

August 11, 2020

Detroit Historic District Commission/PDD
Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
2 Woodward Avenue - Suite 808
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Commissioners –

I wanted to offer a few thoughts about the proposed rehabilitation of the Brodhead Armory.

First, I'd like to share how excited I am about the prospects of a refurbished Brodhead Armory, open once again and serving the community in a forward-facing capacity. And I applaud the city and the Parade Company for working together on such an ambitious plan. It promises to be an extraordinary home for the Parade Company. Indeed together, the Brodhead and the Parade Company have the potential to create one of the most interesting places in the city, with a unique combination of site history, Art Deco architecture, and creative program.

That said, I am saddened that the proposal contemplates the demolition of a significant portion of the building, notably the rear "South Block," which features Works Progress Administration (WPA) era artwork of such quality that the Brodhead has been granted one of Detroit's few interior designations. Nautical themed murals, plasterwork, and wood carving are all noteworthy, and, despite the damage they've endured since the Brodhead was vacated in the early 2000s, are at least 75% intact, according to the HDC staff report. I believe the project should do better by incorporating the South Block.

The Rossetti application's claim that the Brodhead's floorplans in this portion of the building are not convenient for the tenant is the rationale for demolition, but also glosses over the fact that subsequent removal of the WPA artefacts will result in an adverse effect to the resource. Proposed efforts to "retain" the WPA artefacts in a "meaningful" way only make allusion to even being able to remove them safely. Wouldn't restoring the WPA artefacts be an enticing and concomitant opportunity for such a creative endeavor as the Parade Company, as one-of-kind offices, board rooms, or studios?

What's true about the site is that there is more than enough room to accomplish the entire program, even with the South Block intact. Areas to the south or west could be redesigned to accommodate this portion of the Brodhead. Moreover, Michigan's *largest collection of federally funded Depression era artwork* would be left intact, to inspire and inform a new century and a new generation of Detroiters looking for creative ways to face a new set of harsh challenges together. Detroit deserves better.

I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely and Respectfully,


Francis Grunow