



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 12/8/2025

Staff reviewer: Andrew Stern

Property 2320-2338 N. Lake Dr.

CCF #251226

Ald. Brower

St. Mary's Hospital

Owner/Applicant Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital
2301 N. Lake Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53211

Proposal

The applicant is seeking removal of an external elevator shaft.

Staff comments

St. Mary's Hospital was designed by the Buffalo, New York firm of Esenwein & Johnson and constructed 1908-1910. The hospital was locally designated in 2002. The applicants are seeking to remove an external elevator shaft from the north façade of the building, in the interior of the U-shaped portion of the building.

The demolition of the elevator shaft will be considered using the guidelines St. Mary's Hospital:

1. **Condition Demolition requests may be granted when it can be clearly demonstrated that the condition of a building or a portion thereof is such that it constitutes an immediate threat to health and safety and is beyond hope of repair.**

The photos provided with the application show considerable deterioration, separating of the brick, corrosion of the steel members, and major cracks in the masonry. Six of the steel braces are broken and detached.

2. **Importance Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance or displays a quality of material and craftsmanship that does not exist in other structures in the area.**

The elevator shaft appears to be a later addition and is utilitarian in design.

3. **Location Consideration will be given to whether or not the building contributes to the neighborhood and the general street appearance and has a positive effect on other buildings in the area.**

The elevator shaft is in the center of the U-shaped portion of the building and is not visible from the right of way. A 1951 addition to the hospital at 2350 N. Lake Dr. further obscured the elevator shaft, through this addition has since been demolished.

4. **Potential for Restoration Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair.**

The elevator shaft could be reconstructed in full, though the elevator is no longer in use and reconstruction would be unnecessary.

5. **Additions Consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed demolition is a later addition that is not in keeping with the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character.**

No building permits were located for the elevator shaft, though the applicants indicated it likely dates to the 1950s.

Recommendation

Recommend 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.

Conditions

Previous HPC action

Previous Council action