

**Community Planning & Economic Development  
Planning Division**

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**City of Minneapolis**  
*Department of Community Planning  
& Economic Development - CPED*

## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Heritage Preservation Commission  
FROM: Aaron Hanauer, Senior City Planner 612.673.2494  
DATE: July 13, 2010  
RE: Ceresota Building: Pre-Application Review

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Historically known as the Northwestern Consolidated Milling Company Elevator A, the Ceresota Building at 155 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue South is a contributing resource in the St. Anthony Falls Historic District, sub-district West Bank Milling District (Attachment A2.5). The Ceresota building was constructed in 1908 and was used to clean and store grain for the adjacent Crown Roller and Standard Mills. After milling operations ceased in the 1950s, the Ceresota building was used for grain storage until the early 1980s.

The flat-roofed, rectangular shaped brick building features a seven-story brick base (Attachment B9-B11). This section of the building is without windows on the east, west, and south elevations. The south façade fronting Second Street South features a painted sign that covers approximately half of the building wall with the word “Ceresota” and the brand’s historic logo. Above this portion of the building is a four story tower-like former workhouse section located near the buildings’ west façade.

### **1986 Heritage Preservation Commission Review**

The Standard Flour Mill building to the east and north of the Ceresota, and the Crown Roller Mill building to the north and west of the Ceresota were part of a certified restoration tax credit project through the National Park Service in 1986-1987. As part of that project, the Standard Flour Mill building was converted in to a luxury hotel, and the Crown Roller Mill and Ceresota buildings were converted into office space. The 1986-1987 restoration tax credit project also required Heritage Preservation Commission approval. At the June 1986 HPC meeting, the Commission approved the following alterations to the Ceresota Building (Attachment A3-A8):

- Removal of the train shed and overhead conveyor bridges;
- Addition of a three-story metal and glass entrance bay on the north façade;
- Addition of a two-story copper roofed canopy on the west façade;
- Addition of 60 window openings on the eastern portion of the north elevation.
- Addition of window openings in the workhouse to “complete pattern suggested by existing scattered windows.

The 1986 HPC permit review states that, "Presently the north elevation is left void by removal of hoppers, chutes, equipment, train shed and Ceresota façade (Attachment A9). The HPC in support of the new window openings state that, "New openings in the north elevation cut for office occupation will reiterate pattern established by the Standard, Crown Mill, and Ceresota: placing a single large double hung window centrally in each bay (Attachment A5)."

Prior to receiving approval for the 60 windows on the eastern portion of the north elevation in 1986, the previous owner submitted proposals that included window openings on the west elevation and south elevation (Attachment A18). However, these proposals did not receive State Historic Preservation Office or Heritage Preservation Commission approvals. A main reason that the 1986 windows were approved on the north elevation was because these windows are on a secondary elevation, and have minimal visibility compared to other portions of the building (Attachment A21).

All of the 1986 exterior alterations are visible today (Attachment B10-B11)

### **2008 Application and HPC Approvals**

At the July 29, 2008 HPC meeting, the Applicant proposed to add a total of 54 windows to the north and west facades (Attachment B22-B26). No windows were proposed for the south or east elevations. On the north elevation, the Applicant proposed a total of 14 windows be added to the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth floors. On the west elevation, the Applicant proposed to add 40 windows, 8 on each of the five floors. All of the windows were proposed to match the 1980 windows in profile, color, and size. Sill and head details were proposed to be matched with salvaged brick.

The existing metal canopy on the first floor was also proposed to be modified with the installation of a skylight system; new windows would be located on the first floor behind the canopy.

For the 2008 Certificate of Appropriateness, CPED recommended that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt the staff findings and approve the Certificate of Appropriateness with three conditions:

1. No new window openings will be added to the west elevation;
2. The proposed 14 new windows on the north elevation are permitted; the new windows will match the existing c.1980's windows on this façade in terms of profile, color, size, and materials;
3. All final plans and elevations will be subject to approval by CPED Preservation Planning staff.

After the Commissioners discussed the proposal, a motion was made to strike condition #1 and to allow for 40 windows on the west elevation. This motion failed by a vote of 4-2.

A second motion was then proposed that revised condition 2 and added a fourth condition. The conditions of the second motion were as follows:

1. No new window openings will be added to the west elevation;
2. Six new windows on the west end of the north elevation shall not be permitted, but the other eight windows shall be permitted; the new windows will match the existing c.1980s

windows on this façade in terms of profile, color, size, and materials (see Attachment A10);

3. All final plans and elevations will be subject to approval by CPED Preservation Planning staff;
4. That the canopy itself be approved but the CAL-Wall material is not approved for use in its construction.

This motion passed by a vote of 4-2.

The Certificate of Appropriateness approvals for this proposal were valid until July 29, 2009. The property owner, however, decided not to pull permits and complete the work pursuant the conditions of approval.

## **2010 Discussion**

The property owner, Ceresota Mill Limited, is considering a Certificate of Appropriateness application that would revise their 2008 proposal by requesting more windows than asked for in 2008. The property owner has requested a pre-application review so that the Heritage Preservation Commission can provide CPED insight and advice on their latest proposal.

Ceresota Mill Limited is now proposing to add a total of 171 windows to the north, west, and south elevations (Attachment B30-B32). Windows are not proposed for the east elevation because of the code implications of installing windows in a zero lot line circumstance. The most recent proposal includes adding 47 windows on the north elevation, 54 windows on the west elevation (including 10 windows beyond the metal shed roof structure), and 70 windows on the south elevation (Attachment B1-B2, and B30-B32).

New window openings have not been approved on the west elevation in 1986 or 2008. New windows were not proposed on the south elevation in 2008.

The submitted narrative states that the building is currently used as an office building. The property owner highlights that in its current configuration over 70 percent of the office space does not have access to natural light, and 95 percent does not have access to views (Attachment B1). Ceresota Mill Limited states that, "The current use of the building will have to be continued as an office building. Over \$20 million dollars have been invested into making the interior look and function as an office building. However, if it is to be used as an office building it must have one of the most basic needs of office space, windows that provide both daylight and a view on the south, west and north elevation (Attachment B1)."

The narrative adds that, "Without windows the building is unable to attract tenants, and thus unable to pay for necessary maintenance and upgrades (Attachment B2)." The property owners state that they have had issues retaining office tenants due to limited windows (Attachment B3-B4, B7). Other issues that are mentioned are the following:

- having operating costs for the building are over \$9 a square foot, while lease rates have been below \$9 a square foot (Attachment B4),
- vacancy rates over 50 percent,
- future costly maintenance cost repairs (Attachment B4).

Ceresota Mill Limited has looked into the building becoming a storage facility, however, they have found the conversion of the building to storage as cost prohibitive (Attachment B8).

### **CPED Analysis**

The north and west elevations of the Ceresota Building are primary elevations, and the brick, windowless features of these elevations are character-defining features of this historic grain elevator (Attachment A19-A20). The north elevation is a secondary elevation since it does have less visibility than the north and west elevation; however, it is still an important part of the building's character and does have visibility from West River Road and the Riverfront (A21-A22). The location of the 1986 windows was sensitive to the historic character of the building.

Ceresota Mill Limited's window proposal most recent proposal is not consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards or Guidelines for Rehabilitation. The Secretary of Interior Guidelines for Rehabilitation state that, "Installing new windows, including frames, sash, and muntin configuration that are incompatible with the building's historic appearance or obscure, damage, or destroy character-defining features," is not recommended. Ceresota Mil Limited's proposal to install 171 new window openings into the north, west, and south elevations would damage and/or destroy the building's massing, historic character, and character defining features.

The National Park Service provides additional guidance for adding windows to blank walls or secondary elevations in their Interpreting the Standards bulletin (Attachment A16-A17). The Bulletin explains the importance of using careful consideration when adding new windows to historically blank and secondary elevations. The Bulletin states that "Since [blank walls] and secondary elevations can contribute to the historic character of a building, the integration of new openings requires careful consideration to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. This can be done through attention to the number, location, and design of proposed new openings during the design process (Attachment A16). The most recent proposal did not use careful consideration when choosing the location of new window openings. The proposal would destroy the massing and look of the building as well as the building's corbelled cornice.

It is also noteworthy that when Ceresota Mill Limited approached CPED about a possible pre-application review with the HPC, this proposal did not include windows within the cornice line or on the south elevation. It was only after CPED staff scheduled the informational item that Ceresota Mill Limited sent new drawings indicating the proposed windows in these areas.

### **Discussion**

The property owner and the property owner's consultant seek your insight and advice on the project.

## **Attachments**

### Attachment A:

- A1: Context Map
- A2: St. Anthony Falls Historic District Map
- A2.5: St. Anthony Falls Subdistrict Map
- A3-A8: 1996 HPC Review of Window Proposal
- A9: 1945 Aerial
- A10: 7/29/2008 COA Application Approval
- A11-A15: St. Anthony Falls Historic District Guidelines
- A16-A17: Interpreting the Standards
- A18: Ceresota 1980 Proposal
- A19-A23: Ceresota Building Images

### Attachment B:

- B1-B6: Project Narrative
- B7: Ceresota Office Building Leasing Efforts
- B8: Ceresota Storage Potential
- B9-B18: Existing Images
- B19-B21: Historic Images
- B22-B26: 2008 Window Addition Proposal
- B27-B34: 2010 Window Addition Proposal