



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 12/5/2022
Ald. Jose Perez District: 12
Staff reviewer: Carlen Hatala
PTS #115348 CCF# 221062

Property 1101 W HISTORIC MITCHELL ST. **Mitchell Street Historic District**

Owner/Applicant	BBE Investments & Development LLC Zuwena Cotton 731 N. Jackson Street Suite 501 Milwaukee, WI 53202	BBE Investments & Development LLC Zuwena Cotton 731 N. Jackson Street Suite 501 Milwaukee, WI 53202
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Proposal

The applicant proposes to build a five-story mixed use structure that will include 18,380 sf of useable commercial space as well as four floors with 55 residential apartments. Parking will be located at 1718 N. 12th Street. The building's name will be The Encore with a nod to the past in its Art Deco/Art Moderne styling and a nod to the future in helping anchor the west end of the district.

The primary façades are along Mitchell Street and South 11th Street. The proposed building is designed in a traditional manner with a one-story base supporting four stories above. There are six bays on Mitchell Street and thirteen along South 11th Street, the bays defined by vertical piers. Each bay has a pair of windows or a trio of windows or a three-part window. The main entrance is centered on Mitchell Street with black brick framing a three-part window at each story. The very center extends above the parapet and features a stylized keystone-like element, reminiscent of the main entry of the 1937 façade built for The Grand. Each pier stops short of the parapet and has an ornament as well as a light fixture at this location. On the South 11th Street side, the parapet extends up beyond the wall at two locations to emphasize entrances below.

The west elevation is U-form in plan with a recreation area for the tenants that includes a pergola. Apartments facing this recreation area have balconies.

The south elevation is plain and features no windows. At its black base there is a full-light glass door and three large windows to illuminate the interior. The alternating pattern of light and dark brick and stone continues.

In determining whether the proposed building fits the character of the historic district, the following guidelines for new construction are to be examined: **Siting, Scale, Form, Materials.**

1. SITING--The proposed building follows the traditional siting of buildings within the Mitchell Street Historic District and is set up to the sidewalk at each of its two principal elevations. Its major entrance faces Mitchell Street. Side entrances are located along South 11th Street.

2. SCALE--While most of the buildings along Mitchell Street are two or three stories in height, there is precedent for a few taller buildings that intersperse the smaller ones. They typically represent the expansion of existing businesses on the street (Kunzelmann-Esser) or the presence of chain stores (Sears, J. C. Penney). Most of these taller buildings were constructed in the early 20th century and demonstrate Mitchell Street's thriving and healthy commercial life.

Three story buildings include:

- 1135 W. Historic Mitchell, the former Penney's store
- the former Sears Building with taller tower (now grocery and storage)
- 710 W. Historic Mitchell, the former Kunzelmann-Esser building with 8-story tower addition (original use for the furniture business now converted into apartments)
- 632-634 W. Historic Mitchell, today's Women's Care Center (former bank)
- Dollar General new construction
- 550 W. Historic Mitchell, Queen Anne style commercial block
- 529 W. Historic Mitchell, Witkowiak Funeral Home
- St. Stanislaus Church towers
- St. Anthony Church steeple

Four story buildings are fewer in number:

- 605 W. Historic Mitchell, Juneau Theater Building (recent conversion into residential)

- 906 W. Historic Mitchell Hill Building (now Milwaukee Public Library and residential)
- 1030 W. Historic Mitchell (former Schuster/Gimbel Building)
- Modjeska Theater rear auditorium

[The Encore will have 55 apartments while current zoning allows for 28. The applicant went before BOZA on Thursday December 1st and was granted her variance conditional on the HPC approving the demolition of the historic building]

At 5 stories the Encore will be taller than most other mixed-use buildings on the street except for Kunzelman-Esser's eight-story tower and the church towers of St. Anthony's and St. Stanislaus. The Encore will be double the size of The Grand.

Its large size, height, and depth, make it over-scaled for the district. The 11th Street façade is too simple. It needs cleaner vertical lines that are suited to the smaller form of side street buildings and elevations. Even the largest buildings on Mitchell Street do not maintain a continuous height or single façade this far back from the commercial corridor.

3. FORM--The basic massing of the Encore is more or less compatible with surrounding buildings. It features the same rectangular shape, the flat roof, commercial first story, and ordered fenestration as the other larger buildings on the street. The massing on the 11th Street side is a notable exception. While there is a repeating rhythm of columns and recesses, it still reads as monolithic. It lacks a balance of solids and voids that windows alone cannot solve.

4. MATERIALS--The proposed building features traditional materials used in traditional ways, with the exception of the windows. There is brick for the walls and stone accents. The colors pick up the grays and blacks from the Deco/Moderne period. An unusual feature is the subtle striping achieved from alternating bands of light grey brick and light grey stone. Dark charcoal brick and black brick are used for the ground floor.

Windows need detailed comment. On the ground floor, the storefronts should have a continuous transom detail. The presence of transoms only at the entries creates an appearance of a building that has been remodeled over time. While this can be considered compatible with the district, staff does not believe this is an ideal visual effect. A consistent transom line should carry across the whole ground floor. Relatedly, entry doors should be changed to ¾ lite so that the glass of the door lines up with that of the bulkhead and bulkhead heights should also be consistent. It is unclear why the bulkheads are doubled in height for the corner bays.

The three panel windows are oversized and need to be narrowed. They should not be the entire width of the structural bays. Thicker mullions are also needed. The method of operation of the windows is unclear. Some appear as if they are designed to be slider windows. Slider windows are not compatible with an historic area. Commercial metal windows of most other opening methods and in the proposed black frames are reasonable and acceptable.

Staff comments

Development on Mitchell Street traditionally has been the construction of retail buildings with some residential or professional offices above. The current proposal is almost a reversal of that format. The large number of apartments and small number of retail/professional offices has this building read as an apartment building instead of a commercial building with some residential on the upper floor(s). It meets the letter of the guidelines but not the spirit. Staff finds the following items need additional detail or modification:

- Stronger parapet
- Defined belt course to define first story and upper building
- Storefronts need consistent transom
- Storefronts at end of north elevation and east elevation differ from rest
- Striation in alternating brick and stone not characteristic of Mitchell Street
- Slider windows and vinyl windows not appropriate in historic districts
- Need canopy details
- Need lighting details
- Need samples of materials
- Modification of the S. 11th Street façade.

Recommendation

Hold over for modifications

Conditions

Previous HPC action

Previous Council action