

# CITY OF JERSEY CITY

Department of Housing, Economic Development & Commerce  
Division of City Planning



## Interdepartmental Memorandum

DATE: 5/12/2021  
TO: Historic Preservation Commission  
FROM: Daniel M. Wrieden, Historic Preservation officer  
CC: Liz Barna, Esq., HPC Counsel  
NoRR Caitlin DiMarzio, Applicant  
Jersey City Medical Center c/o Jay I. Beispiel, Owner  
Robert Verdibello, Esq  
/File  
RE: Case #H21-196  
350 Montgomery Street (Also known as the former *Jersey City Museum*)  
Block: 12808 Lot 21  
Zone: H / Van Vorst Park Historic District (Extension)  
Commercial Reuse Zone- Montgomery Gateway Redevelopment Plan

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### I. PLANS AND DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1. Historic Preservation Application, submitted 10.9.2020 and subsequently amended
2. Architectural Plans by Caitlyn Di Marzio of NORR entitled ***Museum Consolidation*** 350 Montgomery Street, Jersey City Planning Board submission: April 16, 2021

### II. PROJECT & PROPOSAL BACKGROUND

The property, an altered, contributing building in the Van Vorst Park Historic District Extension, has been owned by the Jersey City Medical Center (as per the attached application) a subsidiary of Liberty Health Care System, (herein referred to as "The Owner") as noted in the Jersey City Tax Record since 12/30/11. The property was originally constructed as a United States Postal Service garage circa 1925, was later expanded to allow for public parking, and was ultimately converted into the Jersey City Museum after approvals for rehabilitation were granted by the Jersey City Historic Preservation Commission on 10-21-1996. The museum closed due to lack of funding in 2010, but reopened briefly in 2012. After litigation between the City and the trustees of the museum, by mutual agreement, the Jersey City Museum Collection was gifted to the Zimmerli Museum at Rutgers University in New Brunswick in December 2018.\* The current proposal calls for the conversion of the former, and now largely empty museum to an office building which will house administrative functions and departments of the Medical Center; the current owner. The proposed rehabilitation does not propose medical or clinical care of patients at the site

Per the submitted application and plans prepared by Caitlyn Di Marzio of NORR entitled

***Museum Consolidation 350 Montgomery Street, Jersey City, Planning Board submission: April 16, 2021***, the applicant is seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness for proposed interior and exterior alterations and interior renovation to allow for office and administrative use. Specifically, the application notes the following work:

The installation of ten new windows with applied muntins which recall the original muntin configuration in the second floor of the existing building. The windows be made of Kawneer EnCore storefront and painted an appropriate historic red color. These windows will be placed in original window openings which were closed off with limestone panels when the museum was constructed. All other limestone panels will be painted a uniform, dark grey color to coordinate with the proposed glazing.

The modern storefront and entrance for the former museum will be removed and two bays will be reopened to their original size. The new entry will be replaced with a modern Kawneer Encore system to coordinate with the proposed window installation above.

A new 20 square foot sign with the inscription *RW Barnabas* is proposed for over the entryway. (Not currently subject to HPC review under E.O.20-007)

The application and submitted plans were deemed complete by HPC Staff on April 26, 2020. This application comes to the HPC as a referral and recommendation to the Jersey City Planning Board due to its location in the Commercial Reuse Zone of the *Montgomery Gateway Redevelopment Plan*.

### **III. PROPERTY LOCATION & JURISDICTION**

350 Montgomery Street (herein referred to as "The Property") is located in the Van Vorst Park Historic District Extension. As defined in the City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance, and as shown on the City's official zoning map the property is zoned as H and is also located within the Commercial Reuse Zone of the *Montgomery Gateway Redevelopment Plan*.

The property is a contributing building within the Van Vorst Park Historic District Extension, designated on October 11, 1984, as well as on the on the National and State Registers of Historic Places on October 11, 1984, respectively. The HPC's jurisdiction regarding the property is defined per § 345-30, entitled *Historic Preservation Review Procedures*:

- a. *No permit shall be issued or amended nor shall any construction, alteration, minor alteration, ordinary maintenance and repair or demolition be started on a landmark building nor on any sign, building, structure, object, site or landscape feature within a designated historic district, whether or not a construction permit is required, prior to a filing of an application for review by the Historic Preservation Commission or the issuance of either a Certificate of Appropriateness or a Certificate of No Effect.*



Additionally, per 2(a), *"The Historic Preservation Officer shall refer all applications for **new construction, alterations, relocation or demolition** to the Historic Preservation Commission for review."*

Due to the building's location in the Commercial Reuse Zone of the *Montgomery Gateway Redevelopment Plan*, this application comes to the HPC as referral from the Planning Board per 40:55D-110 of the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law. Per this provision, the historic Preservation Commission "... may provide its advice, which shall be conveyed through its delegation of one of its members or staff to testify orally at the hearing of the application and to explain any written report which may have been submitted."

#### **IV. REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS FOR CONSIDERATION**

Staff notes regarding the Powers and Duties of the Historic Preservation Commission:

Per § 345-9, entitled Historic Preservation Commission, Section (B) entitled Powers and Duties of the Historic Preservation Commission, the Commission has the following relevant powers and duties:

(4) To advise and assist City officers, employees, boards and other bodies, including those at County, regional, State and Federal levels, on all matters which have potential impact on the landmark buildings, sites, structures, object or landscape features in the City or on the ambience of a historic district.

(17) To issue Certificates of Appropriateness or Certificates of No Effect in accordance with the rules and standards set forth herein.

The property is subject to following standards during the Board's consideration regarding the application seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness:

1. *Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*
2. City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance § 345-58 entitled *H - Historic District*
3. City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance § 345-71 entitled *Historic Design Standards*
4. City of Jersey City Historic Preservation Commission *Rules & Regulations for Alterations & Additions to Buildings & New Construction in Historic Districts*
5. *Montgomery Gateway Redevelopment Plan*.
6. Executive Order E. O -007, dated 06.10.20

#### **V. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS**

After reviewing the proposed project, Staff finds that the proposal is mostly consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, as well as with the *Historic Design Standards and Rules & Regulations* and recommends approval with conditions. The proposed work, while not a restoration or recreation of the original garage building, or a reinstitution of its original use, complies with the Standards for Rehabilitation. According to the first standard for rehabilitation: if a building cannot be used for its originally intended purpose, that building [should] be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships. The proposed plan will not harm original surviving distinctive materials, features such as external openings, or the building's

relationship to the street and the experience of the historic district as a whole. Considering that the former garage has been a museum with very little relation to the street due to the infill of character defining openings, the proposed window and entry installation can only be welcomed. Since there is no surviving documentary evidence of the original windows aside from a photograph of the building taken circa 1938 for the tax assessor's field card, staff believes that the modern Kawneer system is an appropriate, unobtrusive, obviously contemporary substitute for the original windows which were removed during the museum rehabilitation. The new window and entry systems are meant to be easily recognized as modern infill in the original openings and are ultimately reversible.

The proposed administrative office use will keep some of the alterations made to the former museum under H19-117, including the retention of some masonry window infill which will allow for the continued use of existing interior features constructed for the former museum. As these infilled, blind windows were previously approved by the Commission, and will prove to be ultimately reversible, staff has no professional qualm about allowing existing infill to remain to allow for existing interior spaces to be used for offices. Staff believes that painting the existing limestone infill to match the visual appearance of the proposed window glazing may be continued since staff believes that the paint may discourage further graffiti and allow for new graffiti to be covered in a manner which does not harm historic fabric or detract from the viewer's experience of the building.

In accordance with the Mayor's Executive Order E. O -007, dated 06.10.20, which states, in part, "from the date of this order and for the duration of the current state of emergency, the signage approval requirements set forth in section 345 (M) (4) of the City code are hereby suspended." However, considering the Historic Commission's authority to review signage applications will resume when the current state of emergency is lifted by the State of New Jersey, Staff recommends that the applicant and owner consider appropriate materials, colors, and placement for permanent signage which will not visually intrude on the resource or the surrounding district.

It is staff's professional opinion that, the project as proposed will not cause an adverse effect on the character and/or integrity of the Van Vorst Park Historic District, and nor will the proposed office use have an adverse effect on character defining features of the building. HPC Staff recommends approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness with the following conditions:

1. Material samples shall be submitted to HPC Staff for review before the submission of construction documents for permitting.
2. New windows are to be installed at the façade as close to the plane of the original windows as is possible.
3. The architect, NoRR Caitlin DiMarzio, shall be retained during construction and shall submit as-built, signed and sealed drawings to staff, or a signed and sealed letter representing and noting that site construction was consistent with work approved under this Certificate of Appropriateness before the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
4. Details, Specifications, and Material Submissions not currently submitted to and approved by the HPC under this Certificate of Appropriateness, or changed during the course of construction are remanded back to the HPC.



5. Construction drawings, noting materials and finishes, cross referenced with the material sample board, are to be reviewed by, approved by and signed by the Historic Preservation Officer or HPC Staff for compliance with the issued Certificate of Appropriateness before construction permits are applied for and issued.
6. Upon final approval of this Certificate by the HPC, any deviations from the granted approval must be approved by the HPC, except in cases of emergency affecting the public safety, health and welfare. Requests for deviations from this Certificate are to be submitted through written request of the architect.
7. When necessary, any changes or deviations from the approved drawings are to be clearly bubbled on the construction drawings and noted in an accompanying signed and sealed letter from the architect addressed to Staff.

\* *Jersey City's loss is Rutgers' gain: Dormant museum collection 'gifted' to state university*

<https://www.nj.com/hudson/2019/10/jersey-citys-loss-is-rutgers-gain-dormant-museum-collection-gifted-to-state-university.html> Accessed 5.12.21



