



Agenda Item #: 5

Project Title: 430 W Gilman Street - Major Facade Alterations in the Downtown Core District. (District 2)

Legistar File ID #: 88343

Members Present: Shane Bernau, Chair; Jessica Klehr, Rafeeq Asad, Harry Graham, Anina Mblinyi, David McLean, Davy Mayer, and Nicholas Hellrood

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of May 28, 2025, the Urban Design Commission **DENIED** a request to paint the masonry of the building located at 430 W Gilman Street, noting that the paint must be removed from the building. Registered and speaking in support Ziyun Li. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Ze Yu Yuan.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission inquired about the painting had been done noting that the original brick was stunning. The applicant noted that they wanted to refresh the building to be more consistent with the newer development on the block.

The Commission discussed methods of removal for the paint, and the importance of removing it from the soft mortar and vintage of the original masonry. The paint has to come off the building. This is not just an aesthetic issue, but a durability issue as far as the building's structural integrity.

The Commission noted that there was a similar situation at 417 State Street (formerly Grace Coffee Shop) where paint had to be removed, and it was successful; that at least points the applicant to another property owner that did it successfully. This brick is from the early 1900s, the mortar is a softer mortar, the paint will destroy the mortar and brick masonry, and if it gets bad enough, it will work its way into the wall. The paint really needs to come off. There is also a project on Monroe Street where a mural was applied improperly, they are having the same issue, and that is only four years old. It is before us as a durability issue, and an aesthetic issue as well.

The Commission noted that the question may not be why it happened, but what to do about it now.

The Commission inquired about whether a stain would be acceptable to the applicant, after the interior paint is removed. The Commission inquired about City resources being available for façade improvements in the future.

The Commission discussed their ability to approve painting of masonry, the inappropriateness of the materials used, and the Downtown Design Guidelines.

The Commission noted that the greater issue is not that the building was painted, but that it was not painted with the right paint.

The Commission noted their job is about looking at the design, as well as the materials, but not to design for the applicant. It would be necessary to return to the UDC with a new proposed design and materials, after the paint has been removed.

The Commission noted that this masonry is different than the masonry of today. It is softer and more porous, it was meant to breathe, dry, and not hold moisture. It would be best to remove the paint and not reapply it. The age of the brick is key, if it were a newer building it would not be such a big concern, but the older buildings are meant to hold the moisture. Today's brick is a completely different story, they are designed to shed water, not hold it.

The Commission noted that they looked at a car repair center on University Avenue that wished to paint the masonry. The UDC said no and maintained a general policy to not paint on brick. This also occurred at a tattoo place on University Avenue, where the owner painted over the brick. It was not a personal opinion, it was the UDC's decision. It goes to say, if you are going to have brick, don't paint it.

The Commission asked how long the paint has been up there, noting this is really a safety issue. Commissioner Mayer mentioned a building in Davenport, Iowa, that collapsed because it was painted with the wrong paint. The applicant noted that the paint has been there for about six months, and that they would be amenable to a stain option.

The Commission inquired about the side elevation and the type of paint used there, as well as how long that was painted. Depending on the type of paint used, that may need to be removed as well for safety reasons.

Alder Mayer thanked the applicant for taking an interest in improving the building.

Action

On a motion by Asad, seconded by Mayer, the Urban Design Commission **DENIED** the request for painting the building, noting the paint needs to be removed. The Commission noted that repainting or staining the masonry may be an option in the future, but that any future changes beyond removing the paint would need to return to the UDC for review and approval.

The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (7-0).