

Grand Avenue *club*

A community that works

EIFS Wall Appeal September 2021

Grand Avenue Club, a nonprofit vocational rehabilitation program, has owned the historic building on 210 East Michigan Street since December of 2001. Grand Avenue Club members and staff have a great love and appreciation for our historic building. We participate in the September Doors Open Milwaukee so we may share our love of our unique building with our greater Milwaukee neighbors. Prior to the pandemic we were getting over 800 people coming for our tour annually.

Grand Avenue Club has prioritized providing regular maintenance and repairs to preserve the building, including:

- Providing regular inspections to assure safety and maintenance of the building, inside and outside.
- Maintaining the roof and fire escape to assure optimal life span, safety, and soundness.
- Refurbishing over 80 windows following historic preservation guidelines.
- Adding an elevator wing to make all the floors accessible

Many of you have been supportive of Grand Avenue Club and our mission to provide opportunities to Milwaukee citizens who experience mental illness, including: work experiences, a vocational focus and path toward employment, assistance in accessing education to achieve a career goal, assistance in finding safe, decent, and affordable housing, and a safe community to be their whole selves and discover their strengths, talents, and abilities. We would like your support and official approval to leave the EIFS north wall as it is for the life of the EIFS.

Since the Grand Avenue Club has moved into the building, the north wall has needed to be tuckpointed and repaired multiple times, as the applied stucco was not properly adhering to or protecting the underlying brickwork. Most recently, in 2016, a skilled contractor knowledgeable about the structure of the exterior north wall recommended that EIFS be installed to provide longer lasting repairs, prevent ongoing water damage, and match the surrounding stucco as closely as possible. The contractor believed that the only long-term alternative would be a complete rebuilding of the wall, which would have been prohibitively expensive on such short notice. The EIFS was installed, and so far there have been no further water leakage issues.

To provide context, at the time, Grand Avenue Club's building coordinator had recently resigned, and I had been appointed to replace him. I did not know about the process to acquire a Certificate of Approval, or that such an approval was required for the repairs. Since finding out about the importance of getting such approval, we have worked closely with the Historic Preservation Committee on other restoration projects, including applying for and receiving this summer a Certificate of Appropriateness for necessary repairs to the street-facing exterior of the building. I will also make it a priority to create documentation of the procedure for repairs, so that this problem can be prevented from reoccurring in the future.

Grand Avenue Club has no desire to cover up a problem or mislead the City. When the EIFS is no longer providing thorough protection for the building, an evaluation of the wall condition will be performed, and a Certificate of Appropriateness application for appropriate wall repairs will be submitted for approval.

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Why wait to remove the EIFS and replace the wall? Grand Avenue Club is a not-for-profit organization with a million-dollar budget to run our entire program. In addition to the program budget, we are currently in the process of holding a Capital Campaign to raise the funds needed to restore the front exterior of the building, which requires more immediate repair, and which has already been approved by the Historic Preservation Commission, including: (1) inspection and fall hazard removal at our south, east and west elevations, (2) restoration of the south side main entrance, (3) restoration of the south elevations both below and above the 1st floor window sills, (4) masonry repairs to the north west elevation, (5) resurfacing the west entry courtyard, and (6) tuckpointing as needed. In addition to these significant capital expenses, the roof requires regular attention and improvements, the fire escape requires routine inspections and repairs, and once we finish with all these projects, we will need to keep on top of their maintenance and prevent deterioration.

Again, we are proud of our building and we want you to be pleased with our care of it. But we have to balance keeping the building in the best condition possible with fiscal responsibility and being able to provide needed services for those with mental illness in Milwaukee. Removing the EIFS and then restoring our northwest wall is a large additional project and will require a special fundraising to assure a quality rebuild. It would be great assistance in assuring funding for the projects already in the works if we don't have to add the great cost of rebuilding a cream city brick wall.

210 E Michigan Street is our Grand Avenue Club Home. It is centrally located to city transportation, enabling members throughout Milwaukee to actively access the Clubhouse and take advantage of our services. Grand Avenue Club is an international leader in the Clubhouse movement and is known for providing a safe, attractive, and inspiring work space which conveys a sense of respect and dignity to participants. We know maintaining a historic building takes work, planning, and funding. We made the commitment to care for the building when we purchased it. This old Bank of Milwaukee building is the right place for Grand Avenue Club, and with a little help from our friends, we can keep our promise of proper care for the building today and moving forward.

Sincerely,

Pamela R Weisser, MSW
Associate Director