

April 26, 2023

To the honorable chair and commissioners:

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The Milwaukee Preservation Alliance encourages the Commission to support the proposal to deconstruct the Pabst Mansion Pavilion for the stated purpose of reconstructing the building in the future, with conditions as outlined below. While the preferred outcome in the case of any building with a compromised condition is restoration, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties does allow for reconstruction as a suitable treatment option in certain situations, such as when a historic resource is entirely gone or in such an extreme state of failure that other options such as preservation, restoration, or rehabilitation are not possible. In such situations, the Standards require that measures be taken "to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships." In addition, reconstructions should "be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence... A reconstructed property will re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic property in materials, design, color and texture."

In this case, we believe this is a rare instance when the proposed deconstruction and reconstruction as proposed is the best way to preserve the structure. As noted, the pavilion was not constructed to be permanent or outdoors. Therefore, a pure preservation solution is not in the long-term best interest of the pavilion. Further, evidence shows us that the pavilion has been deconstructed and moved multiple times in the past but continues to deteriorate. In this instance, we support the proposed solution to save as much original material as possible for reuse, scan the entire building so that all lost or unsalvageable materials can be replaced in kind, and reconstruct the pavilion in its original configuration with the stated hidden adjustments necessary for the building to survive long term outdoors.

It is important, however, that each of these elements of the proposal are upheld, and we encourage conditions to be placed on any approval to require the project to retain for reuse as much original material as possible, public facing replacement materials to be in kind, and a timeline to be placed on reconstruction (or regular progress updates be provided to the HPC). These conditions will ensure that the deconstruction does not result in a complete loss of the building's original materials, an inauthentic reconstruction, or a historic resource that remains in pieces in a warehouse. With these conditions, we encourage the commission to support the proposed COA.

Thank you for your hard work on behalf of the people and places of Milwaukee.

Respectfully,

Jeremy Ebersole
Executive Advisor
Milwaukee Preservation Alliance