



Department of City Development

City Plan Commission
Historic Preservation Commission
Neighborhood Improvement
Development Corporation
Redevelopment Authority

Rocky Marcoux
Commissioner

Martha L. Brown
Deputy Commissioner

July 20, 2009

Members of the Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee
Milwaukee Common Council
City Hall, Room 200

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing to provide background regarding file no. 090288. This file appeals a decision by the Historic Preservation Commission to confer interim historic designation on the property at 2625 S. Greeley Street, known today as "Hide House."

Hide House consists of multiple buildings constructed between 1898 and the mid-1940s. The Historic Preservation Commission conferred interim designation on a series of connected buildings and additions that fronts S. Greeley Street. However, in its report to the Historic Preservation Commission, the department recommended interim designation for only the original 1898 buildings (buildings 1, 2, 3 and 4) within that grouping. This recommendation was based on the following factors:

- 1) The most notable architectural feature of the grouping is the triangular "iron block" formed by the 1898 buildings. Local historic designation of these buildings (buildings 1, 2, 3 and 4) preserves that feature, and preserves significant physical evidence of the site's former manufacturing use. In contrast, the remaining buildings in the grouping are a series of additions that lack distinguishing architectural details or special historic significance.
- 2) The current property owner already has successfully renovated the original 1898 manufacturing buildings to accommodate a number of small businesses. The owner's analysis indicates that demolition of the later additions, which are more challenging candidates for re-use, would allow for new construction that will contribute to the financial health of the entire project, including the original buildings. Thus, removing part of the complex helps to ensure that the most significant buildings are preserved. Several major turn-of-the-century industrial complexes in Milwaukee have been redeveloped using this same strategy of preserving the most significant buildings, selectively demolishing less significant buildings, and introducing complimentary new construction. Successful examples of this approach include The Brewery (former Pabst Brewery), Schlitz Park (former Schlitz Brewery) and The Tannery.

Now that the decision is being appealed, and the Council considers a wider array of issues than does the Historic Preservation Commission, we call to your attention several policies contained within the Southeast Side Plan. The plan was adopted by the Council last year after many months of public participation, discussion and debate.

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The Southeast Side plan expresses a preference for re-use of industrial buildings, and also supports infill development which “has the advantages of using existing infrastructure, and lowering the demand and costs for land, infrastructure, energy, and maintenance.” The property owners have made a substantial investment to re-use the oldest buildings in the complex. Their proposed redevelopment approach combines building preservation with sensitive infill development, conforming to these principles.

The Southeast Side plan also recommends that future development “provide and maintain affordable housing choices for all residents.” The affordable housing proposed for a portion of the site implements this recommendation.

I will be present at the ZND meeting on July 23, 2009, to answer any questions you have about the Department’s perspective on this file.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Martha L. Brown".

Martha L. Brown
Deputy Commissioner