downer Historic District (DND), which has its own historic preservation guidelines. These two sets of guidelines must not be conflated in the Historic Preservation Commission review process.

Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed so as to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the district.

No building in the DHD looks remotely like the ADD. The ADD **IS NOT**, in any way, **sympathetic...with the character of the district**. It belongs to an entirely different, and much newer, style of architecture than its two contiguous buildings.

Siting

New construction must respect the historic siting of the district. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the cohesiveness of the district as a group of contiguous, stylistically compatible structures.

Café Hollander's patio provides an unparalleled view of the entire historic district. The patio attracts a large number of visitors, at all times of day, 7 days a week, for up to 6 months a year (roughly May into November, depending on weather). Most visitors spend an extended amount of time here, eating, drinking, and socializing. During this time, they are exposed to many views of the DHD. If it could be easily calculated, I am certain Café Hollander's patio would account for substantially more views of the proposed addition than any other point in the DHD.

The only publicly available image of the ADD resides on the internet. This widely promoted image—a mock-up of the ADD as seen from Café Hollander's patio—starkly reveals the ADD's dramatic **ABSENCE of cohesiveness (with) the district**. Further, the image shows the **ADD IS NOT stylistically compatible** with other DHD structures; in fact, it looks entirely out of place.

Scale

Overall building height and bulk, the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof, and individual building components such as overhangs and fenestration that are in proximity to historic buildings must be compatible to and sympathetic with the design of the buildings.

The scale of the ADD itself is a significant improvement over the existing addition in terms of **height and bulk**. However, its **expression...of body and roof ARE NOT compatible to and sympathetic with the design of the (historic) buildings**. The green roof, the stairway, and the fencing around both (plus a possible raised photovoltaic roof covering part of the green space), are **UNIQUE TO THE DND**, and thus place it **WELL OUTSIDE** historic guidelines.

The ADD also fails on **fenestration**. Architects and some designers might detect a relationship between the ADD's windows and doors and St Mark's windows and doors, but the average visitor will not notice this. St Mark's has two prominent red doors at either end of the church and cloister walk; these are dominant design elements. Between the red doors are five 3-part windows shaped **EXACTLY** like the doors. The huge stained-glass window above the church door **REPEATS** the shape of the doors and windows, except for a triangular cut-out at the bottom, which is reflected in the tiny roof at the far end of the cloister walk. While there is a diminutive bank of 3 windows on each side of the main church door, they are so small relative to other design elements that they are, practically speaking, invisible.

Thus, the dominate design element of the church and cloister walk resides in the shape of the two doors, 5 windows, and the stained-glass window. **(T)o maintain the cohesiveness...of contiguous, stylistically compatible structures**, this design element should be incorporated in the new addition. It is not.

Instead, the architect plucked a subordinate design element from the existing buildings (as mentioned above, this design element is two small sets of 3 narrow windows) and used it to link the old and new buildings. Then, this subordinate design is changed so radically that it ceases to have any relationship whatsoever to the old buildings. Specifically, the proposed windows are extremely—and unusually—long, they are very narrow, and they are tightly clustered into four groups. These window banks are the **DOMINATE** design element of the ADD, which makes the ADD **NOT AT ALL compatible to and sympathetic with the design of the (historic) buildings**.

Form

The massing of new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the complex as a cohesive group of historic structures. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from any new construction in the complex should express the same design continuity established in the historic complex.

Excluding the stairway, the green roof, and the fencing that enclose both, the ADD's form is a clean block. The height of the brick block relates to a small horizontal jag at the end of the church's steep roof. The roof of the (bare) block is flat, conforming with most of the cloister walk roof. **HOWEVER**, the strikingly out-of-historic-character green roof, the outdoor stairway, and the fencing surrounding those, plus the possible addition of raised photovoltaic units to shade a portion of the green roof, **VISUALLY ERASE** any relationship in form that the ADD might have had with adjacent buildings. Additionally, the ADD is not in alignment with the two existing buildings in front; roughly 25% of the ADD is set behind part of the cloister walk. While this relationship makes sense for people in the church's interior green space, it will never be seen by people walking by.

Net, it would **STRETCH THE IMAGINATION** to say the ADD is **maintaining the integrity of the complex as a cohesive group of historic structures and express(ing) the same design continuity established in the historic complex**.

Materials

The building materials, which are visible from the public right-of-way and in proximity to the district, should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions and combinations of cladding materials used on the individual buildings. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained

The ADD has significant material incompatibilities with the historic buildings. The new brick looks markedly grayer and darker than the darkened church stones they are supposed to match. While the colors may match when placed side by side, the darkened church blocks look more like brown than gray from the sidewalk. The brick's **texture** could hardly be **MORE DIFFERENT** than the church stonework. The brick looks smooth while the stonework is highly 3 dimensional, plus each stone has its own unique pattern. **Proportions** also differ dramatically: long, thin bricks versus significantly larger, chunky blocks of stone. The stones also vary in size while the bricks are one size. The materials clearly **ARE NOT consistent with the colors, textures, proportions and combinations of cladding materials** used in the church and cloister walk.

Add the outdoor stairway, the green roof, and the fencing surrounding both (and maybe a photovoltaic shading structure), and one can only conclude that the ADD and the historical buildings are of entirely different historical eras.

The Historic District Commission's task is to compare the new addition with buildings ONLY within the designated historic district. I think this task is too limited. The other buildings on the 2600 block of Hackett are also relevant. The average person walking down this block is clueless about specific standards, rules or laws that govern the block. People see what they see.

What people see today is a beautifully **cohesive neighborhood with stylistically compatible structures** that are entirely **sympathetic...with the character of the district**. The proposed addition will look as if it was randomly, and wrongly, dropped on the block. While few people find the current addition attractive, at least it doesn't call attention to itself; the new addition will. Visitors walking down this block (as many Café Hollander and other DND patrons do) will no longer be surrounded by an historically cohesive neighborhood of beautifully maintained buildings...a block virtually unchanged on the outside for over 100 YEARS. A block of this historic quality and cohesiveness is RARELY adjacent to a lively business district. Perhaps the block is even the last of its kind in Milwaukee. If new buildings must be built, **please, please** demand that they genuinely look like they belong with the other historic buildings in the DHD, as well as with the other buildings on the 2600 block of Hackett.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Kay Wosewick

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Milwaukee