

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

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FILE NAME: 800 Washington Avenue North, Deere-Webber Building BZH-25845

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

CLASSIFICATION: Certificate of Appropriateness to allow for the installation of six telecommunication antennas on the chimney, coaxial cable along the rear of the building and an equipment cabinet behind the structure.

APPLICANT: Pat Conlin, FHMC Corporation on behalf of T-Mobile, (952) 835-1072

PUBLICATION DATE: May 5, 2009

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APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION: May 22, 2009

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

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**A. BACKGROUND**

The six-story Deere-Webber Company building is constructed with beige brick in a simplified Richardsonian Romanesque Style. The heavy exterior wall, which is battered in the first story, rises uninterruptedly to an outward curving parapet which terminates the composition. Deep window reveals emphasize the weight and solidity of the walls. The second and third story windows are unified within segmentally arched openings while the fourth through sixth story windows are organized within semicircular arched openings. The original entryway consisted of an arched opening with Sullivanesque ornamentation and two terra cotta deer head flanking the entry. The only other ornament is a terra cotta band with scroll ends below the second and fourth story windows. Mortar joints are laid flush in a mortar slightly darker than the brick.

An adjacent nine-story addition of similar massing, proportion and fenestration was constructed in 1910. The parapet, identical to that of the six-story building, has been removed. A loading dock was constructed adjacent to this section of the building sometime after 1927.

The Deere-Webber Building was the Minneapolis branch of the John Deere Company and remained under the ownership of the John Deere Company until 1963, when it was sold and converted to office space.

**B. PROPOSED CHANGES**

The applicant is proposing to install six telecommunication antennas on the chimney of the building, coaxial cable down the wall of the nine-story portion of the building and install an equipment cabinet behind the structure.

T-Mobile has provided an analysis of its coverage area and explanation for its decision to pursue this location for the antenna installation (See Exhibit E.) The applicant states that:

The primary objective of this cell site is to provide improved in-building coverage in the commercial area along Washington Avenue North between 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North and Plymouth Avenue. Currently, in this area, there is very poor or no in-building coverage. The most important design criterion for this site is its proximity to the target area. Due to substantial signal losses incurred in penetrating buildings such as those along Washington Avenue, this new site must be within or as close to the target area as possible.

The applicant studied seven candidates for the antenna location including the Ford Center at 420 5<sup>th</sup> Street North, 701 Washington Avenue North, 700 Washington Avenue North, 111 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, 718 Washington Avenue North, and 528 Washington Avenue North. The subject site was chosen as it was the only willing landlord. The applicant states the chimney “provides a minimum height upon which the antenna could achieve the design objectives.” The applicant further states that “any lowering of the antenna height compromises the effectiveness of the wireless signal to the intended audience.”

### **Antennas**

The six antennas will be installed on a chimney that is located toward the northwest rear portion of the six-story portion of the building. The chimney is immediately adjacent to the nine-story 1910 addition to the building and a penthouse on the nine-story portion of the building. The antennae are proposed to be installed on three of the four façades of the chimney, leaving the southwest facing façade without an antenna. However, a GPS antenna for the T-Mobile emergency 911 system is proposed for the southwest façade.

Each of the six antennas is 8 feet in length and is under a foot in width. The antennas are proposed to be mounted in a manor where they will project approximately 1 foot 8 inches from the surface of the chimney. The top of the antennas will be one foot below the top of the chimney.

The antennae are mounted to the chimney using a bracket and tension rod system. Each antenna will have two bracket contact points with the chimney. These contact points will be spaced four feet apart. In design these system will appear to have two horizontal bands that will hold the mounting hardware for the antennae. Each of the brackets is attached to the building using a threaded tension rod (the horizontal bands) that runs through each antenna mounting bracket and a corner mounting bracket located on the four corners of the chimney. In there will 22 mounting brackets on the chimney connected by two series of tension rods that will run around the entire chimney. The drawings do not indicate if the mounting system will require penetrations in the brick or mortar. See drawing number A10109-S1 for details (Exhibit H).

### **Coaxial Cable**

The coaxial cables that connect the antennae to the equipment cabinet are proposed to run down the northwestern edge of the chimney to the roof top of the nine-story portion of the building, across the roof top and down the rear of the building. The route down the rear of the building will in the crux of the corner of the nine-story building where the building articulates (See Photo in Exhibit C on page 26). The coaxial cables will be covered with a T-Mobile coaxial cable cover painted to match the existing window trim. The cable cover will start approximately ten feet below the top of the chimney.

## **Equipment Cabinet**

The applicant is proposing to install an equipment cabinet an existing freight loading area on the rear of the structure. The proposed location is enclosed on the north facing wall and is open ended on either side. The equipment cabinet is actually a series of cabinet and other mounted equipment located in an approximately 10 by 20 foot area that is proposed to be enclosed by a chain link fence that is 9 feet tall on the northwest side and 12 feet tall on the southeast side. The north wall is a building wall of the structure. A poured concrete slab will contain three mechanical cabinets and an open site for a future cabinet. The equipment area will also include an approximately five and a half foot tall steel rack that will be used hold the electric meter and other mechanicals.

## **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 NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District is nationally designated and is being evaluated for local designation for the significant impact the wholesaling and implement industry had on the commerce of Minneapolis and the architecture that embodied those industries. The period of significance for the district is 1865-1930. The Deere-Webber building is a contributing structure and the proposed antenna installation does not alter the structure's architectural significance.

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

The proposed antenna installation is mounted on the chimney of the Deere-Webber building. The structure is designed by Kees and Colburn and the six story portion was constructed in 1902 and the nine story portion was constructed in 1910. The structure's architecture and the implementing business that it once housed make the building a contributing structure to the district. The chimney is a vernacular portion of the structure that was built for function to vent fumes from the building. The chimney is not visible from the immediately adjacent right-of-way and becomes more visible from vantage points further away from the subject site, but still within the district.

Vertical projections on buildings in the Warehouse Historic District are not uncommon and some have become character defining features of this industrial warehouse district. Structures such as the Northern Bag Company Building (Tower Lofts) at 700 Washington Avenue and the Hall Hardware Company Building (Duffy Paper) at 618 3<sup>rd</sup> Street North are originally designed with these vertical elements. Others buildings such as the Ford Center at 420 5<sup>th</sup> Street North and the Loose-Wiles Biscuit Company at 701 Washington Avenue North have mechanical equipment, such as water towers, that are character defining features of the structures and the district.

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

The antenna installation is proposed on a chimney located toward the rear of the structure and is not visible from public right-of-way adjacent to the primary façades of the structure. Due to the height of the structure and its location the chimney is not visible from the public right-of-way. Because of the location and height of the chimney the subject chimney is not a character defining feature of the structure like many other roof top features and vertical projections in the district. However the chimney does add to the overall industrial context and feeling of the warehouse district. Many of the chimneys in the district have been removed prior to being under interim protection, such as the chimney on the Gurely Candy Factory at 900 3<sup>rd</sup> Street North. As mechanical, plumbing and HVAC requirements change, the use of chimneys has decreased and instead of maintaining these features many have been removed.

The proposed use of the chimney for a telecommunications antenna provides for a new reason to maintain these features, which will ensure that the chimney remain part of the historic district, thus preserving the integrity of the district through preserving the feeling created by these features.

- (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 current NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District is under interim protection and does not have adopted design guidelines.

- (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 Mechanical and Roofs in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are most applicable to the proposed project. The guidelines for Mechanical recommend against "installing a new mechanical system so that character-defining structural or interior features are radically changed, damaged, or destroyed." This is echoed in the Roof guidelines which recommend that "installing mechanical and service equipment on the roof such as air conditioning, transformers, or solar collectors when required for the new use so that they are inconspicuous from the public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure character-defining features." Conversely the guidelines recommend against "installing mechanical or service equipment so that it damages or obscures character-defining features; or is conspicuous from the public right-of-way."

The proposed antenna installation is not visible from the immediate adjacent right-of-way, but is visible from other vantage points within the historic district. The proposed antenna installation consists of six antennae and does not fully obscure the chimney feature.

- (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 antenna installation is considered a major alteration and requires a certificate of appropriateness application.

*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.**  
Chapter 535 of the Zoning Ordinance governs telecommunication towers and antennas. The applicant has provided an evaluation of the proposed project using these zoning requirements. CPED staff is required to review these applications.
- (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.

*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 antenna installation is proposed on a chimney located toward the rear of the structure and is not visible from public right-of-way adjacent to the primary façades of the structure. The proposed chimney is not a character defining feature of the structure like many other roof top features and vertical projections in the district however the chimney does add to the overall industrial context and feeling of the warehouse district. Many of the chimneys in the district have been removed prior to being under interim protection, such as the chimney on the Gurely Candy Factory at 900 3<sup>rd</sup> Street North. As mechanical, plumbing and HVAC requirements change the use of chimneys has decreased and instead of maintaining these features many have been removed.

The proposed use of the chimney for a telecommunications antenna provides for a new reason to maintain these features, which will ensure that the chimney remain part of the historic district, thus preserving the integrity of the district through preserving the feeling created by these vernacular vertical projections.

- (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.**

Granting this certificate of appropriateness will not negatively alter the essential character of the historic district, however, it may encourage future applications for similar installations. The proposed antenna installation is not visible from the adjacent public right-of-way, but is visible from other vantage points in the district. The chimney and the proposed antenna installation are made more visible by the lack of structures on some of the sites within the historic district. If infill occurs in the district the subject area will be even less visible from the public right-of-way. This proposed antenna installation is in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance.

- (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 to allow for the installation of six telecommunication antennas on the chimney, coaxial cable along the rear of the building and an equipment cabinet behind the structure. with the following condition:

1. The proposed antennae, mounting materials including tension rods and brackets, coaxial cable and the coax cover shall be painted to match the color of the brick.
2. All connections of the antennae, mounting materials, coaxial cable and the coax cover shall only be mounted to the building through mortar joints of the brick.
3. The proposed antennae shall not project more than one foot eight inches from the wall of the chimney.
4. The antenna installation shall not be intensified with additional antennas.
5. CPED-Planning review and approve final site plan, floor plans, and elevations including paint samples.

#### **F. ATTACHMENTS**

1. Applicant's Statement of Proposed Use & Project Description
  - Exhibit A. Application Worksheet
  - Exhibit C. Correspondence with SHPO and the Section 106 – including Letter of No Adverse Effect from SHPO
  - Exhibit E. Analysis of T-Mobile's Network Coverage Need
  - Exhibit F. Structural Integrity Certification Letter
  - Exhibit G. Photographic Perspectives of Chimney
  - Exhibit H. Site Plans