



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 3/7/2022
Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4
Staff reviewer: Jacqueline Drayer
PTS CCF 211657

Property 918 N Vel Philips Avenue *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* Complex

Owner/Applicant Seeds of Health, Inc. Eppstein Uhen Architects
1445 S 32nd Street 333 E Chicago Street
Milwaukee, WI 53215 Milwaukee, WI 53202

Proposal The Owner is seeking an approval for the conceptual design to renovate the building exterior, to improve aesthetics, energy efficiency, and longevity of the buildings maintenance and repairs. With these goals in mind, the proposal is to renovate the following elements.

- 1) Remove the metal building screen on four of the six elevations to restore the original building elevation aesthetic. This will also help the Owner to maintain the masonry veneer and windows as needed in the future.
- 2) Restore and paint the exterior building masonry on five of the six elevations. These five elevations are currently painted and in need of new paint.
- 3) The original unpainted masonry on the west elevation and a portion on the north elevation will be maintained as it currently is with some areas to be repaired, tuck-pointed and restored to its original aesthetic. The Owner would like to remove the unmatched masonry and tooth in new masonry to better match the adjacent existing brick.
- 4) The Owner would like to replace the windows and storefront systems as noted in the drawings. The new window system proposed was selected to mimic the original window aesthetic in appearance. The new aluminum window system will be a hung window style with vertical muntins to replicate the original windows. The new window system was also selected due to the exterior profile options that are available. The proposed exterior frame profile will be selected to imitate the frame style used in the original windows. Lastly, the new windows will be modern in its energy efficiency technology to improve the buildings energy consumption and meet current standards associated with the international energy conservation code. Replacing the windows with the proposed window system will greatly improve the buildings energy consumption, improve the longevity for repairs and maintenance, and provide a cohesive window aesthetic for the whole building that respects the original building window style.
- 5) Lastly, if there is budget available after the above mentioned renovations, the Owner would like to clad the south elevation of the north building with metal panels.. The current exterior material is terracotta block that does not match the other masonry elevations. The base design is to paint the clay block to match the other painted elevations. The cost permitting alternate is to attached a sub-girt framing system and then to mount the corrugated metal panel to the sub-girt frame. We believe this metal panel system in its profile and the complementary color to the painted elevations will be an aesthetic improvement over the original clay block.

Staff comments

Staff supports the first three elements of the proposal. Removal of the metal building screen, restoration and painting of the exterior brick masonry that is already painted, and removing the unmatched masonry on the west elevation and replacing it with masonry that matches the adjacent building fabric are all in keeping with restoring this building to nearer its appearance during the period of significance.

The windows on the north façade of the complex appear to be original. The rest of the site's windows are not original, nor are they compatible with the original design. The windows on the north façade should be replaced in kind and as needed. They should not be replaced with the proposed metal window system.

The existing storefront system design is not original. The proposed changes to the storefront system design also differ significantly from the original. While exact replication is not required, there should be fewer panes in the lower section of the storefront windows and a more clearly defined transom. This is more compatible with the character of the building. Spandrel panels in bays G, H, and J should be as subtle as possible and not protrude beyond the window profile.

The proposal to clad the south elevation of the north building with metal panels is inappropriate. It is an incompatible change with no visual or historical relationship to the building, and should not be approved. This appears to be an aesthetic preference, and is proposed only if funds remained after completing the previous, and much more appropriate, rehabilitation work at the site.

Recommendation

Recommend HPC approval with conditions.

Conditions

North façade windows must be replaced in kind (wood). All finish wood must be smooth and free of knots and must be painted or treated with an opaque stain upon completion. Note: when new, bare wood is left exposed to the exterior elements for a period of only a week or two, the life of the paint job subsequently applied to it will be decreased. The use of a naturally decay-resistant wood species for exterior finish applications is required for porch areas. Using western white pine or Ponderosa pine is “at your own risk” because this wood has no natural decay resistance and can deteriorate in some exterior settings in just a few years.

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; THIS STATEMENT SUPERSEDES ANY OTHER WORDING IN THIS DOCUMENT INDICATING THE CONTRARY.

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.

Work with HPC staff to make aluminum storefront system design more compatible in terms of window panes and transom definition.

Metal panel cladding is not to be installed.

Previous HPC action

Previous Council action