



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 2/8/2021
Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4
Staff reviewer: Tim Askin
PTS #115057 CCF #201074

Property	2001 W. VLIET ST.	McKinley School Complex and Playground
Owner/Applicant	CITY OF MILW 809 N BROADWAY MILWAUKEE WI 53202	Quorum Architects on behalf of Gorman & Co.

Proposal Gorman and Quorum propose a very comprehensive rehabilitation of the school complex. The school has been neglected for a long time and substantial work is necessary to make it habitable and attractive. I will summarize their submission's main points.

Masonry. Painted in the 1970s and in need of substantial repair now. It is unclear whether the paint contributed to the decay. Applicants propose overall repointing and repainting with a color that will restore the cream city look color. While we do permit painting of previously painted brick buildings, care should be taken to test permeability of existing conditions and with the selection of new paint based on its permeability to mitigate future damage. Mortar will have to be the softest possible (Type K) for the brick to withstand multiple layers of paint.

Roof. Current roofing is a severely deteriorated 3-tab shingle on peaked roofs and various membranes on flat areas. Per historic maps, the original roof was classed combustible and therefore likely wood shingle. Modern architectural composition shingles are proposed in a wood tone along with new membrane roofs in flat areas. Additionally, per NPS/WHs requirements, dormers will be roofed in traditional cedar shingles as a nod to the original roofing. This is acceptable as proposed.

Gutters: The oldest portion of the building complex has built-in gutters lined with plated steel. Coating with EPDM is proposed. While this is allowable, it is preferable to replace with galvanized steel gutters. Membrane lining is a fix that generally can only be performed once or twice before built-in gutters become too shallow to function.

Cupolas/Dormers: repair to original conditions (albeit with architectural shingle roofs)

Doors: As we have come to expect from school properties, few exterior doors are original. Openings in the 1884 building will have one set of exterior doors repaired while replicas based on this set will be installed where necessary.

North Entry: A new north entry will be created in alcove presently filled in by a connector to the 1950s edition. Both NPS and this body have determined that nothing related to the 1950s addition is significant. The proposed new entry is line with other connector features approved at other sites, including the Concordia campus.

Windows: The terms of the designation specifically require all wood windows. Most windows are proposed to be replaced with aluminum replicas. There are services that can provide full lead abatement on existing wood windows to HUD standards while restoring them to complete functionality. Complete obliteration of historic material is neither recommended nor required in HUD's lead abatement standards for historic buildings. Above and beyond paint removal, encapsulation also qualifies as abatement. "HUD recommends that all lead-based paint professionals and housing agencies should consider interim controls on historic properties instead of abatement if feasible and permissible" (<https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/LBPH-06.PDF>). Replica wood windows can be accepted in locations where windows can be demonstrated to be beyond repair. A cost comparison should also be provided if aluminum windows are to be pursued in any original openings. (<https://www.fcgov.com/historicpreservation/costcalculator> or equivalent)

Demolition: The boiler chimney and substantial portions of the boiler room and coal bins will be demolished. These demolitions appear to meet the criteria for demolition in the designation.

Landscaping

Landscaping is layout is substantially dictated by the zoning code. Designers have some discretion in selection of particular species and fence styles. There is only one concern, the chain-link fence on the south end of the property. This fence should be the same quality as other fencing on the site. All fencing needs to be reviewed for specific compliance at the time of permitting. The landscaping is satisfactory to HPC staff and trusts the judgment of the designers on plant selection.

Staff comments

February Commentary on Windows

A full condition report on windows has since been provided. The average window was in fair condition at best. Lead paint is expected on windows of this age, but in this case there was also high asbestos content in the glazing putty. Both can be remedied simultaneously in certain offsite processes, but that presumes a better baseline condition of windows and fewer of them being missing entirely.

The proposed window products have been accepted in other school to residential conversions in the tax credit program. Those projects were not under our jurisdiction.

Given the explicit written terms of the designation staff cannot recommend approval of aluminum windows in the historic buildings at this property. References to the ordinance are presented as an **appendix** for Commission review of whether the windows can be approved in spite of the guidelines for the property.

Recommendation

Recommend HPC Approval on all issues except windows and chain link fence. The Commission has discretion on windows that the staff does not.

Conditions

Previous HPC action

Previous Council action

Ordinance considerations

g-1. Whether the proposed work would destroy or adversely affect any exterior architectural feature of the improvement upon which the work is to be done or adversely affect the external appearance of other improvements on the site or within the district.

a. Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for a property which requires minimal alteration of the exterior of a building, structure or site and its environment.

b. The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure or site and its environment shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.

c. All buildings, structures, and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier or later appearance shall be discouraged.

d. Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected.

e. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize a building, structure or site shall be treated with sensitivity.

f. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. If replacement is necessary, the new material shall match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features shall be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historic, physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different elements from other buildings or structures.

g. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials shall not be undertaken without a certificate of appropriateness.