

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

May 20, 2019

PREPARED FOR THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION



Project Name & Address: 640 W Washington, Milwaukee Road Depot

Application Type(s): Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior alteration of a landmark

Legistar File ID # 55790

Prepared By: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner, Planning Division

Date Prepared: May 15, 2019

Summary

Project Applicant/Contact: James McFadden, McFadden & Company

Requested Action: The Applicant is requesting that the Landmarks Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed exterior alterations which include the enclosing of the existing platform and the alteration of some exterior features.

Background Information

Parcel Location/Information: The landmark site is located on West Washington Avenue and is situated adjacent to railroad tracks.

Relevant Ordinance Sections:

- 41.18 STANDARDS FOR GRANTING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS.** A certificate of appropriateness shall be granted only if the proposed project complies with this chapter, including all of the following standards that apply.
- (1) New construction or exterior alteration. The Landmarks Commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for exterior alteration or construction only if:
 - (a) In the case of exterior alteration to a designated landmark, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
 - (b) In the case of exterior alteration or construction of a structure on a landmark site, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
 - (c) In the case of exterior alteration or construction on any property located in a historic district, the proposed exterior alteration or construction meets the adopted standards and guidelines for that district.
 - (d) In the case of any exterior alteration or construction for which a certificate of appropriateness is required, the proposed work will not frustrate the public interest expressed in this ordinance for protecting, promoting, conserving, and using the City's historic resources.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Analysis and Conclusion

The Landmarks Commission approved a similar proposal in March 2017. That Certificate of Appropriateness has expired and the applicant has made modifications to their plans. The current proposal encloses the existing platform with an operable wall system on the track side and between the passenger depot and the baggage depot on the east side. The difference between what the commission previously approved is the introduction of solid walls at two locations along the track side. The remainder of the platform enclosure on the east side is half height windows with narrow horizontal siding below. The previously approved exterior exist stair is no longer necessary and the new design will utilize an interior stair. On the interior of the former passenger platform, the applicant is also proposing that two bathrooms serve as a divider between two functional areas of the passenger platform, which will also include a solid/opaque wall on the trackside of the new enclosure. The train cars in front of the building will be temporarily relocated during construction, but will return to their present location at the end of construction.

Previously the Landmarks Commission had emphasized their preference for the trackside of the passenger platform to continue to read as an open void. Staff has concerns for the introduction of solid walls on the track side as being contrary to interpreting the platform's historic associations.

A brief discussion of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards follows:

1. The historic depot was previously adaptively reused as commercial space and office space, which required minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships. This current request will expand the commercial space to include the platform and portions of boardwalk over the tracks. The distinctive historic materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships will largely remain.
2. The historic character of the property is being retained and preserved. The majority of the passenger platform is being interpreted as previously being open. Staff is concerned with the hard division of

spaces by a bank of restrooms where the previously approved proposal included clear partitions, which allowed those spaces to convey their historic associations of an open passenger area.

3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. The wall enclosure is expressed in a modern vocabulary so as to avoid a false sense of historical development.
4. Changes to the property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved. The train cars installed in front of the property are a change that has become significant, but the plan to temporarily relocate them and then reinstall them as structures on the tracks will allow for them to be retained.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize the property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Staff is not aware of any deteriorated historic features that will require work as part of this project.
7. Staff is not aware of any chemical or physical treatments that are proposed to be undertaken as part of this project.
8. Staff is not aware of any archeological resources on the site that that will potentially be disturbed as part of this project.
9. Previous staff worked with the applicant to ensure that the column brackets would not be impacted/altered with the new proposed glass enclosure system. The area where the two restrooms are now proposed appears that it would impact one of the brackets. The drawings do not indicate the proposed material of the low wall/sill of the enclosure system.
10. The glass enclosure system should be able to be removed in the future and not damage the historic materials. It is unclear is the restroom location that intersects a column and bracket will alter that feature.

Recommendation

Staff believes that the standards for granting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the exterior alterations of the landmark can be met and recommends that the Landmarks Commission approve the application with the following conditions:

1. The trackside enclosure of the former passenger platform return to the glass enclosure system that Landmarks Commission previously approved.
2. Rather than solid walls serving as partitions between the platform spaces, they be constructed of a material that is either clear or occluded so as to be able to convey light but support privacy between the spaces.