

**HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION REPORT**  
Certificate of Appropriateness- Downtown Commercial Historic District.  
Section 115-320(d)(2)

**TO:** Heritage Preservation Commission  
**FROM:** Planning Staff  
**MEETING DATE:** June 23, 2022

**PROPOSAL:** The applicant is proposing alter a portion of the storefront on the property located at 305-307 Pearl Street.

**PROPERTY OWNER:**  
Richard and Gregory Markos  
129 3<sup>rd</sup> Street S  
La Crosse, WI 54601

**APPLICANT:**  
Marcus Zettler  
Zettler Design Studio

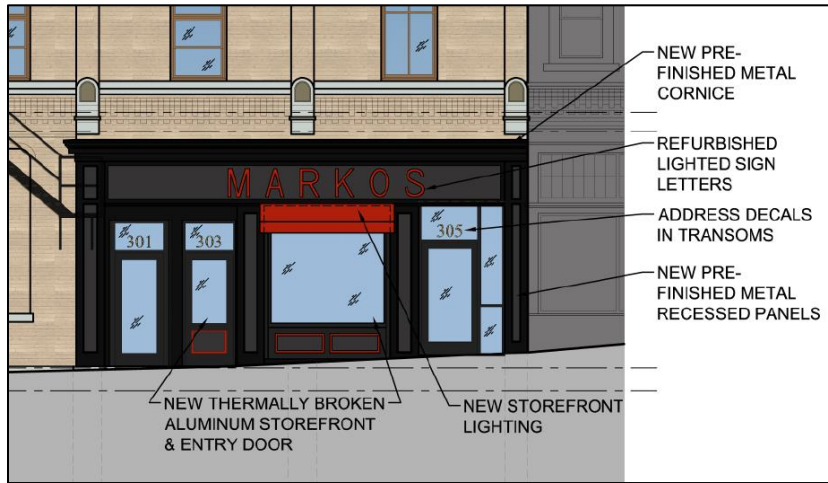
**BACKGROUND:** The Downtown Commercial Historic District was established by Ordinance in April 2016 along with design standards that are specific to the styles of architecture found within. The local district designation of the Downtown Commercial Historic District was created to encourage preservation of the historic resources of the district, which was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1994. The design standards and review procedures are used to guide preservation, rehabilitation, new construction, relocation and demolitions. Plans or requests must be approved by the Heritage Preservation Commission prior to any building/demolition permit being issued. In determining whether to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for Demolition, the HPC shall:

1. Consider factors such as whether the structure is of historical significance, the state of repair of the building, and whether denial of a permit would create a significant economic hardship for the owner.
2. Issue the certificate only if the owner can demonstrate that the building is structurally unsound and/or that denial of a demolition permit would create a significant economic hardship for the owner.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the repair/restoration of several double-hung windows on the third floor, installation of a new fire-rated, double-hung window on the second floor, tuckpointing/mortar repair around the base of the building, repair of the metal cornice and repair of the parapet wall. This project also includes a major alteration to the storefront depicted in the photo to the right. The alteration of the storefront includes the installation of a new storefront, door, awning, and sign going into the existing masonry openings. The project also includes adding pre-finished metal (aluminum) to cover the 1950's brick.



The metal would have recessed panels done in a silver/gray color to contrast the black metal on the majority of the storefront. There would also be red highlights added to match the canopy. The top of the new metal would be capped by a metal cornice similar to the one in the photo below.



SEE ATTACHED PLANS FOR MORE INFORMATION

## ANALYSIS:

The following design standards apply:

a. *Entries and storefronts.*

1. Historic entries and storefront display windows shall be retained.
2. Existing entry openings shall be retained, where feasible. If additional entry openings are needed (i.e., for deliveries) they shall be placed at regular intervals and should be of similar proportions as the original entry.
3. Original or historic features including columns, bulkheads, transoms, moldings and hardware shall be retained; trim should be replicated if replacement is necessary.
4. Wood panel doors with large glass panels were typical of historic commercial storefronts in the district. To the extent possible, historic doors and hardware shall be repaired rather than replaced.
5. If replacement of doors is necessary, replacement doors shall be compatible with the design, proportions and materials of the original door.
6. New doors shall be constructed of wood if possible; aluminum or other metal doors should be finished in colors complementary to the building

This design does not go back to a historical period as depicted in the photo to the right. The historic storefront in this location/portion of the building was completely removed in the 1950s when the steel beams were added (approximately 9' above the floor line). The old storefronts were originally about 12' high. The structure was heavily modified during that previous renovation as well. The structural brick pier was removed on the first floor and a new one was added to create the current three bay configuration. While the proposed storefront does depict a more modern version of the traditional storefront, the removal of the existing materials and look that matches the rest of the building that has been in existence for several decades is concerning. It is noted though that the storefront on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street façade is also metal, though they did a better job of incorporating the existing brick and color scheme around it.



The plans note that the proposed sign will consist of “refurbished lighted sign letters”. More information may be needed from the applicant on this but the following standards would apply to this sign.

*Traditional materials (wood and metal) are appropriate, while plastic is not. Neon signs may be used with the approval of the HPC. Other composite material may be approved by the Heritage Preservation Commission.*

*Modern back-lit fluorescent signs, animated signs, awnings, or electronic billboards and signs with changeable letters are prohibited*

## **FINDING**

Staff has no concerns with the proposed window repair/replacement, tuckpointing, and repair of the metal cornice. These items are all consistent with the district’s design standards. More information may be needed on the sign in order to determine if it meets the standards listed above.

The proposed storefront is challenging when reviewing it under the districts design standards. They require that historic entries be preserved, and while the current storefront is not the original storefront to the building, it has been in existence for nearly 60 years and was part of the district’s National Register Nomination. On the other side, this is the type of storefront being used in some variation on the majority of storefront remodels in the district, including the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street façade if this building. Overall staff would like to a blend of the new (Black & Red) and old colors (Beige) similar of that to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street side.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION BY STAFF:** This Certificate of Appropriateness is recommended for approval with consideration that the applicant have a color palette consistent with the storefront on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street side and the condition that proposed sign meets the districts design standards.