



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

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HPC meeting date: 7/10/2023
Staff reviewer: Tim Askin

Ald. Perez
CCF # 230322

Property 507 – 515 W. Historic Mitchell Street Mitchell Street

Owner/Applicant James Witkowiak

Proposal

1. Move front façade of 515 W Mitchell two lots east and construct new concrete foundation and new rear of building with smooth hardieplank.
2. Add ADA ramp to side elevation
3. Construct gated pedestrian plaza in the expanded space next to the funeral home
4. Construct shared parking at rear of lots for use of both funeral home St. Stanislaus Church. The new parking area will have negligible visibility from Mitchell Street and will be accessible to vehicles only from the existing alley

If demolition is denied, applicant requests to move the whole building.

Staff comments

Moving the Building

While not formally documented in the local designation or the National Register, newer research by staff has found that Mitchell Street has an established history of moving buildings to accommodate new construction, improved foundations, and other reasons. Moving a building a few lots over is within the character of the street.

Substantial demolition in the process of moving the building is not part of the character and violates both the ordinance and the Mitchell Street guidelines.

Under MCO 320-21-11, the commission shall consider:

- g-1. Whether the proposed work would destroy or adversely affect any exterior architectural feature of the improvement upon which the work is to be done or adversely affect the external appearance of other improvements on the site or within the district.
- g-2-c. Whether, in the case of construction of a new improvement on a historic site or within a historic district...the new improvement...is...not an attempt to re-create a historic structure.

Under the ordinance it is clear that significant destruction of exterior features is not to be permitted and replica construction is prohibited on a new site. Generally the commission has not approved demolition without evidence of structural necessity. A detailed structural report is required for a demolition request.

Mitchell Street guidelines require the following:

- **A.2.b(i). Wood.** Retain original material, whenever possible.
- **A.3.a. Windows and Doors.** Retain existing window and door openings that are visible from the public right-of-way
- **A.4. Trim and Ornamentation.** There shall be no changes to the existing trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition.

Moving the building as is will meet the streetscape guidelines. As above, the ordinance prohibits re-creation of historic buildings on new sites. This leaves moving the entire present building as the only option.

Plaza and Parking

The pedestrian plaza is a reasonable use of the space and generally compatible with the historic district. There are no defined materials. Drawings do indicate that the existing fencing along Mitchell Street will be replicated and extended; this is acceptable. Material for the pavers needs to be provided. HPC usually requires clay pavers because of the low durability of concrete pavers. Staff would recommend permeable pavers to help address the stormwater management requirements. Paving for the new parking area should be concrete. HPC has not generally approved asphalt for parking or driveways.

Staff also recommends a low wall or fence on the east side of the plaza and a low wall with plantings at the south side of the plaza. Users and pedestrians will appreciate a reduced view of motor vehicle while additional barriers will prevent trampling of the needed greenery.

Zoning Notes

It is possible that two or more each of long-term and short-term bicycle parking may need to be provided. This much paving requires a stormwater management plan. Staff prefers that DNS address bicycles without HPC input. DNS may address stormwater without HPC input if there are no significant design changes.

Recommendation

1. Deny partial demolition
2. Approve move of whole building
3. Approve design concept pedestrian plaza and parking, pending final staff and DNS review of materials and required stormwater management plan.

Conditions

1. Clay pavers may be used for both areas. The parking area may also be simple poured concrete
2. Add screening plantings at south end of pedestrian plaza to screen parking area from Mitchell and from plaza users.

Additional walls or fences are encouraged around the plaza, but are not recommended as a condition of approval.

Previous HPC action

Previous Council action