CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
CPED PLANNING DIVISION
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

FILE NAME: Washburn A Mill, Mill City Museum, 708 2nd Street South

CATEGORY/DISTRICT: Contributing, St. Anthony Falls Historic District

CLASSIFICATION: Certificate of Appropriateness

APPLICANT: Todd Grover of MacDonald & Mack Architects, on behalf of the Minnesota History Society (612) 341-4051

DATE OF APPLICATION: November 7, 2008

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DATE OF HEARING: December 2, 2008

APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION: December 12, 2008

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

REQUEST: The installation of a protective platform and the removal three steel and concrete elements

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A. SITE DESCRIPTION :

The Washburn "A" Mill sits on a site overlooking St. Anthony Falls and the Mississippi River. The mill complex is both a National Historic Landmark (NHL) and a contributing property to the St. Anthony Falls Historic District. The NHL nomination states that the "Washburn A Mill Complex symbolizes the revolutionary technological and organizational innovations that the Washburn Crosby Company contributed to the American milling industry and, second, the birth and subsequent development of General Mills into the first truly national milling company."

The Washburn A Mill was built by Cadwallader C. Washburn in 1874. The mill was destroyed by fire in 1878 and rebuilt, along with the Washburn C Mill, in 1879-80. When they were rebuilt, the A and C Mills became the first automatic, all-roller, gradual reduction mills in the country. Since the C Mill has been destroyed, the A Mill is the only surviving manifestation of C.C. Washburn's technological innovations. In 1991, a major fire gutted the building, which caused parts of the building to collapse.

In 2001, the HPC approved a plan that allowed the Washburn "A" Mill to be rehabilitated for use as the Mill City Museum.

B. BACKGROUND:

The Washburn "A" Mill is connected to the adjacent grain elevators by a covered conveyor system. A large steel structure was constructed to support the weight of the conveyor. It appears that at some time during its lifetime the steel structure was covered with concrete, possibly to protect the exposed steel from corrosion. When the site was rehabilitated into the Mill City

Museum, a new steel structure was installed to carry most of the weight of the elevated conveyor, and the historic concrete and steel structure was retained as a historic artifact.

This past summer the concrete covering the steel started to fail and fall into the courtyard below. Scaffolding was installed and actions were taken to remove loose concrete and stabilize the corroded steel. However, not all of the concrete could be removed.

C. PROPOSED CHANGES & ANALYSIS:

To protect the structure and the public from future material failure the applicant is proposing to construct a 10 foot deep by 16 foot wide platform that will straddle the original eastern stone wall of the Washburn "A" Mill. The proposed platform is made of a steel frame that supports galvanized steel grating and is painted in a similar red color to the other temporary steel supports. The platform will have simple railings to meet code requirements.

The applicant states that the proposed platform will serve two purposes. First, the platform would protect the structure and courtyard from future debris that may break loose. Second, the proposed platform would allow the maintenance staff of the Mill City Museum to easily access the conveyor enclosure and steel supports to conduct ongoing stabilization.

In addition to constructing the platform, the Mill City Museum is proposing to remove three steel elements (listed as A, B, C on page 6 of attachment 2). These steel elements are in very poor condition and pose a risk of falling. Due their size it is not believed that the proposed steel platform could catch these three elements if they fell. In a memorandum from the applicant's representative it states that the reinforcement of the elements is not an option due to the deteriorated state of the steel which would make welding impossible and that the efforts to create a structure to brace the elements would cause vibrations that would ultimately cause the elements to break loose.

The Mill City Museum is unique in that it is built inside of the shell or ruins of the Washburn A Mill. The efforts to retain and support the structure after its damage and subsequent rehabilitation have introduced contemporary steel, glass and other elements into the structure. These contemporary elements have allowed for the reuse of the structure with very little impact to the remaining historical integrity of the Mill. As the steel and concrete conveyor structure of the Mill ages, it could continue to deteriorate, which will pose safety risks and jeopardize the historical integrity of this landmark.

The proposed platform will be painted like the contemporary bracing that was added to Washburn A Mill to brace the remnants of the existing structure, which in addition to its minimalist design, will easily delineate the historic elements from the new elements. The proposed platform will protect the existing structure and courtyard from future material that may fall due to deterioration. However, it will not prevent further deterioration of the historical conveyor structure or other portions of the structure. Staff believes it is likely that future stabilization work and continued preventative maintenance will be necessary to preserve this structure.

The three steel and concrete elements that are proposed to be removed are not in of themselves character defining elements and their removal will not impair the historical integrity of the Mill structures. The elements contribute to the feel of the ruins of the Mill and depict the severity of the damage caused by the 1991 fire. Staff is concerned that this application may be the first of many applications to remove unstable materials. Without a comprehensive approach to stabilization and preventative maintenance this and future applications to remove materials could result in the chipping away of the historical integrity of the Mill structures.

D. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:

ST. ANTHONY FALLS HISTORIC DISTRICT GUIDELINES (1980)

Purpose

1) preserve the memory of past events
2) encourage sympathetic new development
3) encourage and enable access to the river
4) foster along the riverfront and adjacent areas a viable community geared to the pedestrian.

Right (West) Bank Milling

1. Siting: New buildings shall have their exterior walls in the same axial orientation as the existing buildings.

3. Rhythm of Projections: There shall be no major projections on the principal facades.

4. Directional Emphasis: New buildings shall have a generally vertical emphasis, at least above the first floor.

5. Materials: The exterior surface of new buildings shall be constructed of brick, concrete or stone.

6. Nature of Openings: Openings should appear in a consistent and repeated pattern across the principal facades. Window openings should be approximately 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 times as tall as they are wide. Doors and windows should be set toward the front of the openings but should not be flush with the masonry surface.

8. Details: New buildings should have some emphasis given to the upper termination of the building. Surface treatment should divide the building into vertical bays. Where other surface treatment is used, it should reflect details from other buildings in the area.

9. Color: The primary surfaces of new buildings should be deep red, brown, or buff. Trim should be subdued earth tones or flat black, and new buildings should allow this same general pattern.

Since the St, Anthony Falls Historic District Guidelines are oriented towards new buildings instead of rehabilitation, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation must also be used to review this project.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (1990)

Architectural Metals: *Cast iron, steel, pressed tin, copper, aluminum, and zinc*
Recommended:
-Identifying, retaining, and preserving architectural metal features such as columns, capitals, window hoods, or stairways that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building; and their finishes and colors.

-Cleaning architectural metals, when necessary, to remove corrosion prior to repainting or applying other appropriate protective coatings.

-Cleaning soft metals such as lead, tin, copper, terneplate, and zinc with appropriate chemical methods because their finishes can be easily abraded by blasting methods.

-Using the gentlest cleaning methods for cast iron, wrought iron, and steel - hard metals - in order to remove paint buildup and corrosion. If hand scraping and wire brushing have proven ineffective, low pressure dry grit blasting may be used as long as it does not abrade or damage the surface.

-Applying appropriate paint or other coating systems after cleaning in order to decrease the corrosion rate of metals or alloys.

-Repainting with colors that are appropriate to the historic building or district.

-Repairing architectural metal features by patching, splicing, or otherwise reinforcing the metal following recognized preservation methods. Repairs may also include the limited replacement in kind - or with a compatible substitute material - of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of features when there are surviving prototypes such as porch balusters, column capitals or bases; or porch cresting.

-Replacing in kind an entire architectural metal feature that is too deteriorated to repair - if the overall form and detailing are still evident - using the physical evidence to guide the new work. Examples could include cast iron porch steps or steel sash windows. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible, then a compatible substitute material may be considered.

-Designing and installing a new architectural metal feature such as a sheet metal cornice or cast iron capital when the historic feature is completely missing. It may be an accurate restoration using historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the size, scale, material, and color of the historic building.

Not Recommended:

-Removing a major portion of the historic architectural metal from a facade instead of repairing or replacing only the deteriorated metal, then reconstructing the facade with new material in order to create a uniform, or "improved" appearance.

-Radically changing the type of finish or its historical color or accent scheme.

-Removing the patina of historic metal. The patina may be a protective coating on some metals, such as bronze or copper, as well as a significant historic finish.

-Using new colors that are inappropriate to the historic building or district.

-Failing to assess pedestrian use or new access patterns so that architectural metal features are subject to damage by use or inappropriate maintenance such as salting adjacent sidewalks.

-Replacing an entire architectural metal feature such as a column or a balustrade when repair of the metal and limited replacement of deteriorated or missing parts are appropriate.

New Additions to Historic Buildings

Recommended:

Placing functions and services required for the new use in non-character defining interior spaces rather than installing a new addition.

Constructing a new addition so that there is the least possible loss of historic materials and so that character-defining features are not obscured, damaged, or destroyed.

Locating the attached exterior addition at the rear or on an inconspicuous side of a historic building; and limiting its size and scale in relationship to the historic building.

Designing new additions in a manner that makes clear what is historic and what is new.

Considering the attached exterior addition both in terms of the new use and the appearance of other buildings in the historic district or neighborhood. Design for the new work may be contemporary or may reference design motifs from the historic building. In either case, it should always be clearly differentiated from the historic building and be compatible in terms of mass, materials, relationship of solids to voids, and color.

Placing new additions such as balconies and greenhouses on non-characterdefining elevations and limiting the size and scale in relationship to the historic building.

Designing additional stories, when required for the new use, that are set back from the wall plane and are as inconspicuous as possible when viewed from the street.

Not Recommended:

Expanding the size of the historic building by constructing a new addition when the new use could be met by altering non-character-defining interior spaces.

Attaching a new addition so that the character-defining features of the historic building are obscured, damaged, or destroyed.

Designing a new addition so that its size and scale in relation to the historic building are out of proportion, thus diminishing the historic character.

Duplicating the exact form, material, style, and detailing of the historic building in the new addition so that the new work appears to be part of the historic building.

Imitating a historic style or period of architecture in new additions, especially for contemporary uses such as drive-in banks or garages.

Designing and constructing new additions that result in the diminution or loss of the historic character of the resource, including its design, materials, workmanship, location, or setting.

Using the same wall plane, roof line, cornice height, materials, siding lap or window type to make additions appear to be a part of the historic building.

Designing new additions such as multistory greenhouse additions that obscure, damage, or destroy character-defining features of the historic building.

Constructing additional stories so that the historic appearance of the building is radically changed.

E. FINDINGS:

1. The Washburn A Mill is a designated National Historic Landmark and a contributing property to the St. Anthony Falls Historic District.
2. The proposed platform differentiates the contemporary from the original materials in its design and color.
3. The proposed platform is intended to protect the structure and courtyard from falling debris that may break loose and fall from the covered conveyor and its supports.
4. The removal of the three elements A, B, and C, are necessary to protect against the risk of failing materials that may fall from the conveyor structure.
5. The proposed elements to be removed are not character defining features to the Washburn A Mill structures.
6. The proposed removal of the elements and installation of the platform will not prevent other materials in the conveyor structure from deteriorating to a point where a greater loss of historical materials could occur.

F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the HPC adopt staff findings and **approve** a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed platform and material removal with the following condition:

1. The applicant shall submit detailed plans for the railing of the proposed platform for approval by staff.
2. The proposed platform shall match the color and finish of the other contemporary steel elements.
3. CPED-Planning Preservation Staff reviews and approves the final plans and elevations prior to building permit issuance.
4. A comprehensive maintenance plan that focuses on preventative maintenance and stabilization of the elements of the structure shall be completed by the property owner within two years of this approval.

Attachments

1. Applicant's statement
2. Pictures, plans and rendering of the proposed work