

**CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

FILE NAME: 901 Nicollet Mall/Young Quinlan Building (BZH 25397)

CATEGORY/DISTRICT: Landmark

CLASSIFICATION: Historic Variance

APPLICANT: Shea Inc.

DATE OF APPLICATION: April 21, 2008

PUBLICATION DATE: May 13, 2008

DATE OF HEARING: May 20, 2008

APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION : May 30, 2008

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Aaron Hanauer

REQUEST: Historic variance to allow for a proposed sign package that does not meet Zoning Code requirements.

A. SITE DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND:

The Young Quinlan (YQ) Building, built in 1926, is located at the southeast corner of Ninth Street South at the Nicollet Mall. The YQ Building is a local landmark with interior and exterior designation. It is significant for its association with the early concept of high quality modern merchandising in Minneapolis. The Young Quinlan Department store was the first ready-to-wear shop in Minneapolis, and was originally opened in 1894 at 513 Nicollet Avenue.

The Young Quinlan Building has an impressive and ornate exterior appearance. The building is five stories above ground and 2 ½ stories below ground. All four sides of the building are finished in the same manner with tan brick. The first story is constructed of Kasota stone and has round and square arch display windows. Balustraded second story window have side lights and are framed in an alternative pattern of carved pillars and ionic pilasters. Between the second and third floors are silver flag poles that project approximately 9 feet from the building. The third through fifth stories have multi-paned windows with Kasota frames. The top story is accented by stone moldings above and beneath the windows.

The Young Quinlan Building has had four, 1st floor retail establishments over the last few years. Currently, the building has a Starbucks Coffee shop, Haskell's Wine Store, the new JB Hudson Jewelry location, and the Target commercial furniture store will be taking over the former Crate and Barrel location in the upcoming months.

B. HISTORIC VARIANCE APPLICATION AND ORDINANCES:

The applicant, Shea Inc, is applying for a Certificate of Appropriateness and Historic Variance on behalf of JB Hudson Jewelry to allow for a sign package that does not meet three Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings (see Section D for details) and two zoning code provisions. The scope of this application is to review how the sign package does not meet two zoning code requirement and the applicant's subsequent request for a historic variance. The three items that do not meet the HPC Design Guidelines are addressed in the COA application and staff report (BZH 25412).

For a historic variance, the Heritage Preservation ordinance requires the Heritage Preservation Commission to make findings that the variance is compatible with the preservation of the property and with other properties in the area, and that the variance is necessary to alleviate undue hardship due to special conditions or circumstances unique to the property and not created by the applicant (see Appendix A5 for Historic Variance provisions).

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.”

C. PROPOSED CHANGES:

The applicant is proposing a sign package for JB Hudson Jewelers (see Appendix A4 for rendering). JB Hudson Jewelry extends 149 of the 215 linear feet of the YQ Building along 9th Street, and 43 of the 157 linear feet of the YQ Building along Nicollet Mall. The proposal includes adding 10 awnings, an awning valance, 9 banners, and 5 wall signs. None of these signs are proposed to be illuminated. The total square footage of signage is proposed to be 459 square feet; 357 square feet of signage along 9th Street and 102 square feet along Nicollet Mall. The color of the signs is a shade similar to lime green (Pantone 576C).

Of the 10 awnings proposed, eight awnings would be located along 9th Street South and two along Nicollet Mall. They would be built to a height of 12 feet and would read “jb hudson jewelry.” The square footage of the lettering, which is what is considered when calculating signage square footage, is 2.2 square feet per awning (total of 22 square feet). The awning valance also displays the words “jb hudson jewelry on three sides. The square footage of the lettering on the valance, like the awnings is 2.2 square feet, therefore adds 6.6 square feet of additional signage. The total square footage of awning signage is 28.6 feet.

The nine proposed banners would be built to a height of 40 feet and project 9 feet. There would be six banners along 9th Street South, one at the corner of the building, and two banners along Nicollet Mall. The banner would display a “jb” logo and the words “jb hudson jewelry” at the bottom on both sides. The square footage of the logo and lettering is 48 square feet per banner, for a total of 432 square feet.

The five proposed wall signs complete the sign package for JB Hudson Jewelers. These signs are proposed to be bronze plates and read “jb hudson jewelry.” Four of these signs are less than one square foot; another sign is proposed to be 9 square feet and placed at the corner of the building, where a sign has typically been for this building. The total square footage of wall signs is 12 square feet. These signs will reuse the existing holes in the masonry, thus preserving the integrity of the masonry.

Note: The JB Hudson awnings, placards, and one banner are currently installed. They were installed without CPED approval or approval of a sign permit application (see Appendix C4).

D. ZONING CODE AND PRESERVATION ANALYSIS

New signs proposed for historic landmarks and districts are required to comply with the City of Minneapolis zoning code as well as the Heritage Preservation Commission Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings. When there is a conflict between the zoning code and the HPC Guidelines, the more restrictive provision applies.

The Young Quinlan Building, located at 901 Nicollet Mall, is zoned B4-2 and is in the Nicollet Mall Overlay District. The purpose of the Nicollet Mall Overlay District is to, “Preserve and encourage the pedestrian character of the Nicollet Mall area and to provide a street level activity by creating a pleasant and unique pedestrian environment.” In addition, the Nicollet Mall Overlay District encourages awnings and canopies in order to provide protection for pedestrians and to emphasize individual uses and entrances.

The following is a matrix that describes how the square footage of the proposed sign package will be in compliance with the zoning code as well as the five ways that the proposed sign package did not meet the Zoning Code and/or HPC Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings. The applicant is applying for a Historic Variance for the following items that did not meet the zoning code provisions:

1. The height of the projecting sign
2. The distance a projecting sign projects.

Note: For the zoning code and heritage preservation review, the Zoning Administrator determined that the banners were considered projecting signs.

Table 1: Sign Package Analysis

Particular	Zoning Code Allowance	HPC Guidelines	Proposed	Analysis
Total sign square footage: 9 th Street	753 square feet	Not addressed in general sign guidelines. Details are in specific sign requirements.	366 square feet	Building would be in compliance with Zoning Code if application approved
Total sign square footage: Nicollet Mall	550 square feet	Not addressed in general sign guidelines. Details are in specific sign requirements.	102 square feet	Building would be in compliance with Zoning Code if application approved
Number of signs	No limit with size allocation	Two signs per street frontage	18 signs proposed on 9 th Street South and 7 are proposed on Nicollet Mall	Does not meet HPC requirements
Allowed square footage for awning signs.	120 square feet	6 square feet	28.6 square feet	Does not meet HPC requirements
Projecting sign size (banners)	48 square feet	12 square feet	48 square feet	Does not meet HPC requirements
Projecting sign height (banners)	12 feet (Nicollet Mall Overlay District)	14 feet	40 feet	Does not meet Zoning Code and HPC requirements
Projecting sign extension (banners)	4 feet	4 feet	9 feet	Does not meet Zoning Code and HPC requirements

E. HISTORIC VARIANCE ANALYSIS:

As mentioned in Section B of this report, before recommending approval of a historic variance, the HPC needs to make findings that the variance is compatible with the preservation of the property and with other properties in the area, and that the variance is necessary to alleviate undue hardship due to special conditions or circumstances unique to the property and not created by the applicant.

The historic variance is needed to allow for a sign package that does not meet the Zoning Code requirements for on-premise signs. In particular, the historic variance is needed to allow for the maximum height of a projecting sign to be increased from 12 feet to 40 feet, and for a the maximum extension of a projecting sign outward from the building to be 9 feet rather than the required 4 feet.

The applicant states that the need for the historic variance is in order to maintain the historic façade (see Appendix A). CPED recognizes that the proposal has been sensitive to the historic exterior character of the Young Quinlan Building in at least three ways. First, the proposal uses existing flag poles rather than proposing to drill additional holes into masonry or mortar joints. These flag poles have been a part of the building since 1929 and have been used for other tenant signage (see Appendix B1 and C1). Second, the proposed square footage of the sign package is below what is allowed by the Zoning Code for this zoning district. Third, the signs do not cover up architectural details of the building.

CPED also believes that the proposed sign package is compatible with local landmark and other properties in the area. As previously mentioned, the proposed amount of signage is within what the zoning code square footage allowance. In addition, staff feels that the sign package does not detract from the pedestrian feel of the area, add to sign clutter, or set a precedent for allowing for an increase in height for signage.

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

CPED notified property owners within 350 ft. of the historic variance request. A letter was received from the Downtown Council, who reviews sign permit applications along Nicollet Mall, and wrote a letter in support of the proposed sign package for JB Hudson Jewelry (see Appendix C).

G. FINDINGS:

1. The Young Quinlan Building located at 901 Nicollet Mall is a City of Minneapolis landmark.
2. The proposed sign package for JB Hudson does not meet the Zoning Code requirements for the height of a projecting sign and for how far a projecting sign is allowed to project.
3. The proposed sign package is compatible with the preservation of the property and with the other properties in the area including the Nicollet Mall.
4. The historic variance will help protect the architectural integrity of the Young Quinlan Building by allowing for a sign package that does not harm the exterior of the building and does not cover up important architectural details.

H. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the HPC adopt staff findings and **approve** the Historic Variance to allow for the proposed projecting signs to be built to a height of 40 feet, and for the projecting signs to be allowed to extend nine feet from the building with the condition that CPED-Planning review and approve the final sign permit application.

I. ATTACHMENTS:

- Appendix A: Application
- Appendix B: Historic Photos
- Appendix C: Staff Photos
- Appendix D: Nicollet Mall Advisory Board Letter