

STAFF REPORT: FEBRUARY 7, 2024, REGULAR MEETING
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00027
ADDRESS: 450 AND 461 ELIOT
HISTORIC DISTRICT: BRUSH PARK
APPLICANT: JOHN P. BIGGAR, STUDIOZONE, LLC
PROPERTY OWNER: ELIOT STREET LOFTS, LLC
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: JANUARY 12, 2024
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JANUARY 24 AND FEBRUARY 1, 2024

PREPARED BY: T. BOSCARINO

SCOPE: REMOVE CANOPIES, ALTER WINDOW AND DOOR OPENINGS



450 Eliot (left) and 461 Eliot (right), viewed from the northeast along Beaubien. January 2024 photo by staff.



450 Eliot, viewed from northeast. The original 1912 section, depicted on the Sanborn map (page 3) occupies the foreground of the photo and faces north onto Eliot. The addition continues south along Beaubien. January 2024 photo by staff.



461 Eliot, viewed from southeast. January 2024 photo by staff.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

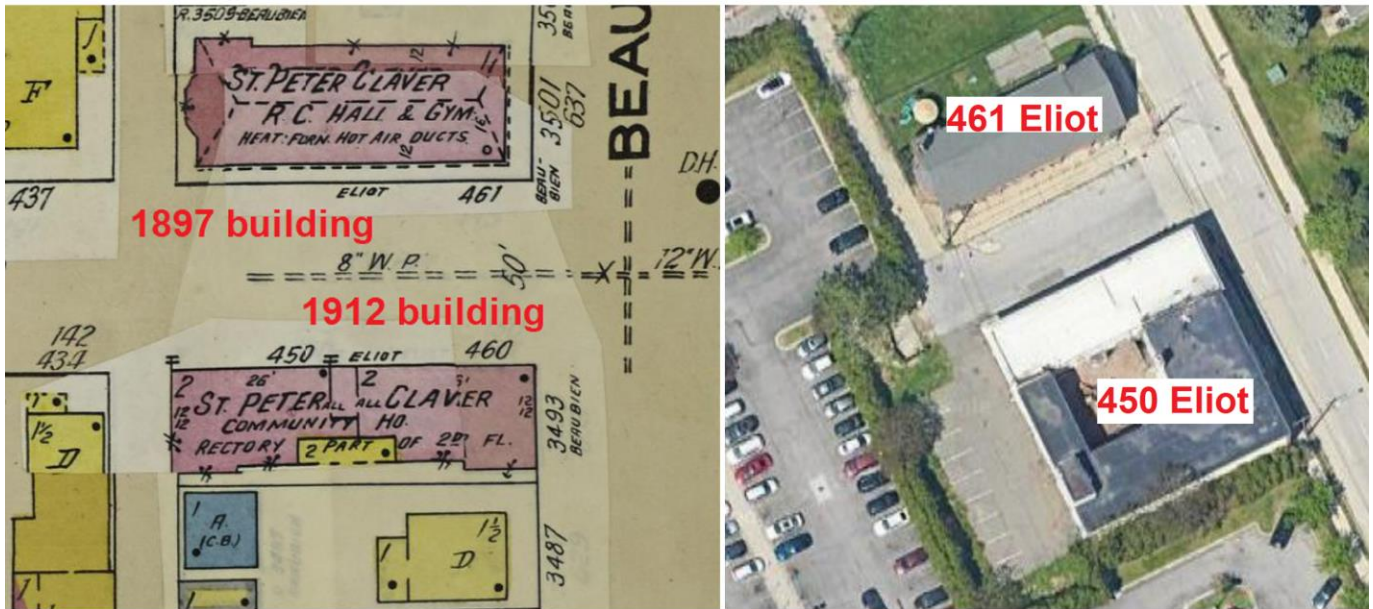
450 Eliot (historically, the St. Peter Claver Community Center) is an Arts-and-Crafts style, two-story, brick apartment building built in 1912. It was greatly expanded with a two-story addition to the south. The date of the addition is not known but its Moderne style and absence from a 1950 Sanborn map suggests that it is from the 1950s. The original portion of the building is oriented north towards Eliot and the newer portion is oriented east to Beaubien. Of relevance to this application, the east-facing entrance was altered in the 1990s with new aluminum doors, a new wood and steel canopy, and a new cement board panel above the entrance. The Commission issued a Certificate of Appropriateness for this work in 1994; however, records associated with that approval do not depict the appearance of the east façade prior to that work.

461 Eliot (St. Mary's Episcopal Church/St. Peter Claver) is a gable-front, red brick, hall church oriented with primary facades facing east onto Beaubien and south onto Eliot. It was built in 1897. An Arts and Crafts influence is shown in the south-facing entry porch while the upper windows on the east façade are Gothic. Pertinent to this application, no historic windows are visible. The visible windows consist of aluminum sashes set within relatively recent wood frames. A few window and door openings have been bricked in. The three Gothic windows on the east façade have wood frames but are missing their sashes (as visible from the interior, according to the applicant). Three small windows on the east façade at a lower level are covered on both the exterior and interior, so their composition is not known.

Both are contributing buildings in the Brush Park historic district, their significance meriting description in the Historic Designation Advisory Board Final Report as follows:

St. Peter Claver, 1892, architect unknown. This simple brick Gothic Revival church was built in 1897 by a mason, George D. Duncan, for St. Mary's Episcopal Church. Sold in 1914 the building became St. Peter Claver, the first Roman Catholic parish founded expressly to serve blacks ... The old church at the northwest corner of Beaubien and Eliot has served, together with the building across Eliot, as part of St.

Peter Claver Community Center. Though now used as a gymnasium the building is generally unaltered externally.



Left: Sanborn Map Company, 1950, with annotations by staff. Note that only the original 1912 portion of 450 Eliot is present. The later addition expanded the building to the south sometime after 1950, where the frame dwelling is shown in the above image. Right: Google aerial photo with annotations by staff.

PROPOSAL

450 Eliot

The applicant proposes to alter both primary door openings by removing the existing bracketed canopies. On the east façade, the entrance area would also be altered by removing the existing doorway and cement-board spandrel panel and installing a new aluminum storefront system.



North-facing canopy (located on original, 1912 building) proposed for removal. No replacement is proposed. January 2024 photo

by staff.

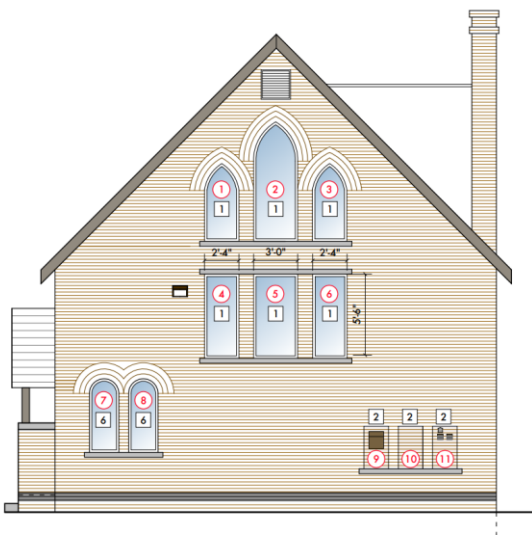


Left: East-facing canopy, aluminum doorway, and cement board panel proposed for removal; 2024 photo by staff. Right: Proposed replacement; image from application documents, cropped by staff.

Several other, relatively minor, work items are also proposed for the building. These include the restoration of existing windows, painting, removal of non-historic storm windows, air-conditioning units, and signs, and the fabrication of new aluminum sashes or glass block windows where these elements are presently missing.

461 Eliot

The proposed work would alter six window openings on the east façade. New stained-glass windows would be installed in openings 1, 2, and 3 (see image below), where sashes are presently missing, and in openings 4, 5, and 6, where non-historic windows are presently installed. Openings 9, 10, and 11, presently covered in plywood boards, would be bricked in. The existing mechanical penetrations on windows 9, 10, and 11 would remain.



East elevation depicting existing conditions. Drawing by applicant.

Other, relatively minor, scope items include repairs to the existing windows and porch entry, and the removal of non-historic signs.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Brush Park Historic District was established by Ordinance 369-H in 1980. As described in the Final Report, the district is notable for its high-style residential architecture from the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century including numerous two-and-a-half-story houses and some taller apartment buildings, along with commercial buildings of various scales. Both 450 Eliot and 461 Eliot are mentioned as contributing buildings.
- Applicable Elements of Design are as follows:
 - “Most buildings have or had a porch or entrance projections.”
 - “Later apartments are in scale with simple but large elements near the ground and repetitive window openings above, frequently capped by a substantial cornice.”
 - “Horizontal proportions exist only in incompatible later buildings.”
- The Final Report does not provide an exact period of significance, but highlights buildings from the 1860s through 1926. The Elements of Design, as quoted above, state that “horizontal” buildings are “incompatible.” Together, these observations suggest that the 1950s addition to 450 Eliot is outside the period of significance and, thus, lacks historic materials and features. Proposed work on this addition is to be evaluated for its compatibility with the building and the district as a whole.
- The canopy on the north façade (i.e., the original 1912 building) of 450 Eliot appears to be an original or historic feature and is important to the building’s character. Its curved, oversized brackets and arched overhang are consistent with the Arts and Crafts-influenced style of the building. The materials used also appear to date from the early twentieth century.
- As the 1950s addition is outside of the period of significance (the canopy itself was added in 1994, according to a Certificate of Appropriateness from that year), its materials are non-historic and may be removed, provided that the new work is compatible with the character of the rest of the building, the related building at 461 Eliot, and the district as a whole. The simple glass and aluminum storefront and surmounting sign panel are compatible, in the opinion of staff. (Staff expects that “Beaubien” will be spelled correctly in the final design.) No scope is provided for replacement of the existing entry step or slab.
- As the six larger windows on the east façade of 461 Eliot are non-historic, their replacement is appropriate. However, their replacements must be compatible with the building and its environment, as described in *Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards* (2007).¹ For these windows, a number of established preservation approaches would be appropriate. These would include literal replication of the historic windows based on a photograph or other evidence, “invention within a style”²—that is, a new Gothic Revival or Arts and Crafts Movement influenced design by a present-day artist, or a design “bearing a contemporary stamp”.³ The only inappropriate design would be one that is “conjectural,”⁴ that is, from another historical style not found on the building, or borrowed from another, unrelated historic building.
- Bricking in highly visible window openings on a street-facing primary elevation is almost never appropriate. It is possible that original or historic windows remain beneath the boards on openings 9, 10, and 11; even if not, *Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards* (*Replacement Windows where No Historic Windows Remain*) would call for a compatible new window. However, this building presents an unusual circumstance in which the windows may appropriately be enclosed. First, they are basement windows, which are often of less character-defining, utilitarian purpose (for comparison, the Commission’s *Glass Block Guidelines* provide a different, but related, circumstance in which basement windows may be

enclosed). Second, to the extent that the windows are character-defining, the character comes from their depth and the nature of their stone sills rather than the presence of operable sashes or glazing. Finally, “the Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility,” and staff recognizes that the installation of compatible sash windows would be challenged by the location of existing mechanical penetrations. The proposed treatment, which recesses the brick infill to retain the character of the openings and sills, is appropriate.



Windows 9, 10, and 11 at the ground level of the east (Beaubian) façade. Photo by staff.

- The removal of non-historic signs, air-conditioning units, and storm windows is appropriate. The other scope items described in the application, such as restoration of windows, fabrication of missing components, and painting, are also appropriate.

ISSUES

- The removal of the north-facing canopy on 450 Eliot would remove a historic, character-defining feature. It would also create the condition of an uncovered primary entrance, inconsistent with the Arts and Crafts style of the building and the Brush Park Elements of Design. The work would be contrary to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, namely Standard #2: “the removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.”
- Materials and specifications for the proposed stained-glass windows are not provided.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78: Determinations of Historic District Commission (removal of north-facing canopy on 450 Eliot)

Staff concludes that the proposed removal of the north-facing canopy on 450 Eliot is inappropriate for the reasons listed below.

- The north-facing canopy is a character-defining feature that should not be removed. If elements are deteriorated beyond repair, they should be replaced in kind.

Therefore, staff recommends that the Commission issue a *Denial* of those work items as they do not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular:

2. *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*

Section 21-2-78: Determinations of Historic District Commission (alterations to the east elevation of 450 Eliot; window alterations, removal of non-historic signs, painting)

Staff recommends that the Commission issue a *Certificate of Appropriateness* for the remaining work items as the work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, subject to the following condition:

- The new stained-glass windows will be compatible, as described in *Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards*, subject to staff review.

¹ <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/windows-replacement-meet-standards.htm>

² Steven W. Semes, *The Future of the Past*, 2009.

³ *Venice Charter*, 1964.

⁴ Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, Standard #3: "Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken."