



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date

7/1/2024

CCF # 240290

Ald. Bauman

Staff reviewer: Tim Askin

Property

534 N Water St

East Side Commercial HD

Owner/Applicant

Motiya & Hezron Lopez

Proposal

The owner would like to update the non-historic storefronts with a new aluminum system. There is also a request to replace all the upper floor front windows.

Staff comments

Historic documentation of this building is surprisingly thin for an 1840s building. It appears to have been little photographed and have limited historical narrative available. An early sketch and photo do provide sufficient evidence for what was present. There was a typical 19th century recessed center entry single storefront with columns providing structural support for the façade at the outside corner of the recess.

There is little, if any trace of this in the present two storefront system that likely dates to the middle of the 20th century. Reverting to a single center entry storefront would require a significant investment in structural alterations. However, tweaks can be made to the present aluminum proposal to get it more in the spirit of a 19th century store without asking for a significant change or significant additional expense. The doors should be changed to a $\frac{3}{4}$ light with a bottom panel roughly the same height as the bulkhead. Such doors do exist as standardized items with storefront manufacturers.

The cladding material of the bulkhead needs to be clarified. Drawings state the cladding will be replaced, but not the replacement material. A flat, paintable surface is suggested. The original bulkhead was highly decorated. In the sketch, the design appears to be repeated pattern of vertically elongated hexagonal cartouche containing a one stylized oak leaf in each. The photo seems to indicate something more elaborate in cast iron, but that is beyond the scope of this project. The owner should do some sort of surface decoration, a stencil of the owner's choice would suffice.

The request for new windows on the upper floors is not ready to be reviewed. We have before us aluminum clad windows that match the current windows. The current windows do not match the documented historic windows. After some discussion, the owner believes replicas of the original windows better suit her needs and is amenable to postponing this issue to next month or for approval to continue to work with the staff on all-wood replicas of the original windows, which are one-over-two cottage sash on the middle floors and one-over-one arch top windows on the top floor. The top floor windows do need to be replaced with true arch top windows where the wood of the top sash fits within the original window opening. Currently rectangular windows are proposed.

Recommendation

Approve with conditions.

Conditions

1. No bare metal finish or clear anodized finish. Require a paint or enamel finish on the aluminum surfaces. Decorate the bulkhead surface in some manner. Artistic license is welcome, but a stencil will suffice.
2. Decorate the bulkhead zone and specify material.
3. Hold or allow staff approval of final upper floor window design