



MILWAUKEE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

HPC meeting date **8/5/2024** **CCF # 240484**

Ald. Bauman Staff reviewer: Tim Askin

Property 924 E Wells Street University Club

Owner/Applicant Northwestern Mutual Kahler Slater

PROPOSAL

Northwestern Mutual has recently acquired the building and is undertaking some deferred maintenance issues as well as undoing some poor choices that were made over the years. PTAC through-wall a/c units and grille-between-glass windows will be replaced with new matching brick and appropriate windows respectively. The original top floor windows will be replaced with an aluminum storefront system.

STAFF COMMENTS

There do not appear to be any original windows on the original 1920s portion of the building. The current grille-between-glass windows were present prior to designation and likely date to the 1990s. These windows deserve to be replaced with something that accurately represents the originals. The Graham windows proposed here are generally accepted by NPS, but uncommon for us. There is an installation in the Pabst complex that staff finds unconvincing due to visible joints in the metal. They are particularly noticeable because of a light finish and ground floor usage. A more recent installation at the Milwaukee Athletic Club appears significantly better. The Commission should request samples of current windows with exterior muntin grids before approving.

The architects have done their best to interpret the details of the original windows from elevations and a limited selection of published renderings. The design offered is period appropriate with the caveat that a building this purely Georgian needs light-colored windows and that floor-length windows should be truly floor length and not have an extra sash of spandrel glass at the bottom. This is possible and the architects and manufacturer confirm their capability

The top floor's windows are original to 1953 when that floor was constructed. Midcentury aluminum windows are an exception to our usual window rules. They are difficult to repair and energy upgrades range from impractical to impossible, as the frames are not thermally broken. The Kawneer Metroview is similar in appearance to the originals and sufficiently so for a high floor. The finish should be clear or clear anodized to match the originals as much as is feasible.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve masonry work and top floor windows with conditions. Hold lower floor windows until satisfied with a physical sample. [A sample is expected to be present at the hearing.]

CONDITIONS

1. If approving lower floor windows, the type proposed have a permanent color/finish. To be accurate, the color must be white or a tan/beige that approximates the limestone used on the building. This is period correct for both true and revival Georgian buildings. The original architect's elevations and renderings do not have any shading on the window details or trim, they are pure white. While this leaves some room for interpretation into beige and limestone tones, it does not allow for bronze.
2. Double hung sash shall not have a lower spandrel panel to accommodate the bottom sash being flush with the floor. Restoration of original window height and proportion is needed.
3. 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.