

## **733 W HISTORIC MITCHELL STREET**

### **Request to Deviate from Performance Standards Within the Historic Mitchell Street Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Zone**

**March 8, 2024**

Voces de la Frontera has purchased a 2-story building located at 733 W Historic Mitchell Street, which is in the Historic Mitchell Street Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Zone. They are intending to build out the first floor of the space and are anticipating expanding the social services programming to the additional floors in the future. Their proposed use of the space is classified as a Social Service Facility. The zoning overlay regulates first floor uses and allows Social Service use provided the frontage does not exceed 30', 733 W. Historic Mitchell Street does encompass 60'-0" of frontage, which exceeds the maximum 30'-0" of street frontage. Because of this, a deviation to the overlay's performance standards is necessary.

Voces' proposed building renovation and change of use will utilize the street frontage of Historic Mitchell Street for their reception/ lobby/open gallery space aiming to re-activate the street level. They have kept all private uses to the rear of the building beyond the existing storefront windows. A floor plan has been included in this application that shows active uses along the street and the private uses to the rear of the building, away from the street activating zone. They recognized that it is the goal of the overlay district to re-activate the street level which is why they have maintained the openness to the street frontage and will have active uses along the street. The existing storefront windows will remain open and unobstructed. In addition to the re-activation of the street level with their lobby space, they intend to upgrade the exterior signage on the building. All other exterior building features will continue to be maintained by Voces de la Frontera as it is a historic building, and they want to ensure it remains preserved. In the future they intend to open the windows on the second level working with the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission to ensure that the windows best match what was original to the building.

Voces is currently located on 5<sup>th</sup> and Washington and is less than 1 mile from this proposed location. They provide many important services to the community. These services include, the New American program, citizenship classes, English as a Second Language Classes. Caminos In-House Legal Services, which offers free or



reduced fee legal services such as help filling out the citizenship application for individuals and family beneficiaries, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) renewals, LPR Green Card renewals, assistance with change of address, assistance with screening and assistance with asylum applications within the first year of arrival, assistance with Deferred Action for Labor Enforcement (DALE) recipients. Translation of documents. Pro-bono legal clinic with volunteer attorneys with a focus on immigration, criminal, traffic, and labor law. Their Worker Center offers ongoing one on one support for referrals to government agencies such as consumer fraud, labor violations, or humanitarian support for newcomers such as connecting new arrivals with organizations or agencies that provide shelter, food, clothing, helping families enroll kids in school or access health care and immigration related questions. They connect immigrants with volunteers or staff for court accompaniment to Chicago or local courts. They offer an Essential Worker Rights Network featuring monthly training on labor rights, leadership development opportunities, assistance filing labor rights complaints, advocacy, or collective organizing to enforce one's rights and dignity. The general membership meetings bring resources and information to the community and listen to community needs, share program updates, coordinate campaigns such as our statewide Drivers Licenses for All campaign, and organizational work such as planning for events. Lastly, the voting rights information is for new and existing voters such as voter registration, language access rights and polling locations.

Voces de la Frontera is seeking your support for the use of the building located at 733 W Historic Mitchell Street. Your support will help ensure Voces' continued dedication to improving the aesthetics of the neighborhood and, through their services, enrich the people in the community.



We feel this deviation meets the applicable criteria (as outlined in 295-311-9 of the zoning code) as follows:

1. The purpose of the overlay zone is met.

One of the main goals of the overlay district is to preserve and enhance the integrity of its commercial and retail corridor along the street level. The previous tenant of the space was a retail store that had much of the street facing frontage blocked with display cases not truly activating the frontage of the building. Voces de la Frontera is re-engaging the interior of the building at street level by leaving unobstructed views into space to welcome the public in to inquire about the services they offer the community. Also, as the owner occupant of the building they have an invested interest in the preservation and rehabilitation of the building structure itself as this is a long-term investment in the community that they serve.

2. The deviation improves the aesthetic of the site.

As previously mentioned, the building features great storefront windows along the street frontage. Voces will be allowing views into the space from the road by removing the existing display cases that currently block view. They have structured the space in a way that moves all private functions to the rear of the building beyond the exposed street frontage. They will be adding new exterior signage. As part of their planned expansion of social services into the second level of the space, they plan on restoring the second level windows as part of their continuous efforts to maintain the historic architecture of the.

3. If applicable, the deviation addresses one or more unique site factors that make application of the standard impractical.

As Voces will be moving out of their other rented spaces throughout the city and into this new building, they will need the space for services to continue to grow as their involvement in the community grows. By utilizing the street level for their reception area/open gallery, it allows the community to interact with the organization conveniently and allows for Voces to grow the rest of their operations away from the street frontage. Voces has plans for future the expansion of their operation to the second floor. This will make the entire building a hub for social services within the community.



4. The deviation is consistent with the comprehensive plan.

This site is within the Near South Side Plan area, which recognizes and supports the continuation of Mitchell Street to serve as a community-wide shopping district with a “high quality main street or downtown retail look and function,” although Voces’ does not function in a retail capacity, their storefront windows will maintain the aesthetic of the corridor. While this Social Service use is limited in the overlay zone’s use table, Voces de la Frontera has committed to maintaining a completely open and active street frontage along Historic Mitchell Street to allow an engaging space at this important corner of the district. All private uses that would require window coverings will be located at the back of the space, away from the street. The existing plan calls for maintaining a mix of retail stores and services at the street level. Voces de la Frontera adds to that mix of uses in a way that offers great services to the community.