

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

---

---

FILE NAME: Washington Avenue North, between the railroad bridge and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue North  
BZH-25908

CATEGORY/DISTRICT: Interim Protection for the NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic  
District

CLASSIFICATION: Certificate of Appropriateness to allow for tree planting in the boulevard  
along Washington Avenue North, between the railroad bridge and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
North

APPLICANT: David Frank on behalf of the North Loop Neighborhood Association,  
(612) 359-5844

PUBLICATION DATE: June 9, 2009

DATE OF HEARING: June 16, 2009

APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION: June 26, 2009

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Brian Schaffer (612) 673-2670

---

---

**A. BACKGROUND**

The subject area is a three and a half block section of Washington Avenue between the railroad bridge over the Burlington Northern line to 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. The area is located within the National Register of Historic Places Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District.

In 1989 the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District was nationally designated and listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its architectural significance and commerce significance associated with the wholesaling and implementing industries in Minneapolis.

The Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District is historically significant as an area of early commercial growth as the city's warehouse and wholesaling district, which expanded during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when Minneapolis became a major distribution and jobbing center for the upper Midwest. The jobbing -wholesaling, implement warehousing and other related industries shaped the physical, economic and social development of Minneapolis. The district continues to play a role in the economic growth of Minneapolis with shops, restaurants, offices and residential units being developed along side long-established commercial and industrial businesses.

**B. PROPOSED CHANGES**

The applicant is proposing to install 55 trees in the boulevard along Washington Avenue North between the railroad bridge over the Burlington Northern line and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. The project will involve two different planting installations. The first method, and according to the applicant- the preferred method, is the installation of a 6 inch tall by 5 inch wide curb around a 5 foot wide

by 10 foot long boulevard opening. According to the applicant this method is preferred because the “curb protects the tree from excess salt found in urban environments.” There are 28 of these types of planting installations proposed along Washington Avenue and five along 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North between Washington and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street North.

The second method is the installation of a metal grate over a 5 foot wide by 8 foot long opening. This method will be used where the sidewalk width is too narrow for pedestrians (generally east of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue North) and will allow for a wider walking surface. There are 22 of these types of proposed along Washington Avenue. Elevations and plans for these two planting types are located on page L1.03 of Attachment B.

The applicant is proposing four different types of trees. The type of tree, its planted size and average mature size is as follows:

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Botanical Name</b>	<b>Planted Size</b>	<b>Avg. Mature Size</b>
Common Hackberry	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	2.5 inch wide trunk	50 ft tall, 50 ft canopy
Discovery Elm	<i>Ulmus davidaina</i> var. <i>japonica</i>	2.5 inch wide trunk	40 ft tall, 30 ft canopy
Cathedral Elm	<i>Ulmus</i> ‘Cathedral’	2.5 inch wide trunk	50 ft tall, 50 ft canopy
Swamp White Oak	<i>Quercus bicolor</i>	2.5 inch wide trunk	60 ft tall, 60 ft canopy

The mature size of the proposed trees will be limited because of the constraints from their planting sites. The forty or fifty square foot planting beds that are proposed will likely prevent the trees from reaching these mature sizes. Anecdotally, the size the trees might reach will likely be between one third and one half of their potential mature size, much of this has to do with the planting beds and the typically life expectancy of street trees, which is less than 15 years.

The applicant states the following about the purpose of their project.

The purpose of the North Loop Neighborhood Street Tree Planting project (“Project”) on Washington Avenue North – from the railroad tracks at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North to 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue North - is to install trees in a neighborhood which is currently lacking in all forms of green space in the Minneapolis Warehouse National Historic District.

It has long been a key goal of the North Loop Neighborhood to plant trees along Washington Avenue North. The effort led to conversations and planning beginning several years ago, but it is only in the past year, with many hours of volunteer effort and a commitment by the neighborhood to spend planning dollars, that the effort has moved ahead towards tree planting. The effort gained a boost with Mayor Rybak’s Washington Boulevard vision, and since last spring private fundraising efforts have had much success. The Phase One tree planting area described here includes some work which would happen this year and additional work which will happen when more funds are secured. Neighborhood volunteers are currently meeting with City Public Works staff to determine the technical details of distances from parking meters and curbs, necessary sidewalk widths, and the like, leading to the necessary encroachment permit.

## **C. FINDINGS**

- (1) The alteration is compatible with and continues to support the criteria of significance and period of significance for which the landmark or historic district was designated.**

The period of significance for the district is 1865-1930. The district was an industrial warehousing, manufacturing and commercial area. The district was nationally designated for the impact the wholesaling and agricultural implement industry had on the commerce of Minneapolis and the architecture that embodied that industry. Street trees may not have been present during the period of significance, but they do not detract from the criteria of significance as evidenced from other existing of street trees in the historic district.

- (2) The alteration is compatible with and supports the interior and/or exterior designation in which the property was designated.**

The district was designated for the impact the wholesaling and agricultural implement industry had on the commerce of Minneapolis and the architecture that embodied that industry. The proposed street trees add greenery and increase the livability of this area during a time when the area is transitioning from its historic industrial and commercial uses to a residential and commercial neighborhood. The proposed trees support the local nomination and national register designation.

- (3) The alteration is compatible with and will ensure continued integrity of the landmark or historic district for which the district was designated.**

The proposed reconstruction will not impair the integrity of the district. It will increase the livability of the area by providing greening to the area. This will likely have positive impacts to the district by providing residents and businesses with a much desired element of urban fabric, which will contribute to the value and longevity of the properties in the district.

- (4) The alteration will not materially impair the significance and integrity of the landmark, historic district or nominated property under interim protection as evidenced by the consistency of alterations with the applicable design guidelines adopted by the commission.**

The subject area is contained solely by the NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District, which is under local interim protection as a local designation study is being conducted. There are no local guidelines for this area under interim protection. However, the NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District includes portions of the locally designated St. Anthony Fall Historic District and the entirety of North Loop Warehouse Historic District. Neither of these districts has specific guidance addressing street trees, but street trees are prevalent in both of these local historic districts.

- (5) The alteration will not materially impair the significance and integrity of the landmark, historic district or nominated property under interim protection as**

**evidenced by the consistency of alterations with the recommendations contained in The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.**

The guidelines for Setting in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are most applicable to the proposed project. The guidelines recommend "retaining the historic relationship between buildings and landscape features of the setting." The proposed trees will add another layer of fabric to the area, which will obscure small portions of these significant structures. Some tree locations may have an impact on the relationship between the historic structures and the general landscape features of the historic district. Staff believes that the negative impact to this relationship can be minimized by trying to center the location of trees within or between the bays of the buildings and avoiding locating trees in front of the entrances of buildings.

- (6) The certificate of appropriateness conforms to all applicable regulations of this preservation ordinance and is consistent with the applicable policies of the comprehensive plan and applicable preservation policies in small area plans adopted by the city council.**

The proposed street trees are supported by implementation step 8.5.2 of the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth, which states "Encourage planting and maintenance of street trees and other natural elements in historic districts to promote livability."

***Adequate consideration of related documents and regulations.* Before approving a certificate of appropriateness, and based upon the evidence presented in each application submitted, the commission shall make findings that alterations are proposed in a manner that demonstrates that the applicant has made adequate consideration of the following documents and regulations:**

- (1) The description and statement of significance in the original nomination upon which designation of the landmark or historic district was based.**

See above analysis

- (2) Where applicable, Title 20 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, Zoning Code, Chapter 530, Site Plan Review.**

Not applicable

- (3) The typology of treatments delineated in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the associated guidelines for preserving, rehabilitating, reconstructing, and restoring historic buildings.**

The treatment can be best described as rehabilitating. The setting and location of the street are original, but the materials are not. Much like many of the structures in the district have been rehabilitated for adaptive reuse from their former industrial uses to other commercial or residential uses the infrastructure is being rehabilitated to reflect the growth of this growing urban neighborhood.

***Additional findings for alterations within historic districts.* Before approving a certificate of appropriateness that involves alterations to a property within an historic district, the commission shall make findings based upon, but not limited to, the following:**

- (1) The alteration is compatible with and will ensure continued significance and integrity of all contributing properties in the historic district based on the period of significance for which the district was designated.**

The proposed street trees will increase the livability of the area and be more inviting to pedestrians. These improvements could increase pedestrian traffic, which will ensure the attractiveness of the area for residents, businesses and visitors. The proposed locations of the trees does not compromise any historic infrastructure or historic materials as there are no loading docks, original sidewalk or street materials, or other character defining infrastructure features that will be lost or obscured.

The architecture of the structures is significant to the district; the proposed trees will add another layer of fabric to the area, which will obscure small portions of these significant structures. Some tree locations may have an impact on the ability of a structure to convey its significance. Staff believes that these minor visual intrusions can be minimized by trying to center the location of trees within or between the bays of the buildings and avoiding locating trees in front of the entrances of buildings. Staff believes this will mitigate the minimal impact to the integrity of the structures and their ability to convey their architectural significance. This is evidenced by the numerous trees that line the streets of other portions of the historic district. See Attachment C.

- (2) Granting the certificate of appropriateness will be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and will not negatively alter the essential character of the historic district.**

The proposed street trees will enhance the essential character of the historic district, while preserving its industrial feel.

- (3) The certificate of appropriateness will not be injurious to the significance and integrity of other resources in the historic district and will not impede the normal and orderly preservation of surrounding resources as allowed by regulations in the preservation ordinance.**

The proposed alterations will not alter the significance or integrity of other resources in the district and will continue to allow for normal and orderly preservation of surrounding resources in the district.

## **F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings and **approve** the certificate of appropriateness certificate of appropriateness to allow for tree planting in the boulevard along Washington Avenue North, between the railroad bridge over the Burlington Northern line and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue North with the following condition:

1. Where possible the proposed trees shall be centered within or between the bays of buildings as shown in elevation.
2. The proposed street trees shall not be located in front of entrances of buildings.
3. The Applicant receives the proper encroachment permits from the Public Works Department of the City of Minneapolis and other necessary City of Minneapolis approvals for the proposed trees and accompanying infrastructure improvements.
4. CPED-Planning review and approve final plans including a typical section detail showing trees and building and typical plan detail showing tree canopy.

## **F. ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Map of Site
- B. Application
- C. Plans
- D. Pictures