

May 21, 2003

The Honorable Gary Schiff, Chair  
Zoning and Planning Committee  
350 South Fifth Street, 307 City Hall  
Minneapolis, MN 55415

RE: Historic Variance for 1625 Hennepin Avenue

Dear Council Member Schiff:

At a public hearing on May 13, 2003, the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) reviewed an application by Olson and Co. for an historic variance to allow rooftop signage. The building is a contributing property to the Harmon Place Historic District. The applicant installed a sign reading "Olson + Company" and a 10' tall "brick man" sculpture on their roof without a permit and received a notice of violation (3-11-03) from the inspections department.

After the hearing the applicant submitted a new application to the HPC for a Certificate of Appropriateness to install a sign in the signband as recommended by the HPC. This application will be heard by the HPC at the June 10, 3002 public hearing.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The HPC recommends that the City Council adopt the findings below and **deny** an historic variance to allow the rooftop signage reading "Olson + Company."

1. The building is a contributing structure to the Harmon Place Historic District.
2. The current signage was installed without a required permit.
3. Chapter 543 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, "On-Premise Signs", prohibits roof signs. There is no authorized zoning variance to allow a prohibited sign.

4. Section 599.490 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances authorizes the HPC to recommend a variance from any applicable zoning regulation to encourage the preservation and reuse of landmarks and properties in historic districts.
5. Rooftop signage also is a prohibited sign type in the HPC sign guidelines, “Guidelines for Signs and Signage for Historic Properties and Districts,” adopted in 1993.
6. The Harmon Place Historic District Design Guidelines (adopted by HPC 2002) states “wherever possible, signs should be placed in traditional sign locations including the storefront signband area and upper facade. Existing signboards and sign frames should be reused if possible to limit drilling new holes into masonry.” The property at 1625 Hennepin has a signband area that is an appropriate location for signage.
7. The applicant has not exhibited special conditions or circumstances unique to property that require rooftop signage nor is rooftop signage compatible with the preservation of the property or with other properties in the area.
8. The “brick man” sculpture is considered a work of art and not a sign or logo for the tenant. Therefore the sculpture may remain and is approved as a Certificate of Appropriateness by the HPC.

**Planning Department Recommendation:**

Planning Department staff concurs with the recommendation that the HPC made on May 13, 2003, and recommends that the city council **deny** the request for a historic variance.

Sincerely,

Amy Lucas  
City Planner

Report prepared by: Amy Lucas

Phone Number: 673-2422

Attachments

cc: Council Member Lisa Goodman, Ward 7  
Blake Graham, Planning Department

**REPORT**  
**of the**  
**HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
**of the City of Minneapolis**

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The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission, at its meeting on April 8, 2003, took action to submit the attached recommendation on the following item:

**Historic Variance**

**1625 Hennepin Avenue, a contributing property to the Harmon Place Historic District**

Application by Olson + Company for an historic variance to rooftop signage that reads “Olson + Company.”

- 1) **Motion:** The Heritage Preservation Commission recommends that the City Council deny an historic variance for the rooftop signage that reads “Olson + Company.”