

Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission
Staff Report



HPC Meeting Date: 1/14/2019

Ald. Bauman District: 4
Staff Reviewer: Tim Askin
PTS#114620 CCF#180978

Property 511 N. Broadway East Side Commercial Historic District

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Proposal The first version of this project was presented to the Commission in December 2017 it was heard again in October 2018. It was scheduled for additional review in December 2018, but withdrawn at the last minute. It has grown from 7 to 9 to 11 stories. It remains proposed as mixed-use retail and office building with a significant aboveground parking component at the northwest corner of Clybourn and Broadway. The increase from 9 to 11 stories changes the plans from approximately 120 ft. to 129 feet. This is mainly achieved by lowering floor-level heights.

The ground floor of the Clybourn elevation will feature a full width, two-story storefront with a separate storefront on Broadway. North of the Broadway storefront will be the office building lobby followed by the parking entrance. Roughly, 60% of the first floor will be indoor parking, 90% of the second floor, and all of floors three through five will be parking. The upper floors are dedicated to office space.

The proposed building is massed to provide a strong corner bookend for both Clybourn and Broadway. The proposed form is set back from the historic Mackie building to allow for continued exposure of natural light for the ballroom's feature windows and maintains a view corridor to the clock tower.

Staff Comments This property has been surface parking in the East Side Commercial Historic District for quite some time. Several properties on this land were lost to fire and unrelated structural deficiencies after the creation of the district.

There have been major revisions to the building in height and materials, but the design concept is substantially similar. Most of the concerns previously expressed have been addressed. Both the changed and unchanged items have been addressed in a narrative. Additionally, the parking entrance has shifted a few feet to avoid a streetcar pole.

The most visible changes are the use of natural stone on the street-facing elevations and modified masonry accents. The altered masonry accents add depth and character while simultaneously emphasizing the unusual angles of the siting.

The concerns were as follows:

1. More cohesive fenestration pattern on west wall. *Achieved, now linear and larger.*
2. Add fenestration to north wall. *Added where feasible at northwest corner. More will be added once an easement is recorded.*
3. Refine SE corner to tie it in to the design concept together more coherently. *Design intent is clarified, but there have been no changes. Commissioners Jarosz and Bauman particularly opined on the apparent incongruity of this feature in October.*
4. Further address vehicle shadows and visibility of parking. *Windows will be translucent with backlighting and therefore not have views to the interior.*
5. Limit Cordova Stone to Chiselface, Rockface, and Groundface textures. *This artificial stone has been eliminated from street-facing elevations and replaced with*

- natural stone. Groundface has been selected for its locations of use*
6. Consider requiring full height masonry on west and north walls
Changes declined because of cost concerns. Staff is willing to concede the point on these secondary elevations. Commissioners did not seem exceptionally concerned about this point.
 7. Consider significant alterations to cladding and fenestration of northeast corner setback.
Unchanged and architects indicate that the depth of the setback is sufficient to mitigate these concerns. A new section drawing is provided. Staff is not fully convinced of this point.
 8. Submit drawings with thorough dimensioning of façade elements and heights.
Received and they provide sufficient clarity.
 9. Submit HVAC plans that include any proposed penetrations of the street-facing facades.
HVAC plans are not complete, but written assurances have been provided. The street-facing elevations will not be marred with mechanicals other than intake vents disguised with trellised green screens at the garage entrance.

Metal on primary elevations

The setback in the northeast corner has an abrupt change in materials and fenestration. The switch from masonry with rhythmic fenestration to metal panels with arrhythmic windows is an extreme contrast. By changing both, the change calls attention to itself in a way that should be de-emphasized on a secondary portion of the primary elevation. The surrounding buildings decrease their detail as they rise higher, this design increases detail as it goes upward by virtue of maximizing contrast. Staff believes either the masonry should be continued or the fenestration pattern should be continued up for the full height. Continuing the fenestration pattern vertically is likely the best of these options and certainly the most economical.

Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that additional new construction be designed to harmonize with the character of the district.

1. Siting: New construction must reflect the traditional siting of buildings in the district. This includes setbacks, spacing between building, and the orientation of openings to the street and neighboring structures.

The siting is nontraditional, but leaves substantial sightlines to the historic buildings surrounding it. This Commission approved the siting in October.

2. 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 must be compatible with the surrounding structures.

The building is tall at 11 stories and 129' at the top of mechanical screening. Rooftop is at 119'. A height of 112-120' was previously approved. The major building divisions on the masonry portions of the street-facing facades are harmonious, rhythmic, and generally fit the district, excepting the corner projection, which appears as a separate building. . It pushes the outer limits of what should be acceptable in this historic district. Staff was more comfortable with this height for a 9-story building, as the two metal stories above the masonry section alter the massing.

3. Form: The massing of new construction must be compatible with the surrounding buildings. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from the main block must express the same continuity established by the historic structures.

The form is essentially rectangular with a major setback from the northeast corner. Windows in the masonry sections are grouped in a way that is reflective of the surrounding buildings. It attempts to tie together the verticality of the Romanesque Button Block with the horizontality of the Mackie Building. Window patterns in the metal-panel clad areas are of contrast to those in the masonry sections. It is notable that towers are prominent features of the large historic buildings on this block and that feature is absent here. The divisions at the masonry levels fit the surrounding buildings well. Having two levels above the masonry detracts from the coordination with surrounding buildings.

Windows in the masonry sections are unchanged from the last review. The rhythm and verticality and their dimensions work with the scale and indicate an awareness of context. Nonetheless, the number of window configurations is high due to varying combinations of a small number of modules.

4. Materials: The building materials that are visible from the public right-of-way should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials traditionally used in the district. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.

Staff still holds concerns about the use of metal panels on the primary elevations. The natural masonry and shadow effects enhance the street-facing elevations. This is a recommended and appropriate detail for a building in this historic district. The staggered lines of header bricks have been tweaked to emphasize the verticality and angularity of the Broadway elevation. The change in the brick accent is good and welcome. Nonetheless, continuity is lacking at the projecting corner; its ties to the rest of the building are almost exclusively along the top floors. This should be addressed.

Materials on the masonry portions of the street-facing elevations have changed. An off-white brick is proposed where synthetic masonry and limestone blocks were previously proposed. Where the metal panels and storefront systems become dominant at the SE corner, they create a discontinuity not found in the neighboring historic buildings. It is staff understands that the dark masonry at the base of the street-facing elevations will remain granite matched to the Mackie building, but the drawings disagree with the materials sheet.

Secondary elevations have had their materials changed from synthetic stone to pre-cast concrete panels for the lower portions, up to 45' or so. On the north elevation, this is of no concern because of negligible visibility. The west elevation will have some visibility and it is an alley that may be planned for future "activation." Sample photos have been provided by the architect of a project completed in 2013. I recently visited this site and the panels show no signs of deterioration, but joints may be subject to caulking failures. Staff would suggest a concrete pour on the north elevation, as this area would be inaccessible for re-caulking.

All of these guidelines lead to a few essential questions for the Commission to consider:

1. Does the proposed new construction support and enhance the historic district or detract from it?
2. How can the compatibility be clearly outlined and defined? What makes this building compatible? How is it different from a building that could be placed elsewhere downtown and not in this historic district?
3. Compatibility and differentiation are not mutually exclusive and one should not be prioritized over the other. Do these two considerations strike the right balance?

Staff is mostly satisfied, but still has concerns about the integration of the metal paneling on the primary elevations and the number of window configurations. The additional floors are concerning as they throw off the massing and scale. Most other concerns have been addressed in an adequate fashion.

Recommendation

Approve or hold.

Conditions

1. Natural granite as shown in materials sheet should be required for dark masonry base areas on Clybourn and Broadway and first segments of corner wraps.
2. Consider eliminating top story.

If held, further revisions of metal panel areas on the street-facing elevations.

Previous HPC Action

December 2018: increase to 11 stories, proposal withdrawn before meeting.
Approval of subtly modified footprint and 9-story height 10/1/2018, this file.
Approval of footprint and 7-story height on 12/11/2017, CCF#171155.