



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 8/2/2021
Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4
Staff reviewer: Tim Askin
PTS #115153 CCF #210395

Property	210 E. MICHIGAN ST.	East Side Commercial
Owner/Applicant	GRAND AVENUE CLUB INC 210 E MICHIGAN ST MILWAUKEE WI 53202	Grand Avenue Club 210 E. Michigan St. Milwaukee, WI 53202

Proposal Retain EIFS that was installed in 2017 without a COA.

Mothball status is requested because of known other masonry problems that have greater priority for building function.

Staff comments

EIFS is a longstanding controversy throughout the construction industry, and while some architects and builders respect, it is often not a good choice. While it has some validity in new construction, it is never a good idea as a retrofit. New Orleans explicitly prohibits its use on historic buildings. "One of the significant problems with EIFS is that it does not "breathe" and can trap moisture within the wall thickness. This can lead to powdering or melting of soft lake bricks and rotting of wood sills and framing. If the problem persists, mold and mildew can develop in the building, providing a desirable home for termites." While Milwaukee is not known for termites, we do have similar situations with famously soft brick and wood rot proceeds no differently in our climate, except perhaps slightly slower. In addition to the water problems, it is visually incongruent with a requirement for control joints that create the look of a panel system.
[\(https://www.nola.gov/hdlc/documents/07_masonry-stucco-2015-04-24/\)](https://www.nola.gov/hdlc/documents/07_masonry-stucco-2015-04-24/).

It is likely that the EIFS is creating problems of its own, much like the painting of brick, EIFS is often used to cover over unsightly brick work rather than trying to solve the underlying problem ([EIFS over brick: Should you do it? – JK Industries, Inc. \(jkirestoration.com\)](#)). While the GAC undoubtedly engaged in a good faith effort here to preserve their building as directed by a contractor, it was not sound building science. The EIFS was applied to a highly damaged wall of cracking plaster and bare brick. While we can assume some restoration and cleaning work was done in the installation process, we do not know how thorough it was, just that there were already problems with the wall. My predecessor Mr. Jakubovich was insistent and issued two COAs to repair the wall with lime plaster.

Recommendation Recommend HPC Denial

Conditions Standard masonry conditions per next page.

Previous HPC action

**Previous Council
action**

Standard Masonry Project Conditions

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 must match as closely as possible the color texture, size, and finish of the original brick.

A sample panel of brick and 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.

Masonry Cleaning

Abrasive cleaning methods are prohibited on historic buildings by Wisconsin state law. Exceptions can only be granted in writing by the Wisconsin Historical Society. Chemical and power-washing are acceptable methods of cleaning that the city can approve. Pressure at the nozzle is not to exceed 800psi, 400-600psi is usually adequate for cleaning, though it may take more time and more passes than higher pressures.

1. Pressure washing of historic buildings is limited by state law and known best practices. Pressure washing is to be conducted **ONLY** with fan tips with a spread of 15-50 degrees, maximum 800psi at the tip, flow rate less than 8gpm, and from a distance from the surface of a minimum of 12" inches.