



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 2/13/2017

Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4

Staff reviewer: Carlen Hatala and Tim Askin

PTS #114198

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| Property | 790 N. VAN BUREN ST. | |
| Owner/Applicant | TRUSTEES, ANCIENT ACCEPTED SCOTTISH RITE, VALLEY OF MILWAUKEE 790 N VAN BUREN ST MILWAUKEE WI 53202 | Mr. Kenneth Gowland METROstudio 6501 Spanish Fort Blvd New Orleans, LA 70124 Phone: (504) 283-3685 |
| Proposal | Construct curtain wall tower addition at south end, construct rooftop biergarten, and convert to hotel use. | |
| Staff comments | See attached | |
| Recommendation | Recommend HPC Approval with conditions | |
| Conditions | See attached | |
| Previous HPC action | | |
| Previous Council action | Permanent historic designation is at ZND and held at the call of the chair | |

The applicant is proposing to construct a new rooftop hotel tower at the Wisconsin Consistory / Humphrey Scottish Rite Masonic Center in addition to making modifications to the current historic building. These modifications are directly tied to the function of the proposed new hotel.

Outlined below are the major impacts to the historic building envelope that will occur in addition to the tower construction.

1) ENTRY CANOPIES

The existing entry canopy at the main entrance on Van Buren Street will be removed and replaced with a new steel and glass contemporary-flat style canopy suspended by metal cables. Two additional matching canopies will be placed above the entrances on East Wells Street. The steel will have a bronze finish.

2) SIGNAGE

Vertical banner signage will be installed flanking the proposed entry canopies. Steel signage supports, in a bronze finish, will be anchored into the masonry. The material of the signs themselves has not yet been indicated.

3) ROOFTOP TERRACE

The current flat rooftop area will be converted into a rooftop terrace. Access to this terrace will be from the Tower elevator lobby as well as an elevator / stair penthouse located immediately adjacent to the conical roof of the corner tower. This penthouse exists now and measures 10 feet tall by 18 feet in length. The new penthouse will stay at 10 feet tall but expand to 22 feet in length.

A new structural roof deck will be installed over the existing roof to accommodate new usage. There will be perimeter planters that accomplish several goals: rooftop activity will be kept from the parapet walls; rooftop activities will be screened from the street below; the plantings will provide an amenity for the users of the terrace. This planting area will be 3'6" wide. A biergarten / arbor will extend northward from the Tower core. The arbor will consist of steel posts in a black iron finish. Benches and table will be located below. There will be tensile awning fabric panels at the perimeter of the arbor and the center will be open. The food and beverage area will be located at the east end of the rooftop adjacent to the Tower lobby and will feature metal panel cladding at the back (east) and a glazed front facing the terrace. Window mullion color will match existing mullions.

4) REMOVAL OF STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

It is proposed to remove all of the stained glass windows on the first and second stories and relocate them to the interior.

5) MECHANICALS

There will be mechanicals located on the building both at the rooftop terrace and the rear or east elevation and on the rooftop near the south elevation. There will be various vents at the food and beverage pavilion, on the rooftop of the ceremonial chamber, behind the ceremonial chamber and along the alley or east wall where an existing mechanical platform will be reused. In addition, a new exhaust fan and stainless steel duct work will penetrate the east wall above the mechanical platform.

Mechanicals at the proposed new tower will be discussed elsewhere in the staff report.

6) RESTORATION OF EXISTING ENTRANCES

The three entrances each feature wood framed double doors surmounted by multi-part transoms. The doors have geometric leaded glass panels. The transoms showcase leaded glass depicting Masonic symbols. At the North Van Buren Street entrance, a part of the transom is currently obscured by signage. This signage will be removed. All entrances will be cleaned, woodwork restored, and the leaded glass will be restored.

7) MANSARD ROOF

The mansard roof, clad in variegated slate, will be repaired as needed and any new slates will match existing.

8) MASONRY CLEANING

Masonry cleaning will be done using the gentlest methods and following Secretary of Interior Standards. At the present time it is proposed to use PROSOCO products.

9) CONSTRUCTION ACCESS OPENING

A construction access opening will be cut into the east or alley elevation. It will be closed and returned to original condition upon the completion of the project.

STAFF COMMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS ON WORK THAT WILL IMPACT THE HISTORIC BUILDING

1) ENTRY CANOPIES

Staff has concerns both on the design and placement of the entry canopies. They are very stark and more suitable for an industrial building, say at the Pabst complex, and are not sympathetic to the design of the historic building. In addition, the canopies will span across the carved keystone above the entrance on Van Buren and across cut stone detail on the Wells Street entrances. Staff recommends that the architect and developer come up with some alternatives that work with the Tudor arch shape of the entrances, that not impact design features and that work better with the historic character of the building. Since the entrances are recessed (except for the Van Buren Street elevation which was recently modified) some thought could be given to removing the canopies entirely.

2) SIGNAGE

Staff has concerns about the placement and number and design of banner signs as proposed. Staff recommends that the architect and developer come up with some alternatives and a way to install signage that will minimize damaging the stone.

3) ROOFTOP TERRACE

The rooftop terrace appears appropriate in design and function and will provide an amenity that hotel guests will enjoy. Activities will be located away from the roof's edge and will not be overly visible when viewed from adjacent street locations. Having the north penthouse for the stair / elevator so close to the original conical tower is not ideal. A different location would be preferable if it is at all feasible to do so. However, the penthouse is located there now and responds to the internal circulation pattern. It will be clad in panels with a bronze finish.

4) REMOVAL OF THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

The stained glass windows depict images related to the history of the Masonic order and have been a recognized part of the exterior envelope of the building for many decades. Some were installed at the time the current façade was constructed, some were added later. The stained glass windows are located on the first two stories of the conical tower, in some of the openings on the second story of the Van Buren elevation and in some of the first story windows of the Wells Street elevation.

Staff does not recommend the removal of the stained glass windows and relocation to the interior. Future interior remodels could lead to their permanent loss. There is substantial visibility into the interior through the first story, clear glazed windows along the Van Buren elevation.

5) MECHANICALS

Mechanicals will require separate HVAC permitting once the project is nearing completion. Details of their appearance can be worked out with staff. Current proposed locations appear unobtrusive.

6) RESTORATION OF EXISTING ENTRANCES

Restoration of the three entrances is appropriate. Note: The Van Buren entrance was modified to allow for at-grade handicap accessibility.

7) MANSARD ROOF

Proposed work is appropriate. Any slate replacement to be reviewed by staff before installation.

8) MASONRY CLEANING

Applicant will work with staff on the gentlest and most effective way to clean the building. Test areas will be prepared and staff will approve before work can begin.

9) CONSTRUCTION ACCESS OPENING

Any construction-related temporary opening will be located on the east or alley elevation and returned to its pre-construction appearance.

CONSTRUCTION OF NEW HOTEL TOWER

The current proposal is to erect a glass curtain-wall tower, adding 15 stories atop the existing structure, near the south end of the building along with a rooftop secondary hotel lobby and beer garden. Atop the 15th floor will be an additional 12.5' of mechanical penthouse space, it will serve as strictly functional space with no public use. The tower is specifically sited so as to minimize harm to existing interior finishes and significant interior spaces. The intent is to preserve the shell in its entirety along with a large majority of interior spaces. This is very specifically not an exercise in façadism.

The building is set on a central core that bores through the existing structure along with a number of piloti around the outside edge of the tower. The bore through the structure goes through the backstage area of the auditorium within the structure. It is a structurally unimportant area and contains two floors of open-air volume. There will be loss of some third floor space and loss of heavily altered basement area.

The new construction will contain the majority of the spaces for the changed programming of the building.

Beginning at the rooftop of the existing structure is a central core structure that is clad in engineered stone in grey color to match the existing historic building below and ribbing/fluting to match details below. The proposed product is a panel manufactured by Stonelite. The core will be surrounded by a series of evenly spaced piloti inset from the edge of the tower to provide additional structural support. The piloti will be clad in an architectural aluminum with a bronze finish.

Curtain wall

The body of the tower is a curtain wall covering a dia-grid internal steel support structure. While the diagrid will be highly visible, it will not be exposed. It serves as a design element of the façade. An ultra-clear glass with a coating to maximize light transmission is proposed. Glass is intended to have a seamless design with a unitized structural silicone-glazed installation system for the glass panels. There will be subtle, angular undulations in the curtain wall creating a non-rectilinear structure for a contemporary appearance. Seams, if any, will be clad in an architectural aluminum with a bronze finish.

Rooftop

The rooftop is capped with a metal parapet, matching the bronzed aluminum material on the building in a smooth finish. At the center, is a mechanical area screened by an engineered stone panel product, matching that used at the base of the tower on the rooftop of the historic building. The stone will be ribbed/fluted to match the historic structure and the panels are of sufficient height to prevent any visibility of rooftop mechanical systems, which include a chiller plant, rooftop exhaust with booster fans and air intake. Based within the structural core will be a functional penthouse containing elevator mechanicals, rooftop stair access, a pump room, and various other building services.

Tower Floorplan:

The tower floorplan is not completely finalized except for general layout of the typical hotel floors. Given an increased floor height on the top floor, staff surmises that the layout of that floor may be substantially different. The inner core will consist of three elevator shafts and two staircases. The core is surrounded by an interior hallway without window access. Hotel rooms will be on the perimeter with the typical floor having twelve standard rooms and two large rooms for a total of fourteen per floor. Each room will have private bathroom facilities.

Top Floor Signage

Signage is proposed atop the curtain wall glass in backlit block letters on several sides of the building.

| Comments/Conditions |
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Overall, the design takes some inspiration from Norman Foster's Hearst Tower in New York City, but it is infinitely more sensitive to the existing building by preserving the majority of existing interior spaces. The Tower design appears generally approvable; additional design and material specifications are required before a COA can be issued. Staff would request a full 3D rendering and full size drawings to be submitted in paper.

Stone panel cladding should be considered for the piloti.

The signage concept on the Tower appears generally approvable; however, this will need to be addressed by a separate COA when the design and wording are finalized.

CONCLUSION

While the construction of a new hotel tower atop the Wisconsin Consistory / Humphrey Scottish Rite Masonic Center is a very dramatic change to the historic building staff finds this particular proposal is appropriate for a number of reasons:

The shell of the historic building and much of its unique interior spaces will be preserved and exterior areas in need of restoration will be addressed.

An observer can still read the historic building as it appears today.

The proposal has the Tower set back from the exterior walls of the historic building and it does not take up the entire footprint of the current rooftop.

The Tower itself is raised on pilotis above the rooftop and creates a visual separation from the historic building.

The Tower has a distinctive design and cladding which will lighten its appearance.

Staff concerns and recommendations are listed above. They center on matters of signage, canopy design and placement, historic leaded glass windows. Some elements like the HVAC systems and masonry cleaning will be later matters that can be worked out with staff.