



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date	8/3/2026	CCF # 260410
Ald. Perez	Staff reviewer: Tim Askin	
Property	1101 W Historic Mitchell St	Mitchell Street
Owner/Applicant	Zuwena Cotton	Continuum

Proposal

Rehabilitate former department store into upper floor apartments, and daycare, retail, and community-serving spaces on the ground floor. The exterior work largely consists of repairs with few significant interventions.

Notable work includes:

1. Remove all existing exterior signage and patch related holes. None is historic to the building's department store era.
2. Clean and repair masonry with Prosoco products
3. Existing windows will be retained and repaired, replacing in kind to current conditions where necessary in the ground floor aluminum storefront system. There appear to be no original windows outside of the 1949 building.
4. Replace tinted spandrel glass in the storefront system with clear glazing.
5. Replace non-historic entry doors on the 11th Street façade of the 1949 façade.
6. Install five new aluminum frame hung windows on the alley façade of the 1949 building. There are no windows in this section presently. The location matches NPS best practices for adding windows on a secondary blank façade. Graham aluminum windows will be used. In a commercial building which is presumed to have had only metal windows since 1937, this is an acceptable product.
7. Repair roof deck. Install new membrane roof. Install 12 skylights to provide daylight to interior apartments.
8. Replace rooftop mechanicals. Equipment will be sited so as to avoid visibility from the Mitchell Street sidewalk, which has the additional benefit of avoiding the installation of safety railings.

Staff comments

The Grand Department Store is several combined buildings with numerous connections and remodelings. Pieces range from prior to permits in 1888, 1891, 1911, and an international style south addition from 1949. In 1937, the present Mitchell Street façade was constructed, using primarily natural limestone and synthetic black granite.

Staff has some concerns with the details of the masonry cleaning proposal. Prosoco Sure Klean Light Duty Concrete Cleaner is highly caustic. Acidic cleaners can be used on limestone, but only with great caution. Every effort should be made to attempt cleaning with water, light surfactant, and an antimicrobial before resorting to such chemicals. Black staining of the limestone should be tested for its composition before selecting any particular chemical treatment. Soot and biological staining are nearly indistinguishable to the naked eye and respond very differently to cleaning agents.

Recommendation

Approve with conditions

Conditions

1. Acquire masonry building cleaning permit. It is separate from the construction permits and is required.
2. The condition of the brick on 1949 façade on 11th Street is such that harsh chemical masonry cleaning is not indicated. No cleaning other than water and light surfactant should be performed on this section except for graffiti management as necessary.
3. Chemical cleaning of the stone lintels on the 1949 building may prove necessary.
4. When painting the previously painted brick on 11th Street, use a paint certified by the manufacturer as safe for brick.
5. High-powered abrasive cleaning methods are prohibited on historic buildings by Wisconsin state law. 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.