



**Request for City Council Committee Action
From the Department of Community Planning & Economic Development**

Date: November 28, 2005

To: Council Member Gary Schiff, Chair of Zoning and Planning Committee

Prepared by: Amy Lucas, Senior Planner, CPED-Planning (612-673-2422)

Presenter(s) in Committee: Amy Lucas

Approved by: Barbara Sporlein, Director, Planning _____

Subject: Referral from the October 25, 2005 Heritage Preservation Commission Hearing

RECOMMENDATION: To adopt Heritage Preservation Commission findings and approve the variances to allow seven rooftop signs and to exceed the amount of allowed signage on the west and east elevations subject to the staff condition.

Financial Impact (Check those that apply)

No financial impact

Community Impact

Ward: 8

Neighborhood Notification: Central Neighborhood Improvement Association, Midtown Phillips, Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association, Phillips West Neighborhood

City Goals: Consistent with "Preserve and enhance our natural and historic environment and promote a clean, sustainable Minneapolis."

Zoning Code: Section 599.530 and Section 599.490 authorizes the historic variance "to encourage the preservation and reuse of landmarks and properties in historic districts by providing the commission with authority to recommend departure from the literal requirements of any of the applicable zoning applications."

Background/Supporting Information:

The attached report summarizes the actions taken at the Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on October 25, 2005. The staff report, findings, public hearing testimony and recommendations are respectfully submitted for the consideration of your Committee.

Attachments:

1. Application for Historic Variance, 10-31-05
2. HPC Staff Report, 10-7-05

**CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
CPED PLANNING DIVISION
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

FILE NAME: 2843 Elliot Avenue

DATE OF APPLICATION: 10-31-05

APPLICANT: Hess, Roise and Company for Ryan Companies US Inc.

DATE OF HEARING: 11-15-05

HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Landmark

CATEGORY: contributing

CLASSIFICATION: Certificate of Appropriateness for historic variance

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Amy Lucas

DATE: 11-7-05

A. SITE DESCRIPTION:

The Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail-Order Warehouse and Retail Store was designated a Landmark by the Minneapolis City Council on November 4, 2005. The property was also recently listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The property was constructed in 1927 and was designed by the firm, George Nimmons and Company. The property represents a relatively early phase in the development of a company that became a major retailer in the United States. The Sears building represents both the mail order business on which the company was founded, and also the retail store which began to dominate the business soon after the construction of the Minneapolis structure. The Sears tower on Lake Street provided a commanding presence that not only created a focus for retail activity, but acted as a dominant landmark visible through south Minneapolis. The Sears building is also significant because it represents a well-conserved example for the industrial designs of George Nimmons and Company. Nimmons was prominent among architects for his concept of industrial design.

B. BACKGROUND:

The rehabilitation of the Sears Building is nearing completion and has received City approvals. The applicant has applied for tax credits for the rehabilitation and letters from the National Park Service regarding the signage are attached. The National Park Service has approved the seven signs that are part of this historic variance request.

The applicant describes the history of signage at this property in the application and provides historic photos. Two rooftop signs that read "Sear Roebuck and Co." were added in 1931. In 1939, signs that read "Sears" were added to the top of the tower.

C. PROPOSED HISTORIC VARIANCE:

The applicant is applying for an historic variance to allow rooftop signage and to exceed the amount of allowed signage on the west and east elevations.

Section 525.530 of the Minneapolis Zoning Code and section 599.490 of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Regulations authorize the historic variance “to encourage the preservation and reuse of landmarks and properties in historic districts by providing the commission with authority to recommend departure from the literal requirements of any of the applicable zoning regulations.”

The applicant, Ryan Companies, is applying for an historic variance to allow 7 additional signs on the property. All of the signs below are defined as roof signs and roof signs are prohibited in all zoning districts (except a small area in the “Mills District”). In the C3A District one can have one-and-a-half square feet of signage for every foot of primary building wall unless there is a freestanding sign on the zoning lot then there can only be one square foot of signage for every one foot of primary building wall. A freestanding sign has been allowed for historic Sears building zoning lot. The west building wall is 710 feet long and the applicant has 405.3 square feet of signage approved. Most of this previously approved signage is related to the freestanding signs that are within the zoning district of the building, but not the designated parcel. The applicant is proposing 1303.5 more square feet of signage which requires a variance of 998.8 square feet of signage on the western elevation. The east building wall is 695 feet long and the applicant has 133.9 square feet of signage approved. The applicant is proposing 1141 more square feet of signage which requires a variance of 579.9 square feet of signage on the eastern elevation.

The proposed signs are:

1. Two angled signs on the four story section of the building along Lake Street. These two signs measure 27’ wide and 17’ tall and read “Midtown Global Market.” These two signs will have open face channel letters and a white LED lighting along the edge of the letters. The location, size, angle and framework of these signs copy the historic Sears signage at this location. These two signs will be placed near the roof of the east elevation and the west elevation. The original signs were most probably neon.
2. Two signs on the top of the tower. These two signs measure 43’ wide and 10’ tall and read “Midtown.” These signs will be placed on the east elevation and the west elevation of the tower. The two signs will have green LED lighting along the edges and will be attached to a steel frame. They will be placed on the roof of the tower and not to the wall edge of the tower where the original “Sears” signs were attached. The National Park Service stipulated the move of these signs from the parapet to the top of the parapet to limit drilling into the masonry.
3. Two signs will be placed on the top of the roof edge near the rear of the building. These two signs will measure 50’ wide and 44” tall and will read “Allina Commons.” These two signs will have white LED lighting along the word edge and will be attached to a metal framework.
4. One sign will be attached to the top of the three story entrance bay on the west elevation. This marks the main entrance to the building. The sign will measure 50’ wide and 39” tall and will read “Midtown Exchange.” These letters will be aluminum letters and will

be uplit and attached to a metal frame. This sign will not cover the historic carved signage and placement on the roof limits drilling and permanent damage.

All other signage in the drawings has been previously approved by the City and is not part of this application.

D. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:

Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings for historic districts:

1. *In General:*

- a. *Sign message:* All signs, except window signs, real estate signs, project information signs, auxiliary signs, temporary signs and portable signs, are limited to the name and address of the establishment.
- b. *Historic signs:* Maintenance or restoration of existing historic signs is encouraged and should not be counted in number of allowable signs.
- c. *Number of signs:* Each principal building entrance that faces a public street, or each ground floor principal use, whichever is less, is allowed two signs. A corner lot with a principal entrance on each street is allowed two signs per street frontage. The two signs may be a combination of one wall sign, one projecting sign, one ground sign, one banner, and awning signage. However, a property may not have both a projecting sign and a ground sign. Only one of the signs should be illuminated, except that banners and awning signs should never be illuminated. Awning signs are limited to ground floor awnings and are subject to the specific guidelines for awnings and awning signs. Parking lot signs are subject to the specific guidelines for signs accessory to parking lots.
 - d. *Location of building signs:* Wherever possible, signs should be placed in traditional sign locations including the storefront sign band area. Signs should not obscure or damage architectural features including windows, doors, pilasters, columns and historic signs. Building signs should be located only on the primary façade of the building adjacent to the street and should be no higher than fourteen (14) feet, except as otherwise provided in the specific guidelines for wall signs.
- e. *Color:* Sign colors and materials should be compatible with the colors of the building and its surroundings. Day-glo, light reflecting or fluorescent colors or materials are not allowed.
- f. *Installation:* Sign installation should have a minimal impact on the building and to the extent practical allow the building to be returned to its original condition if the sign is removed.

Existing signboards and sign frames should be reused to limit drilling new holes into masonry. Wall signs should be attached to the building through the mortar joints. Projecting signs should be attached to a permanent mounting plate. Awnings should be attached to window or door frames and should never damage masonry.

- g. *Illumination:* Signs may be illuminated externally, internally, or by neon. Plastic face covers should not be placed on illuminated signs. All illuminated building signs should connect to a permanent mounting plate located near the entrance. Electrical conduit should be installed through the permanent mounting plate. Not more than one brick should be damaged by the installation of the permanent mounting plate. Electrical conduit and any lighting fixture should be attached to the sign and not the building wall.

2. *Sign Types Allowed:*

- a. Wall signs.
- b. Projecting signs.
- c. Banners.
- d. Ground signs.
- e. Awning signs.
- f. Window signs.
- g. Marquee signs, on theaters only.
- h. Project information signs.
- i. Real estate signs.
- j. Temporary signs.
- k. Auxiliary signs.
- l. Portable signs.

3. *Sign Types Not Allowed:*

- a. Off-premise advertising signs and billboards.
- b. Roof signs, unless present during the period of significance.
- c. Backlighted signs, backlighted awnings and backlighted awning signs.
- d. Balloon signs.
- e. Individual letters or elements applied to the surface of a building.
- f. Pole signs, unless present during period of significance, or a project information sign, real estate sign, auxiliary sign or sign accessory to a parking lot.
- g. Canopy signs and service area canopy signs.
- h. Signs placed on or painted on a motor vehicle or trailer and parked with the primary purpose of providing signage.
- i. Signs placed or maintained on natural features.
- j. Audible signs.
- k. Signs with moving or swinging parts or elements.
- l. Any sign relating to sexually oriented uses and prohibited by the regulations governing such uses in Chapter 549, Downtown Districts.
- m. Searchlights and strobe lights.
- n. Signs attached to skyway bridges and intended to be read from the public right-of-way.
- o. Animated signs.
- p. Flashing signs.

- q. Changeable copy signs, except on a theater marquee or ground sign.

4. *Guidelines for Specific Types of Signs:*

a. *Wall Signs:*

- i. Location. Wall signs should be located between the first and second floor and should not be higher than fourteen (14) feet, except where the historic sign band is higher. Wall signs should not conceal architectural features or obstruct openings.
- ii. Size. Wall signs should be no more than two (2) feet high and thirty-two (32) square feet in area and should not extend outward from the building more than eight (8) inches.
- iii. Materials. Wall signs may be constructed of wood, metal, painted fiberglass or painted plastic.
- iv. Installation. Wall signs should be attached to the building through the mortar joints. If illuminated, a wall sign should be placed adjacent to or over a permanent mounting plate for electrification. Electrical conduit and lighting fixtures should be attached to the top of the wall sign, and should not be attached to the building. Wall signs should not be painted directly on the surface of the building, except as part of the maintenance or restoration of an existing historic sign.

b. *Projecting Signs:*

- i. Location. Projecting signs should be located near a building entrance and should not be higher than fourteen (14) feet. Projecting signs should not conceal architectural features or obstruct openings, and should not be suspended from the soffit.
- ii. Size. Projecting signs should be no more than twelve (12) square feet in area and should not project more than four (4) feet from the building. The thickness of a projecting sign should not exceed eight (8) inches.
- iii. Materials. Projecting signs may be constructed of wood, metal, painted fiberglass or painted plastic.
- iv. Installation. Projecting signs should always use a single permanent mounting plate.

m. *Signs for multiple tenant buildings:*

An application for approval of a master sign plan for a multiple tenant building may be submitted to the HPC for review and approval. Following approval by the HPC, staff will issue a Certificate of No Change for signs that are consistent with the approved plan.

E. **FINDINGS:**

1. The building is a designated Landmark.
2. Like the zoning code, the Sign Guidelines for historic districts, generally, do not allow roof signs. The exception is if there is historical precedent. In this case, the “Midtown

Global Market” signs and the “Midtown” signs closely mimic the historic Sears signs for size, location and color.

3. The “Allina Commons” roof signs do not have historical precedent at that location but they mimic the historical signs and balance the signage on this extremely long building mass.
4. The signs on the west and east wall exceed the size limit allowed per zoning code, but the size of the building can manage larger signs and has historically done that.
5. The National Park Service has approved the design and location of these proposed signs.
6. The proposed signs do not obscure or damage architectural features of the building. In fact, the main entrance sign that reads “Midtown Exchange” is moved above the carved stone signage.
7. In general, signs on historic buildings should be placed in the sign bands and not higher than 14 feet. In the case of the Sears building, historic sign bands do not exist and historically the signage has always been placed high on the building due to the building’s massive size and early retail use.
8. The sign installation has minimal impact on the building because it is all attached to metal frames and placed on the roof rather than directly drilling into the masonry.
9. The sign proposal does not overwhelm or damage the historic integrity of the Landmark.
10. The proposed variance is compatible with the preservation of the property.

F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the HPC **adopt** staff findings and **forward** to the City Council a recommendation to **approve** the historic variance to allow the additional seven (7) signs with the following conditions:

- 1) The installation of signs does not cause damage to the historic fabric.

G. HPC MOTION:

At the public hearing of October 25, 2005, the Heritage Preservation Commission voted to **adopt** staff findings and conditions and **forward** the recommendation to **approve** the historic variance to allow the additional seven (7) signs.