



## Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

**HPC meeting date: 1/10/2021**  
**Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4**  
**Staff reviewer: Tim Askin**  
**PTS #115231 CCF #211403**

**Property** 3138 W. KILBOURN AV. Tthigwe Building (Gymnasium) Concordia Campus

**Owner/Applicant** THE USA IN TRUST FOR FOREST COUNTY POTAWATOMI COMMUNITY Forest County Potawatomi Community  
3215 W. State Street Suite 300  
Milwaukee, WI 53208

**Proposal** Demolish the 1950s pool addition and adjacent sunken loading dock at the north end of the older college gymnasium. Restore original north façade, which is partially intact inside and construct accessible entrance at NE corner.

Landscape drawings were included with the application, but not mentioned in the narrative and the application was found to be incomplete as to the landscaping project. The landscaping project is also subject to significant additional review by the City Plan Commission. Landscape components are therefore not before us currently.

**Staff comments      Demolition**

Demolition Criteria for Concordia:

1. *Condition.* This only refers to imminent health and safety situations. While the parapet is in dangerous condition, it is the only portion in true risk of imminent collapse. Safety repairs could be made. This criterion is not met.
2. *Importance.* The pool addition is of some historical consequence in the of Concordia College on this site. It shows their efforts to expand and improve facilities at this location before ultimately abandoning the campus. There is no architectural significance to the pool addition.
3. *Location.* In photographs the massing appears generally compatible. Viewed in person, it is an awkward and bulky mass that modestly detracts from the streetscape.
4. *Potential for Restoration.* Exterior restoration is possible. Restoration would be expensive and possibly impractical. After the college moved out, the campus buildings were neglected for some time as both abandoned property and eventually poorly maintained by tenants. Additionally, alterations to the ceiling level, humidity, and pool chemicals have caused severe damage to the brick of the pool wing. Original use at this point may be impossible. The pool was substantially filled in. Brick on the original gymnasium portion is in substantially better condition and primarily needs repointing and parapet repair with less need for brick replacement.
5. *Additions.* The addition was a sincere effort at matching the style and character of the original structure. However, it failed to be compatible in massing or siting. The addition is approaching 70 years of age, it does not appear to constitute a character-defining feature of the main gymnasium or have acquired individual significance within the context of the campus.
6. *Replacement.* This will substantially be discussed below, however, the portion of the plan to be reviewed today is rehabilitation of the original north facade that partially survives within the existing structure. It will include a new, small accessible entrance within the design scheme used for other 21<sup>st</sup> century modifications on the historic campus buildings.

The demolition criteria in ordinance are substantially similar to the district guidelines. All relevant points in the ordinance are covered in the above discussion.

Staff finds that at least four of the six demolition criteria have been met, those being numbers 3-6. Not all criteria must be met, therefore the Commission may approve demolition.

**Staff comments      Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, and Repairs**

The proposal for the new north façade is based on historic photos, original drawings, and surviving structure. A new entry is designed in the same vocabulary as other approved, modern interventions and additions on the campus. It is therefore similarly appropriate to this building.

Significant repairs are proposed to the masonry of the building. The architects and owners have previously demonstrated compliance and competence with best practices in this area in other recent projects on the campus. The repairs should be approved as submitted, applying our standard masonry project conditions.

Windows are not discussed in the application. It is not clear if they are surviving or will be replaced. This should be further discussed with staff before selecting a final product. Original windows should be maintained where extant.

**Recommendation** Recommend HPC Approval with conditions

**Conditions**

1. Work with staff on window details to be match the details of other approved windows in use throughout the historic buildings on the campus.

2. Standard masonry 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.**

**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 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. PSI of 400-600 is typically adequate, though it may take more time and more passes than higher pressures.

**Previous HPC  
action**

**Previous Council  
action**