

STAFF REPORT 12-08-2021 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG

APPLICATION NUMBER: 21-7634

ADDRESS: 1501-1541 CHURCH

HISTORIC DISTRICT: CORKTOWN

APPLICANT: JOEL SMITH/NEUMANN/SMITH ARCHITECTS

OWNER: GODFREY DETROIT PROPCO LLC

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 11-19-2021

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 11-08-2021, 12-06-2021

SCOPE: REVISION OF PREVIOUSLY APPROVED APPLICATION; CHANGES TO WINDOWS AND WINDOW OPENINGS, MATERIALS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

A parking structure was approved at the site by the Commission at the May 2021 Regular Meeting. The current condition is that of a former parking lot; construction activities have not yet commenced.



View of existing conditions at 1501-1541 Church. View to the southwest from Church Street. Staff photo, December 6, 2021.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Per the submitted drawings (relevant elevations reproduced below) and subsequent discussions with the applicant, the proposed revisions to the Commission's previous approval include:

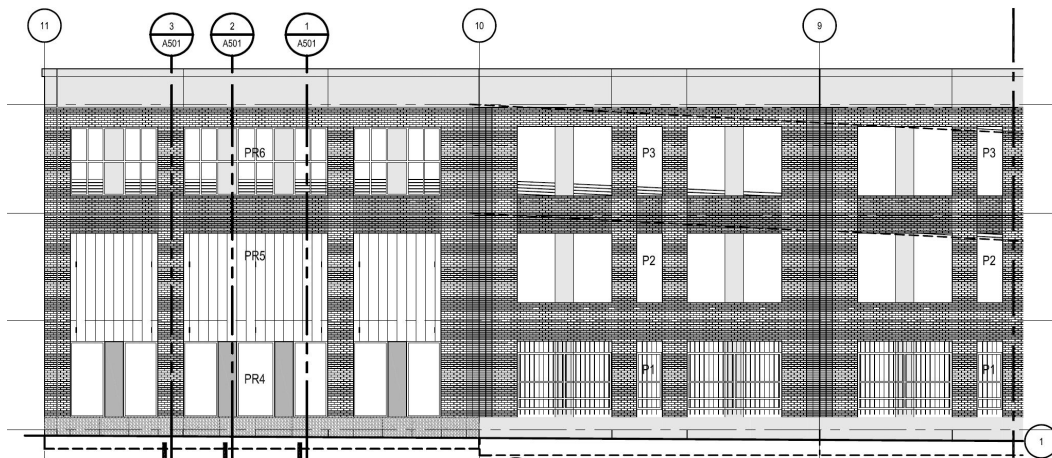
- Remove all granite base from building, currently approved for the base of the NW and SE towers, and at the NE storefront (east elevation), in favor of pre-cast concrete base to match the remainder of the building.
- Replace metal panels currently approved at top of NW elevator override tower; will be replaced with brick expression to match the remainder of the building (i.e., brick embed in pre-cast).
- Removal of crossed interior muntins from mullioned windows at towers, resulting in larger panes. Previous approved design showed muntins, which staff interpreted as true divided lights but the applicant wished to interpret as interior- or exterior-applied (adhered).
- Replacement of previously approved spandrel glass panels at NE storefronts, not technically feasible due to adjacent concrete columns, with pre-finished metal closure panels colored to match window frames
- Substitution of fence-like closure of openings around base of building with 4" mesh grid. Addition of mesh grid in other openings at the south, east, and north elevations.



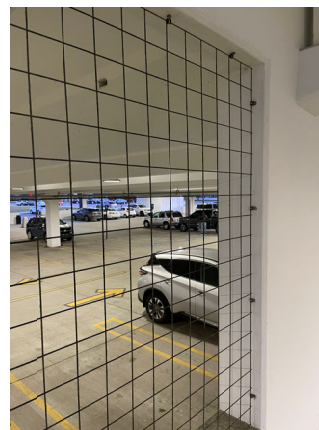
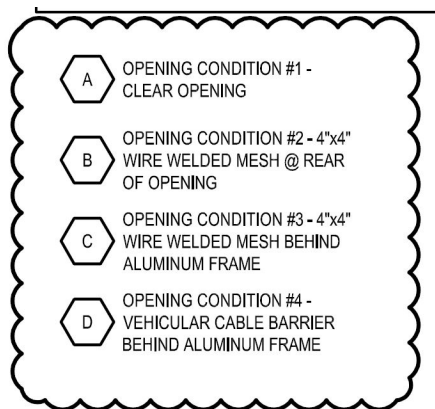
Areas of proposed revisions to originally approved scope indicated with revision clouds..

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The proposed substitution was reviewed for approval under delegated staff authority. We decided that the cumulative impact of the proposed change was too substantial to qualify under staff’s “minor changes” authority, resulting in this review in front of the Commission. The expression of the building will change.
- The removal of the “interior-crossed” muntins at the “tower” locations increases the apparent scale of the panes. Note that the submitted drawing notes them as “false muntins adhesively applied to interior face of glazing.” In discussions with applicant, staff noted that either (1) exterior-applied muntins or (2) removing muntins altogether would merit recommendation by staff as appropriate. Because of the maintenance issues ultimately anticipated with adhered muntins, the applicant is asking for removal of the muntins altogether. The expression of the building will change from the approved version, but staff does not find the new version necessarily inappropriate.
- As for the openings, the applicant now seeks to establish four types of openings per the modified note and marks reproduced below (i.e., A, B, C, and D as indicted on the elevations). Types C and D preserve the “unglazed window” expression (i.e., “aluminum frame”) which was briefly at issue in the original approval for the east/storefront areas, with the new mesh element installed behind. The expression of the building will be different than approved; however, the removal of the fence-like enclosure at the first story is aesthetically desirable, and staff finds that the overall effect to be more cohesive and not inappropriate for a new construction building of this type.



Representative sample of the original opening configurations approved by Commission in May 2021.



New opening types now proposed, per elevation on page 2. Representative photo of wire mesh, per applicant..

ISSUES

- While the changes in some cases reduce the quality/expense of materials on the building, and appear intended to reduce cost, in staff's opinion the proposed changes in materiality and window/opening treatments do not render the new construction "inappropriate" per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards or Elements of Design, as the Commission. As such it is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

The proposed work is compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features of its environment. Staff therefore recommends that the proposal should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Corktown Historic District's Elements of Design