

September 12, 2022

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

Dear Commissioners –

I'm writing again to express my concern about the Brodhead Armory proposal.

First, I remain excited about the prospects of a refurbished Brodhead Armory, open once again and serving the community in a public-facing capacity. I applaud the city and the Parade Company for working together on such an ambitious plan for the building—it could yet 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 still contemplates the total demolition of the rear “South Block,” which features Works Progress Administration (WPA) era artwork of such quality that the Brodhead is distinguished by having 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, they are at least 75% intact, according to HDC’s staff report. I believe the project should do better by incorporating more of the South Block.

I do appreciate the additional diligence the applicant has undertaken to secure conservation expertise, and to better understand the scope and approach for removing the WPA art. But that does not change the fact that removal of the art will result in an adverse impact to the historic resource. Wouldn't restoring the WPA art in situ be an enticing and concomitant opportunity for such a creative endeavor as the Parade Company, as one-of-kind offices, board rooms, and artist studios?

What's still true about the site conditions is that there is more than enough room to accomplish the entire program, even with the South Block substantially intact. Areas to the south or west could be redesigned to accommodate more of the proposed program while saving more of the historic resource. 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 hungry for new ways to engage our City's rich and irreplaceable cultural heritage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely and Respectfully,


Francis Grunow