



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 11/6/2017
Ald. Nik Kovac District: 3
Staff reviewer: Tim Askin
PTS #114405 CCF #170986

Property	1697 N. MARSHALL ST.	Brady Street Historic District
Owner/Applicant	CITY OF MILWAUKEE 809 N BROADWAY MILWAUKEE WI 53202	Scott Genke SG Property Development LLC 2534 S Kinnickinnic Ave, Suite 103 Milwaukee, WI 53207 Phone: (414) 745-4580 Johnsen-Schmaling Architects

Proposal

Construct three-story flat roofed building with deeply recessed third floor. The building will have a large commercial storefront area on the ground floor recessed behind flat brick piers. It is designed with the look of multiple storefronts divided by these piers, but it is expected to host just one commercial tenant. The individual bays are defined by bands of three-panel nana-walls (or similar) with bulkheads and transoms. Floors are further visually separated by a thin canopy that projects between the piers. The west end features a wooden entry area for upper apartments and a blank wall enclosing the stairwell.

The upper story has a rhythmic pattern of narrower and wider windows leading to a large corner window. The building is capped with an unarticulated stone cornice, a green roof, and a deeply recessed third floor that features a sheer glass wall. Windows undulate with 5" recesses into the brickwork and wood fins project from each of the larger windows.

Along Marshall Street is the commercial entry. It is recessed into the building against a projecting metal address panel that is connected to the overhanging canopy at a sharp right angle. South from here are three slit windows that run from bulkhead height to the projecting beltcourse. This is followed by a two-story green wall that serves to shield parking, mechanical, and trash areas from public view.

The third floor is very simply detailed, consisting of sheer glassy walls facing Brady and Marshall with a wood-clad roof and wood boundary areas between units. These boundary areas enclose half-baths and stairwells. A small, canopied area of the same wood faces Marshall. It is recessed from Marshall by 10 feet and from Brady by 20 feet.

Staff comments

This project is the summation of a RFP developed by the Department of City Development for this vacant corner lot at the intersection of Brady and Marshall. It was advertised twice with all responses from the first round being rejected. Two applicants (including this one) from the first round re-applied and were the only applicants for the second round. Of the two submissions in the second round, this was the clear winner. Additionally, the developer has an excellent track record with rehabilitation of historic properties.

Staff comments (cont.)*Brady Street Context*

Only eight buildings along the entire stretch of Brady Street have been built since 1939. Many buildings on west end in particular hide their historic nature under secondary cladding that obscures some of the true nature of the district. Nonetheless, the immediate area of the new proposal is among the more historically intact sections of the street.

Proposal

The building generally fits the site in scale. The third floor is sufficiently recessed and glassy to disappear from street level. The green roof may incorporate solar panels and is likely to be open to tenant use.

Materials consisting of brick and wood are appropriate to the district. Traditionally the Commission has been more flexible on commercial projects, allowing such things as *clad windows and stained wood*, where they are generally not allowed in residential projects. In this particular case, the stained wood is a significant part of the architectural composition and it should not be required to be painted. Clad and metal windows have been permitted in other mixed-use projects on Brady Street.

Apart from the scale and materials, the building is simply too much Snøhetta and too little Brady Street. Even so, the materials, from the color of the brick down to the green roof, heavy use of glass, and ornamental grass tufts bring ultra-modern Snøhetta to mind.

As a whole, the design draws too much attention to the new building and detracts from the historic fabric of Brady Street. The horizontal rhythm of the street, its continuous horizontal lines, and its prominent corner buildings are neglected by the current incarnation of this design. The corner disappears into glass rather than continuing to draw one's eye down the street. Raked horizontal mortar joints with flush vertical joints attempt to carry the street's horizontality, but they are overwhelmed by the extraordinary verticality of the windows, their accompanying fins, and the vertical slats at the entries. Carrying through of the street's lines is explicit in the Brady Street new construction guidelines (A.3).

Staff has prepared some lightly edited alternate proposals that indicate areas that could be improved. They should be treated as nothing more than quick sketches. The intent of these proposed alterations is to increase horizontality, emphasize the corner, and adjust proportions of features.

Overall, staff finds the project only meets two of four Brady Street new construction criteria: siting and materials. Modifications are required to achieve the standards outlined for scale and form, however, these can be achieved within the current form and materials. The full guidelines are appended to this report.

Staff believes the design is ultimately approvable, but requests further revisions from the applicant to bring it alignment with the new construction guidelines. These alterations are listed under conditions of approval.

Recommendation

Recommend HPC hold the file over for revisions and review again in one or two months.

Conditions

Return to Commission with new drawings and renderings showing requested changes enumerated below:

1. Provide down-angled perspective/axon drawing indicating more detail of third floor details
2. Indicate total building height, including third story
3. Include west side of Marshall Street in all revised materials.
4. Provide south and west elevations.
5. Reduce vertical proportions of windows on both floors. They are too large and too vertical.
6. A taller bulkhead is needed on the ground floor
7. A bulkhead should replace the lower windows and railings on the second floor. The windows are again too vertical. Retaining the proposed balconies with a solid wall matching the bulkheads is encouraged.
8. Create some minor articulation of the cornice to break up the massing. Something as subtle as carrying through the lines of the first-floor piers via the window recesses might suffice. Articulated cornices are a key feature of the street's context and character.
9. Carry bulkhead across the entire frontage of both streets, including doorways, vertically slatted areas, and blank walls.
10. Revise slit windows on Marshall elevation to de-emphasize verticality. In particular, consider shortening them to match the center glass height of the storefront areas.
11. Align horizontal lines of the building with the rest of the block (guideline 3).
12. Create horizontality that specifically draws the eye to the corner. The corner itself need not be further articulated, but the eye should be carried to it with strong horizontality. A greater visual presence of the corner would also be an appropriate echo of the turret across the street. Refer to staff sketches.
13. Recommend that any solar panels shall be placed on the green roof and be below parapet height. Having them at the roof edge would be an excellent barrier to public visibility of third floor.

Previous HPC action

Previous Council action

Appendix: Brady Street Guidelines for New Construction (1989)

It is important that additional new construction be designed so as to harmonize with the character of the district.

1. Siting
New construction must reflect the traditional siting of buildings in the Brady Street Historic District. This includes setback, spacing between buildings, the orientation of openings to the street and neighboring structures.
2. Scale
Overall building height and bulk; the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof; and, individual building components such as porches, overhangs and fenestration must be compatible with the surrounding structures.
3. Form
The massing of new construction must be compatible with the surrounding buildings. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from the main block must express the same continuity established by the historic structures.
4. Materials
The building materials that are visible from the public right-of-way should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials traditionally used in the Brady Street Historic District. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.