



STAFF REPORT

Downtown Design Commission

November 21, 2024

Agenda Item **V.I.C.**
Case No. **DTCA-24-00068**
Property Address **217 N Harvey Ave**
Applicant Name **Cody Pistulka, Miller Architects**
 for Miles Davidson, Oklahoma County Board of County Commissioners
 111 NW 10th St, Suite 100
 Oklahoma City, OK 73103
District **DBD**

A. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Paint penthouse structure to match adjacent court annex building;
2. Install new curtain wall system with corbelled brick at the top of the upper opening;
3. Install modular brick veneer and cast stone sills and detailing;
4. Install new parapet with direct applied finish system;
5. Install roof-mounted mechanical equipment;
6. Install frosted glass at the basement level;
7. Install steel plate entry portal frame;
8. Install exterior lighting fixtures;
9. Install security bollards; and
10. Install landscaping, including lighting.

B. BACKGROUND

1. Location

This site is located on the southwest corner of N Harvey Ave and Robert S Kerr Ave.

2. Site History/Existing Conditions

Designed by Arthur J Williams, the Oklahoma County Investors Capital Building, completed in 1908, was one of Oklahoma City's first reinforced concrete buildings and was originally home of the Western Newspaper Union. Mr. Williams was the architect of St. Paul's Cathedral, completed in 1904, at NW 7th St and N Robinson Ave in downtown Oklahoma City. During his career, Mr. Williams partnered with William A Wells on projects, including the Pioneer Building, 401 N Broadway Ave, constructed in 1907.

The Oklahoma County Investors Capital Building has undergone several renovations over the years, resulting in the structure seen today. The exterior façade has fallen into disrepair. The building is currently used for offices.

3. Surrounding Environment

Adjacent to the west, is the Oklahoma County Office Building. Adjacent to the south, is the Oklahoma County Courthouse. To the east, across N Harvey Ave, are

numerous multi-storied office buildings, the majority having retail/food businesses on the first floor. To the north, across Robert S Kerr Ave, is the former Metropolitan library building, currently used for offices, and a nine-story parking garage.

4. Intended Use

8300.1 Administrative & Professional Offices

5. Previous Actions/Other

The Downtown Design District Handout and the *Building Conservation & Rehabilitation Guidelines* for Oklahoma City encourage the preservation and revitalization of historic architectural features, which can include alterations or additions that have gained significance over time. Many early buildings in Oklahoma City were “re-skinned” during the Urban Renewal era in order to appear more modern; those alterations are an important part of the history of Downtown Oklahoma City.

In this instance, deterioration of the cladding forces removal in order to repair and maintain the building. As significant portions of the original façade have remained visible through what was only a partial reclad, the restoration of the original façade would also be an appropriate alternative.

On 5/21/2020, the Downtown Design Review Committee considered DTCA-20-00036. DDRC approved this application to: remove windows, doors, and storefront glazing; remove infill in window and storefront openings; remove grilles and louvers in window openings and over windows; remove concrete and stone curbs at base of building; remove parapet coping, fascia board and plaster; remove all stone, marble, and tile cladding not original to the building; remove all metal framing not original to the building; remove angle iron beneath stone panels; remove brick coatings; remove building plaques; restore the brick; repair the cast stone and infill where needed to form continuous band; install cornice at top of building; add corner capitals to the northeast and southeast corners of the building; install windows, storefronts, and doors; install cast stone panels, cast stone sills, and cast stone surrounds; and reinstall building plaques. This work was not completed and this CA expired in 2022.

Installation of various features in the public right-of-way, such as bollards, meet applicable criteria but may require a revocable permit in addition to this Certificate of Approval.

C. ITEMS IN COMPLIANCE

1. Unless noted below in Section D. Issues and Considerations, all other case items of this proposal comply with the Development Regulations and Guidelines of the Downtown Design District zoning ordinance as referenced below:
 - a. RE: §7200.1.D., Pedestrian Zone Designation
 - b. RE: §7200.1.E., Use Regulations
 - c. RE: §7200.1.F., Development Regulations
 - d. RE: §7200.1.F.(3), Sidewalks

- e. RE: §7200.1.F.(5), Service Area, Utility Screening
- f. RE: §7200.1.F.(7), Building Materials
- g. RE: §7200.1.G.(2), Building Materials
- h. RE: §7200.1.G.(3), Building Design
- i. RE: §7200.1.G.(4), Development Pattern
- j. RE: §7200.1.G.(5), Pedestrian Circulation and Amenities
- k. RE: §7200.2.A., Purpose and Intent
- l. RE: §7200.2.B., Use Regulations
- m. RE: §7200.2.C., Development Regulations

Note: All other Regulations and Guidelines of the Downtown Design District zoning ordinance not listed above are either not applicable to this case or apply to elements of this project to be considered as a separate case at a later date.

D. ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

1. Development Guidelines

This proposal may not comply with the Development Guidelines of the Downtown Design District zoning ordinance as follows:

a. RE: Renovation of building, Case Items 2-8.

- 1) Description: The applicant proposes to remove the exterior cladding from the building and renovate into a modern interpretation of the historic building.
- 2) Reference: §7200.1. Downtown Design Districts (DBD, DTD-1, DTD-2).

“A. Purpose and Intent. This commercial district is intended to support diverse forms of business and residential activity, including mixed-uses in a single building, within the central area of the City. Development regulations and guidelines in this district are intended to:”

“(6) encourage preservation and restoration of the Historic Resources and Architectural Resources of the Downtown districts;”

Reference: §7200.1.G. Development Guidelines

G. Development Guidelines.

“These guidelines are intended to promote the development and redevelopment of the downtown area in a manner that is consistent and compatible with existing unique and diverse design elements of downtown Oklahoma City and that also encourages economic development and commerce. These guidelines are also intended to promote downtown as a vibrant, active destination with a variety of land uses, designed in context with the area in which they are located. The Downtown design review Committee and staff shall consider these guidelines as appropriate to the specific site and district, taking into account the character

and context of the urban environment, and providing flexibility to incorporate new technology and techniques.

(1) Existing Buildings; Architectural Resources or Historic Resources.

In order to preserve the legacy of our past, developers are encouraged to rehabilitate structures and sites within the Downtown districts that are Architectural Resources or Historic Resources so that as much of the original fabric as is reasonable possible remains intact.

(a) Existing buildings and character-defining architectural features such as building mass, roofs, exterior walls, doors, windows, and architectural detailing should be retained, refurbished and remain in the original locations.”

Reference: §7200.2. Downtown Business District (DBD)

A. Purpose and Intent.

“The DBD District is intended to support diverse forms of business and residential activity, including mixed-uses in a single building, within the central area of the City. Development regulations and guidelines in this district are intended to promote the development and redevelopment of the downtown area in a manner consistent with the unique and diverse design elements and urban character of the downtown district; ensure that uses are compatible with the commercial, cultural, historical and governmental significance of downtown; promote the downtown as a vital mixed-use area; create a network of pleasant, safe, and connected public spaces and pedestrian amenities; enhance existing structures and circulation patterns; and encourage preservation and restoration historic features.”

Reference: Building Conservation & Rehabilitation Guidelines for Oklahoma City

“1. Character-Defining Features

Character-defining features of traditional buildings should be retained. Collectively, these features are the building blocks that define the unique character and context of neighborhoods and districts, as well as the identity for the City as a whole. Typical character-defining features include (but are not limited to): original wall materials, decorative cornices, pilasters and columns, vertically aligned upper-story windows, larger first-floor openings, and trim around openings.

The principal elements of the architectural composition, including windows, doors, and cornices, can strongly affect the character of a building. The retention and maintenance of the original or early elements is important.

Guideline 1.1 Retain character-defining features that are intact.

- a) *Do not remove or damage character-defining features.*
- b) *Preserve intact features with appropriate maintenance techniques.”*

“3. Alterations

Buildings undergo alterations over time, and compatible changes may occur to traditional buildings. A new alteration should be planned to retain a building’s original or traditional integrity. Alterations should be designed to avoid destruction of key features, so that one may continue to interpret the original character of the property.

Guideline 3.1 Design an alteration to be compatible with the traditional character of the property.

- a) *Avoid alterations that would hinder the ability to interpret the architectural character or significance of the existing original building.*
- b) *Avoid alterations that seek to imply stylistic or historical components that are inconsistent with the style or period of the existing or original building. For example, it would be inappropriate to apply Spanish Colonial Revival elements to a Mid-Century Modern building.*

Guideline 3.2 Avoid alterations that remove or damage original or traditional features.”

“b) Do not cover up traditional or original features.”

“7. Building Components

7.1 Windows

The arrangement, proportions, and design of windows and other openings in a building façade (“fenestration”) is an important aspect of the visual and architectural design character of a building. Fenestration is often designed in a pattern or multiple patterns. These patterns are essential to the character of the building and should be retained. The character-defining features of an early window, the distinctive materials, profile (silhouette), and details should be preserved. Some of the character-defining features of an early window include, but are not limited to, the frame, sash, muntins, mullions, glass, glazing, beads, sills, heads, jambs, moldings, and operation.”

“Guideline 7.1.1 Preserve the position, number, and pattern or arrangement of the windows in a building façade.”

“b) Do not add a new window opening because it may disturb the composition of windows in an important façade. This is especially important on the front or a street facing side of the building because the historic ratio and pattern of solid wall to window opening is a character-defining feature.”

“Guideline 7.1.2 Retain the traditional ratio of window openings to solid wall (“solid to void”) on a primary façade.

a) Do not increase or reduce the amount of glass on a character-defining façade. The dimensions of window frame components have a direct relationship to the size of the glass of a window.

b) Some flexibility in the ratio of solid (opaque) materials to void (transparent) materials may be more appropriate for secondary façades not visible from the public right-of-way.

Guideline 7.1.3 Retain the size and proportions of a window opening.

a) Do not reduce an original opening to accommodate a smaller window or increase it to receive a larger window.

b) Retain the proportion of the original window.”

- 3) Considerations: Throughout the Guidelines, preference is expressed for the retention and rehabilitation of Downtown’s historic resources where feasible. In this instance, the original appearance of this historically significant building has evolved over time, most significantly with the mid-century recladding that fully concealed the historic façade. In previous project reviews, staff and the Commission have contemplated the appropriateness of retaining that façade as historically significant in its own right, but this and previous applications have documented failures in that installation that make its retention infeasible.

While previous iterations of the historic façade are fully documented in photographs, the applicant has also provided information indicating that the historic façade behind the mid-century cladding is not in a salvageable condition and presumably would have to be recreated with largely or entirely new materials.

As an alternative to such a reconstruction, the applicant proposes an entirely new design, with reference to the historic building’s architectural character in the form of building materials, proportions, fenestration patterns, and the entrance canopy. The proposed design retains the form and configuration of the historic cast-in-place concrete structure, clad in brick. Curtain wall mullions follow the placement of the historic punched openings in the masonry façade. Entry canopies, brick detailing, and a stepped-

back detail in the location of a previously demolished cornice also reference the architectural character of the historic building.

Recreation of historic buildings, even those nearly or completely lost such as to a fire, can be an appropriate treatment of a historic property, as articulated in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation, and for Reconstruction. The subject property is one of the oldest in downtown Oklahoma City and its significance could certainly warrant a more accurate restoration of the historic appearance. However, the proposed renovation does not negate the possibility of a future, more accurate recreation of the historic design. It also avoids the creation of a faux historic appearance by utilizing design components that are clearly of their own time while respecting the historic evolution of the property.

It may be appropriate for the applicant to consider documenting remaining elements of the building as they conduct removal of the mid-century cladding in order to add to the record of the building's evolution.

E. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- 1. Approve the application** on the basis that the project complies with the regulations and guidelines of the Downtown Design District zoning ordinance as referenced in Sections C and D of the Staff Report.

Note: Staff recommendations do not constitute Committee decisions.

Attachments: Zoning Map, Application, Design Statement, Drawings, Photos.