



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 7/7/2025
Staff reviewer: Andrew Stern

CCF # 250353
Ald. Perez

Property	501 W. Historic Mitchell Street	Mitchell Street Historic District
Owner/Applicant	St. Stanislaus Properties LLC 501 W. Historic Mitchell Street Milwaukee, WI 53204	

Proposal

The applicant is requesting approval to remove the outer wythe of Cream City brick and reface the building with a modern cream brick to match the appearance of the historic brick.

Staff comments

The Paul Noe Meat Market building, 501-503 W. Historic Mitchell, and Paul Noe Investment Building, 505 W. Historic Mitchell St., were acquired by St. Stanislaus Properties LLC in 2024 and the church has started a rehabilitation project for use as a parish center for the congregation. Additional phases of the rehabilitation will come to HPC in future months but at this time they are just seeking approval for the exterior brick.

501-503 W. Mitchell was designed by Alfred C. Clas and constructed in 1888. 505 W. Mitchell was designed by Ferry & Clas in 1904. The two buildings are located on one tax parcel and a portion of the party wall has been removed, connecting the two inner spaces. At some point after 2002, the entire brick surface of the buildings was covered with a cementitious material and painted. Prior to the painting of the entire building, sections of the exterior brick were painted with advertisements. No COA was issued for covering the building with a cementitious coating or painting the building and no records were found to indicate a violation was ever issued to the then property owner.

As part of the renovation project, Holton Brothers undertook spot removal of the exterior coating and paint to gauge the condition of the brick. They uncovered sections of brick on the east, west, and north (main) façade and found the brick is far too deteriorated to remain as the exterior sheathing. The brick appears to have been previously sandblasted and the hard face of most of the bricks has been removed. The cementitious coating is also showing signs of deterioration, with cracking and spalling evident throughout. The buildings are solid masonry construction, rather than brick veneered.

The applicants are proposing to remove the first wythe of brick and reface the building with a modern cream-colored brick. They have selected a brick that has a rough finish, rather than smooth pressed brick-style face. This more closely aligns with the historic appearance of common Cream City brick.

The preservation guidelines for masonry in the historic district state:

- (i) Unpainted brick or stone should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering natural stone and unpainted brick. This is likely to be historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
- (ii) Retain painted masonry surfaces. Removal of paint could cause irreversible damage to the masonry. If it is decided to remove the paint from masonry surfaces, use the gentlest method possible.
- (iii) Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or not used when the building was constructed.
- (iv) Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting brick or stone surface is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products that could

- have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone or marble.
- (v) Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed, such as artificial cast stone or fake brick veneer.

Though the guidelines recommend leaving painted masonry painted, that is not possible here given the deteriorated nature of the top coating and the underlying brick. A salvaged Cream City brick would be the closest match to the original brick, though salvaged brick can vary widely in condition, color, and availability. Based on the photo sample provided by Holton Brothers, the new replacement brick "duplicates the old material as closely as possible," which satisfies the preservation guidelines requirement.

Recommendation

Recommend HPC Approval with Conditions

1. 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/stone/terra cotta must match as closely as possible the color texture, size, and finish of the original.

A sample panel of the masonry materials and their 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.

2. Powered 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.

Conditions

Previous HPC action

Previous Council action