

Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission
Staff Report



HPC Meeting Date: 10/01/2018

Ald. Bauman District: 4
Staff Reviewer: Tim Askin & Carlen Hatala
PTS#114620 CCF#171155

Property	511 N. Broadway	East Side Commercial Historic District
Owner/Applicant	511 N Broadway LLC 225 E Michigan St #200 Milwaukee, WI 53202 joshua@jeffers.com 414-501-5610	J Jeffers & Co 225 E Michigan St #200 Milwaukee, WI 53202 joshua@jeffers.com 414-501-5610

Proposal This is a revision of a project previously presented to the Commission in December 2017. The revised project consists of constructing a nine-story mixed-use retail and office building with a significant aboveground parking component at the northwest corner of Clybourn and Broadway. The Commission previously approved this footprint and a seven-story height, but requested that the applicant return with specific materials and design revisions.

The ground floor of the Clybourn elevation will feature a full width, two-story storefront with a separate storefront on Broadway. North of the Broadway storefront will be the office building lobby followed by the parking entrance. Roughly 60% of the first and second floors will be covered parking and all of the third and fourth floors will be parking. The upper floors are dedicated to office space.

The proposed building is massed to provide a strong corner bookend for both Clybourn and Broadway. The proposed form is set back from the historic Mackie building to allow for continued exposure of natural light for the ballroom's feature windows and maintains an appealing view corridor to the clock tower.

Staff Comments This property has been surface parking in the East Side Commercial Historic District since at least 2004. Several properties on this land were lost to fire and unrelated structural deficiencies after the creation of the district.

This design is a noticeable improvement over the previous version, even with the added height. Allusions to other recent developments in the city are more subtle and reflect a more and reference different works than the previous proposal. There is a definite influence of E-A's design for the Humboldt/Brady project in some of the masonry detailing while the choices of metal cladding hint at the Bucks Arena and Live Block designs.

The proposal outlines historic context as reference for inspiration and material choice. Staff feels this has been achieved in the masonry-clad areas. Staff has design concerns primarily about the metal-paneled areas.

Metal on primary elevations

The setback in the northeast corner has an abrupt change in materials and fenestration. The switch from masonry with rhythmic fenestration to metal panels with arrhythmic windows is an extreme contrast. By changing both, the change calls attention to itself in a way that should be de-emphasized on a secondary portion of the primary elevation. The surrounding buildings decrease their detail as they rise higher, this design increases detail as it goes upward by virtue of maximizing contrast. Staff believes either the masonry should be continued or the fenestration pattern should be continued up for the full height. Continuing the fenestration pattern vertically is likely the best of these options.

West and North Walls

The west wall has an irregular pattern of equal height windows along its southern two-thirds with vertically stacked windows at the north end. The boundary between the two patterns is

abrupt and jarring. The irregular spacing should be continued across the whole elevation or scrapped for a more rhythmic pattern. The north wall is fully blank where it faces the Mackie Building and should have some fenestration on its west half.

Above Ground Parking

Staff has significant concerns about the night appearance of the parking levels. As an office, there should be little use after dark, but the visibility of car shadows onto the translucent glass would be an unacceptable appearance.

Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that additional new construction be designed to harmonize with the character of the district.

1. Siting: New construction must reflect the traditional siting of buildings in the district. This includes setbacks, spacing between building, and the orientation of openings to the street and neighboring structures.

The siting is nontraditional, but leaves substantial sightlines to the historic buildings surrounding it. This criterion is met and was fixed and settled in December.

2. Scale: Overall building height and bulk, the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof, and individual building components such as overhangs and fenestration must be compatible with the surrounding structures.

The building is tall at 9 stories and 112' at the bottom of the parapet. The parapet height is unknown. It pushes the outer limits of what should be acceptable in this historic district, but does not quite cross that line. The major building divisions on the masonry portions street-facing facades are harmonious, rhythmic, and generally fit the district, excepting the corner projection, which appears as an entirely separate building.

Windows in the masonry sections have been refined to be less disruptive to the rhythm and verticality and their dimensions work with the scale. Nonetheless, the number of window types has increased from the previous proposal's 15 to over 20 now. The secondary elevations could be considered overly plain with an entirely blank north wall. Revisions are recommended.

3. Form: The massing of new construction must be compatible with the surrounding buildings. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from the main block must express the same continuity established by the historic structures.

The form is essentially rectangular with a major setback from the northeast corner. Windows in the masonry sections are grouped in a way that is reflective of the surrounding buildings. It attempts to tie together the verticality of the Romanesque Button Block with the horizontality of the Mackie Building. Window patterns in the metal-panel clad areas are of extraordinary contrast to those in the masonry sections. It is notable that towers are prominent features of the large historic buildings on this block and that feature is absent here. The essential form meets the intent of this criterion.

4. Materials: The building materials that are visible from the public right-of-way should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials traditionally used in the district. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.

Previous concerns about texture have been resolved with the submission of a full suite of cladding materials and sections this time. Natural masonry and shadow effects enhance the street-facing elevations. Sections reveal a flatter surface than hinted at by the elevations, but windows within the masonry can be confirmed as recessed and not flush. This is a recommended and appropriate detail for a building in a historic district. The staggered line of header bricks may not be the most successful detail as shown by the Humboldt/Brady project. This detail may function better as unbroken lines. Continuity is lacking at the projecting corner; this must be addressed.

Materials on the masonry portions of the street-facing elevations are satisfactory as proposed. Where the metal panels and storefront systems become dominant at the SE corner, they create a discontinuity not found in the neighboring historic buildings. The dark color and heavy glass at the south elevation are also likely to create heat issues in this projecting area.

Secondary elevation (west and north) materials are acceptable, but their arrangement may need adjustment. The Cordova stone synthetic stone product was previously approved for the St James apartment tower in certain limited finishes. (The St. James apartment tower addition has been cancelled by the developer). The Cordova can again be accepted here under the same conditions for these secondary elevations and the parking entrance. Staff also feels that metal paneling will create an odd view from the neighboring historic buildings. Full height Cordova stone in two different colors or textures may be a better solution. This criterion is not fully met.

All of these guidelines lead to a few essential questions for the Commission to consider:

1. Does the proposed new construction support and enhance the historic district or detract from it?
2. How can the compatibility be clearly outlined and defined? What makes this building compatible? How is it different from a building that could be placed elsewhere downtown and not in this historic district?
3. Compatibility and differentiation are not mutually exclusive and one should not be prioritized over the other. Do these two considerations strike the right balance?

Recommendation Staff is satisfied with the general layout, footprint, and height, but has concerns about compatibility, great number of window types, secondary cladding, and secondary elevations.

Hold per conditions below

Conditions

1. More cohesive fenestration pattern on west wall
2. Add fenestration to north wall.
3. Refine SE corner to tie it in to the design concept together more coherently.
4. Further address vehicle shadows and visibility of parking
5. Limit Cordova Stone to Chiselface, Rockface, and Groundface textures.
6. Consider requiring full height masonry on west and north walls
7. Consider significant alterations to cladding and fenestration of northeast corner setback
8. Submit drawings with thorough dimensioning of façade elements and heights.
9. Submit HVAC plans that include any proposed penetrations of the street-facing facades.

N.B.: Accessible parking spaces on 3rd and 4th floors appear exceedingly far from the elevator lobbies.

Previous HPC Action

Approval of footprint and 7-story height on 12/11/2017, CCF#171155.