

STAFF REPORT 9-11-2019 MEETING
APPLICATION NUMBER 19-6429
ADDRESS: 25 W. ELIZABETH
HISTORIC DISTRICT: GRAND CIRCUS PARK
APPLICANT: MIKE KIRK
DATE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION: 9-5-2019
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 9-9-2019

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

SCOPE: REVISION TO PREVIOUSLY-APPROVED SCOPE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The project site includes a parcel that is located within the boundaries of the Grand Circus Park Historic District (25 W. Elizabeth) and a parcel that is directly adjacent to the district, 2047 Woodward Avenue. The parcel located within the district boundaries includes the building known as the “Stroh’s Annex” The Annex was constructed as a rear addition to the Stroh Tower/Michigan Mutual Building (which faces on to W. Adams Street). It is connected to the Stroh Tower/Michigan Mutual Building to the south across and alley by a bridge at stories 2-10. The annex building rises 10 stories in height and features a parking garage at the first four stories and office spaces at stories 5-10. The building has a rectangular footprint measuring 120’ x 90’. It is clad in buff-colored brick with aluminum ribbon windows at the north and south elevations. Red granite clads the first story exterior walls and a simple aluminum canopy at its northwest corner marks the entrance.

25 W. Elizabeth and 2047 Woodward, current conditions



PROPOSAL

The applicants appeared in front of this body at the 12-12-2018 regular meeting with a proposal to demolish the existing building at 25 W. Elizabeth, known as “The Annex”, and erect a new building at the site. The Commission issued a Notice to Proceed for the demolition of 25 W. Elizabeth and a Certificate of Appropriateness for the new construction. With the current submission, the applicant is proposing to revise the approved design of the new building as per the **attached renderings** and the following:

Rooftop

- Establish a rooftop terrace, recessed 10’-0” back from the roof edge to be defined by painted galvanized guardrail posts, stainless steel cable railing
- Erect new mechanical penthouses to be clad with metal panels
- Add precast concrete panel parapet at south and west elevations

East Elevation

- Revise signage to read “TCF”
- Reconfigure primary storefront entrance (material to be the same as approved/aluminum)
- Increase height of building from 291’-6” to 311’-0”

South Elevation

- At upper portion of elevation, above garage, revise fully glazed wall to aluminum windows set within precast concrete panels
- Revise location of mechanical louvers
- Increase height of building from 291’-6” to 311’-0”
- Revise signage to read “TCF”
- Install precast concrete panels at parking garage exterior

North Elevation

- Revise location of mechanical louvers
- Increase height of building from 291’-6” to 311’-0”
- Revise signage to read “TCF”

Finally, regarding the Commission’s 12-12-2018 approval of the initial proposal, please note that this body issued a Certificate of Appropriateness for the new building as proposed and a Notice to Proceed to demolish the building at 25. W Elizabeth. The Notice to Proceed was issued upon the specific condition that the property be subsequently developed by the applicant in accordance with construction plans and drawings approved by the City of Detroit’s Building, Safety, Engineering and Environmental Department. Additionally, neither the Notice to Proceed nor the Certificate of Appropriateness was to be issued until the following conditions were met:

- Applicant owns the building at 25 Elizabeth;
- All planning and zoning approvals necessary for the construction and/or the demolition have been obtained;
- Approval by the Building, Safety, Engineering, and Environment Department of the final construction drawings for the new building;
- All environmental clearances have been obtained for the demolition and for the new construction.
- Staff be afforded the opportunity to review and approve any minor revisions to the design
- HDC Staff shall verify that these conditions have been satisfied prior to issuing the Certificate of Appropriateness or the Notice to Proceed

As per the above, staff **cannot** issue the applicant a Certificate of Appropriateness or the Notice to Proceed for the demo or new construction until they have demonstrated that all of the above-listed conditions have been met.

The applicant has recently updated staff re: their efforts to meet the above-listed conditions to note they plan on discussing the following at the 9-11-2019 HDC meeting:

- They will clarify that TCF Bank is the Owner of the building at 25 Elizabeth
- They will obtain a written confirmation that the Project has approval from Planning and Zoning
- They will have environmental clearance as abatement is currently underway and The State will certify when complete.

They are, however, seeking clarity from the Commission re: the following condition because the Building, Safety, Engineering, and Environment Department cannot issue a permits or “approve” the project without first receiving the HDC’s written approval of the work, aka the Certificate of Appropriateness and the Notice to Proceed:

- Approval by the Building, Safety, Engineering, and Environment Department of the final construction drawings for the new building

Also, it appears that the applicant is seeking to pull the permit for the demo/receive BSEED “approval” for the demo before they pull permits for the construction of the new building.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- It is staff’s opinion that the proposed revisions are generally in keeping with the spirit of the design which the Commission originally approved.

ISSUES

- RE: the question around the conditions placed on the applicant’s approval to demolish the existing building at 25 W. Elizabeth and erect a new building in its place, please note that the Commission issued a NTP under the following condition as outlined in Detroit City Code, Sec. 25-2-22, “Issuance of Notice to Proceed”:

The resource is a deterrent to a major improvement program that will be of substantial benefit to the community. Substantial benefit shall be found only if the applicant proposing to do the work has obtained all necessary planning and zoning approvals, financing, and environmental clearances and the improvement program is otherwise feasible;

- The above-stated condition does not require “approval by the Building, Safety, Engineering, and Environment Department of the final construction drawings for the new building”
- The Commission has required “approval by the Building, Safety, Engineering, and Environment Department of the final construction drawings for the new building” prior to the issuance of the project’s COA and NTP. However, the Building, Safety, Engineering, and Environment Department give their “approval”/issue a permit for the demo and new construction until they receive the project’s COA and NTP

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed because it meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, standard #9) *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*