



SOUTHFIELD • DETROIT

1500 Woodward
Suite 300
Detroit, Michigan 48226
phone 313.782.4800
www.neumannsmith.com

February 22, 2021

Mr. Garrick Landsberg
Director of Historic Preservation
Detroit Historic District Commission
Planning & Development Department
City of Detroit
2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 808
Detroit, MI 48226

RE: Corktown Site 2 – HDC Request for Advisory Comment for future application for Notice to Proceed to demolish existing Downtown Storage Company building for construction of new Parking Deck

Dear Mr. Landsberg:

In accordance with requirements from the Detroit Historic District Commission, we are submitting project information for the proposed demolition of the Downtown Storage Co. building and construction of a new Parking Deck project located at Church & 10th Streets in Corktown and requesting that we be placed on the HDC March agenda to request an Advisory Comment for a future application for “Notice to Proceed” on this project.

The Parking Deck project is proposed to be built on the site of the existing building(s) at 1551 Church street. A review of Detroit Sanborn Insurance maps shows one structure on the Church street frontage in 1923, and the survey map for the NR District nomination in 1978 shows a second attached structure to the east.

1551 Church is a two-story masonry commercial structure, with north façade currently painted, a restrained denticulated brick cornice band wrapping north & west facades and several roof monitors providing natural light to the center of the building. It was originally constructed as the Whittaker Contractors office with next owner being Red Arrow Bottling Co. (late 1920's through 1970's- Joe Sakal up to 50's then sons Joe & Rudy-owners) who also brewed/bottled Towne Club Soda at this site through the 1970's (Towne Club bottling works now on 8 Mile Road). The Red Arrow pop business was sold to Orca Brewing in Redmond, Washington who continues to produce the pop. Red Arrow also originated the Orange Crush line which was also sold in 1970's to the 7UP company. The Sakals through their Red Arrow company-maintained ownership of the site but converted the building to a storage center in the late 1970's and then sold it to the current occupants, Downtown Storage Company, in 1999 (who have occupied it to the present day.)

The name appears to have come from the Red Arrow, or 32nd Infantry Division of National Guardsmen from both Michigan and Wisconsin that fought bravely in WWI and II. Due to this honorable history, Red Arrow has become a very popular name in the Michigan area. The name has been given to many landmarks and establishments. There is even the historic U.S. Highway 12 that has been renamed the Red Arrow Highway to honor the men of the Red Arrow Division

The arrow logo on the older Red Arrow wooden case crate has a hash mark through the midpoint of the arrow shaft just like the 32nd Infantry Division's arrow logo.

The planning map that was titled "Corktown Historic District-Detroit" and initialed "REM" 2/78 was included as reference by the survey committee that provided the National Register Historic District nomination for Corktown in 1978. On that color-coded map 1551 Church Street is indicated to be "neutral" in historic contribution to the historic district (two levels of "considerable" and "some" historic contribution are above that designation.)

Advisory Comment: We respectfully acknowledge the historical significance of the Downtown Storage Company building, but maintain that the proposed Parking Deck project will provide a "higher and best use" to the community by being constructed on this site. We request that the Historic District Commission provide an Advisory Comment for our future application for a Notice to Proceed for the demolition of 1551 Church to allow for construction of the Parking Deck at the HDC April meeting, and the developers offer the following attached documents to demonstrate compliance with Section 25-2-22, subparagraph 2 of required preconditions to requesting a Notice to Proceed for demolition of the structure:

- Letter from Detroit City Planning relative to their review of this project (forthcoming)
- Letter from Hunter Pasteur relative to retention of environmental testing and abatement firms and proposed clearance of hazardous material conditions on the property
- Letter from Oxford Capital relative to their equity assembly and financing placement
- Five-year operations pro forma from Oxford Capital demonstrating project financial feasibility.
- Oxford Capital letter of economic development benefits of the Parking Deck project.
- Community Engagement plan and letters of support

As a necessary condition of approving the above noted Notice to Proceed, we are presenting the design of the new Parking Deck with accompanying materials as follows

- Sanborn Insurance Map of Corktown in 1923
- Corktown Historic District map 1978
- Exterior photos of the former Whittaker Contractors/ Red Arrow Bottling Co buildings at 1551 Church Street.
- As-built drawings of the existing Downtown Storage Co. building and building sections with overlays of the proposed parking deck structure highlighting the conflicts with retention of the existing building affecting the ability to construct the parking deck in the size and capacity as envisioned.
- Blockfront elevations studies of surrounding neighborhood buildings illustrating solid/void rhythms of openings.
- Architectural site plan
- Schematic drawings including floor plans, elevations, and building sections
- Material sample boards
- Project narrative
- 3D renderings of the proposed new building

In addition to the attached documentation, we are also submitting the following narratives to describe the design of the new building and how it was contextually developed relative to the HDC “Corktown Elements of Design.”

Corktown Site 2- Parking Deck Design Narrative

The proposed parking deck is a three-story structure constructed of precast concrete panels imbedded with a dark reddish face brick and a precast parapet wall on the upper level to provide a cornice to the building. The facades of the deck are delineated by brick pilasters at structural bays and intermediate pilasters between openings (both brick and precast) to achieve vertically oriented openings compatible with the Victorian window geometries throughout the neighborhood. The first-floor openings are proportioned to resemble retail display windows and infilled with decorative metal grilles. The northwest and southeast corners are reinforced by masonry towers with large, glazed openings for the stair and elevator enclosures. The northeast corner of the structure houses a retail business with large display windows on the north and east facades with canopies above. The east façade openings on Trumbull are also glazed to further the appearance of a warehouse type structure as seen throughout the neighborhood. Vehicle ingress/egress openings occur on the Trumbull and 10th Street facades.

Materials for the proposed new building utilize the brick masonry warehouse aesthetic of the larger historic commercial buildings in the surrounding area. The form, massing, and scale of this proposed parking deck also closely resemble those elements of other Corktown structures.

Parking Deck Compatibility with Corktown Elements of Design

Adjacent Buildings Context: To the east across Trumbull is St. Peter’s Episcopal Church and offices which are a restrained example of the Gothic ecclesiastical style executed in a medium brown brick with limestone detailing, and copper gutters/downspouts. To the west is a surface parking lot on several parcels with a partial blockfront of historical two- and one-half story residential structures beyond. To the south is a public alley with the rear yards of a blockfront of historical two- and one-half story residential structures. To the north across Church Street is a one story brick auto repair shop probably dating from the early twentieth century.

1. Height: At 38’-8” in height at top of parapet walls, the parking deck structure is compatible in height with the front gable two- and one-half story residential structures in the neighborhood. The use of major and minor pilasters as well as secondary intermediate pilasters of differing color break the façade up into vertical units. The third level parapet wall is also expressed as a “crown” to the building in differing color material.

2a. Mass/Scale: The building’s massing is derived from the examples of the larger commercial/industrial historic buildings in Corktown (Checker Cab, Grinnell’s Lofts, 6th Street Lofts, Kaul Glove factory, etc.) The scale of the proposed parking deck relates to the scale of historic residential blockfronts as well as the larger loft buildings throughout the neighborhood.

2b. Proportion of Front Façade (Vertical/Horizontal Expression): The parking deck façade proportions (Trumbull, Church, and 10th Street) are essentially rectangular with horizontal form and vertical design elements such as the brick pilasters and spandrel panels traversing the height of the building.

3. Openings (% and Orientation): The proportion of openings versus solid wall on the building is 31% on average, and again derives its proportion from neighboring historic loft structures.

4. Opening Rhythm: Wall openings are in a regular grid pattern with vertical orientation within the majority brick rectangular grid of pilasters and spandrel elements. This shape/rhythm of wall openings is compatible with the wall patterns of historic loft buildings in the neighborhood.

5. Blockfront Rhythm: The building's façade rhythm is again derived from the opening cadence in nearby loft structures.

6. Entrance/Porch Rhythm: Not applicable on this functional structure that incorporates vehicle entrances, people access and a corner retail presence.

7. Compatible Materials: The building's material palette is derived from common Corktown building elements: brick, glass, and light colored pre cast concrete cornice and intermediate pilasters.

8. Compatible Textures: The textures of brick frame the wall openings that comprise the building facades.

9. Compatible Colors: With the majority use of brick as the body color of the building with lighter color cornice and intermediate pilasters, the parking deck derives its coloration from the historic loft, industrial structures in Corktown.

10. Architectural Detail: The parking deck's use of architectural detail is found in the filigree of the first-floor decorative metal screens, brick patterns, and lighter color details of the building's precast concrete cornice.

11. Roof Shape: The top level of the building is exposed to the sky surrounded by the precast concrete parapet walls.

12. Continuous Street Wall: With the parking deck's two street front facades developed close to zero lot lines, the urban commercial district public realm character is preserved in a continuous street wall.

13. Landscape/Surface Treatments: The public right of way sidewalks adjoining the parking deck on Trumbull Avenue, Church Street and 10th Street will all be finished with traditional concrete paving.

14. Open Space Relationship to Building: Not Applicable as the building primarily fills up the site property line to property line.

15. Façade & Elements Scale: The parking deck uses the traditional storefront base of openings resembling traditional display windows and transom to derive context from neighboring historic commercial facades at the northeast corner (retail tenant) with the balance of first floor surfaces providing screened openings to the deck behind mimicking traditional storefronts. The body of the building comprised of a rectangular brick and glass grid offers a pleasing rhythm of openings compatible with nearby loft structures.

16. Directional Expression of Front Elevations: The elevations of the parking deck are horizontal in the overall massing of the building with strong vertical expressions of vertical pilasters and vertically oriented openings that mimic window openings on the upper floors and retail display window openings on the first floor.

17. Rhythm of building setbacks: Not applicable, no setbacks

18. Relationship of lot coverages: Not applicable as building fills site.

19. Façade Complexity: The articulation of the wall openings, expressed pilasters and bundled structural bays of the building's façade bring it within the milieu of traditional historic façade expression throughout the historic district

20. Orientation, Vistas, Overviews: The parking deck presents a warehouse type façade to Trumbull Avenue with northeast corner retail display windows and upper glazed openings recalling neighborhood loft buildings. Other facades on Church and 10th street have similar presentations in all directions, structure fills the site and does not present any particular vistas/overviews.

21. Symmetrical vs Asymmetrical: The parking deck's northeast corner tenant space as well as vehicle entries aligning with interior drive aisles provide an asymmetric expression on each of the street facades.

22. General Environmental Character: The overall character of the brick faced parking deck exhibits compatibility with the Corktown neighborhood in the same vein as the industrial building it replaces. This juxtaposition of larger masonry commercial and industrial structures "cheek to jowl" with the primarily wood clapboard residential structures that give Corktown its unique charm and "grit."

Please let me know if you require additional information or have any questions.

Sincerely,

NEUMANN/SMITH ARCHITECTURE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JS', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joel Smith, AIA
President

Copies: Mike Kirk: Neumann/Smith