

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development
Planning Division

Certificate of Appropriateness
BZH-26774

Date: April 18, 2011

Proposal: Certificate of Appropriateness for park alterations and improvements.

Applicant: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

Address of Property: 434 Main Street NE

Project Name: Boom Island and BF Nelson Park Improvements

Contact Person and Phone: Michael Schroeder, LBH, 612-752-6966

Planning Staff and Phone: Chris Vrchota, 612-673-5467

Date Application Deemed Complete: February 23, 2011

Publication Date: March 29, 2011

Public Hearing: April 5, 2011

Appeal Period Expiration: April 28, 2011

Ward: Ward 3

Neighborhood Organization: St. Anthony West Neighborhood Association

Concurrent Review: N/A

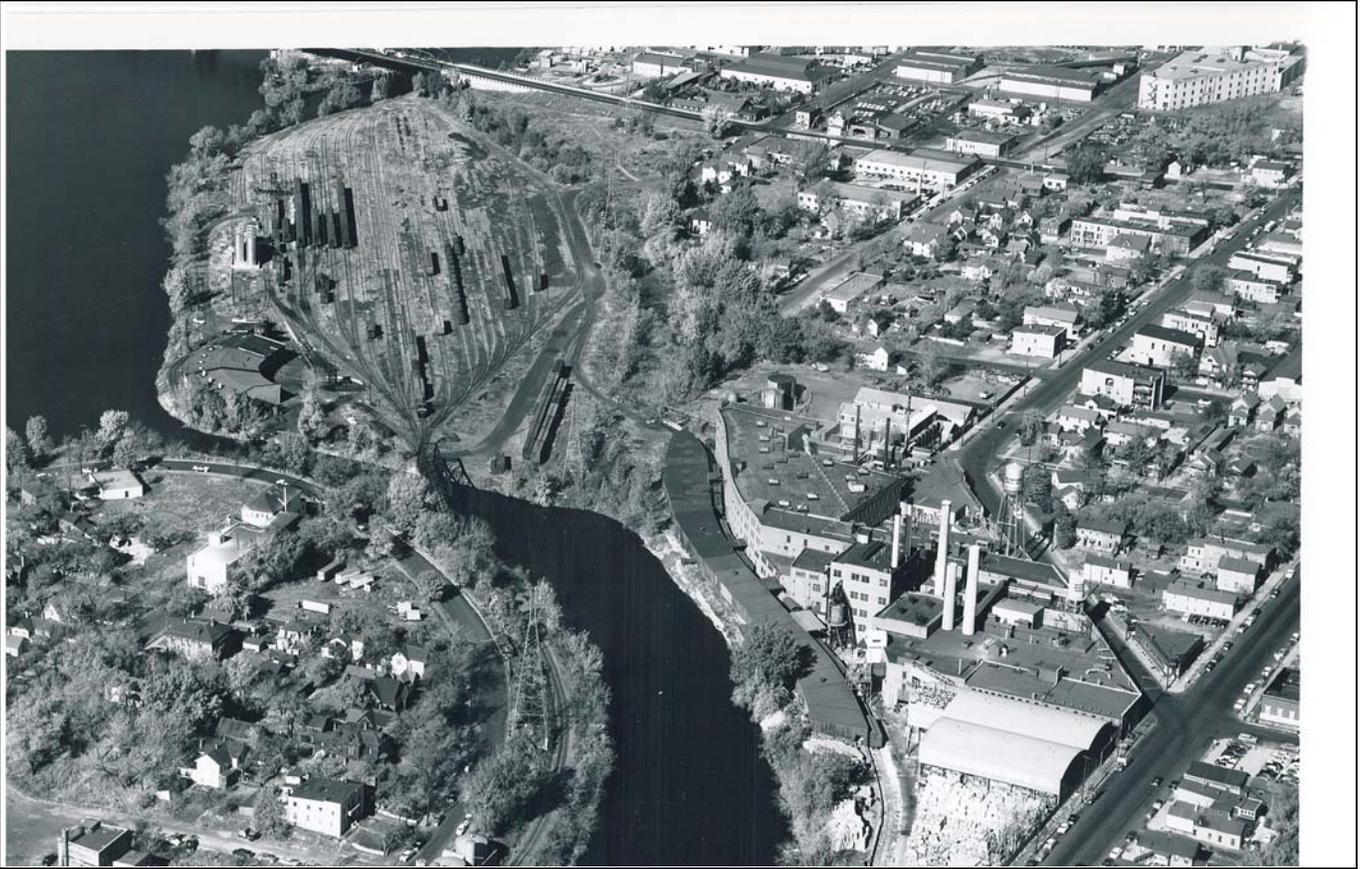
Attachments: Attachment A: Materials submitted by CPED staff –

- 350' map (A-1)

Attachment B: Materials submitted by Applicant –

- Notification letter to Council Member and neighborhood organization (B-1 – B-2)
- Application form (B-3 – B-4)
- Project Description (B-5 – B-6)
- Statements addressing required findings (B-7 – B-9)
- Plans and drawings (B-10 – B-26)
- Photos (B-27 – B-41)
- Procedures for encountering architectural artifacts on site (B-42 – B-43)

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Historic Aerial Photo of Site- Circa 1956
Photo from CPED Files

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Aerial View of Site- Present Day
Source: Bing Maps

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CLASSIFICATION:	
Local Historic District	St. Anthony Falls
Period of Significance	1858- 1940
Criteria of significance	Architecture, Commerce/Industry
Date of local designation	1971
Applicable Design Guidelines	St. Anthony Falls Historic District Guidelines (1980), Secretary of Interior Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties

PROPERTY INFORMATION	
Current name	Boom Island and BF Nelson Parks
Historic Name	Wisconsin Central Railroad Yards, BF Nelson Paper Company, Boom Island
Current Address	434 Main Street NE
Historic Address	Numerous
Original Construction Date	Unknown
Original Contractor	Unknown
Original Architect	Unknown
Historic Use	Rail Yards, Saw Mills, Manufacturing
Current Use	Park
Proposed Use	Park

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BACKGROUND:

The project site encompasses several acres that make up two parks, Boom Island Park and BF Nelson Park. In the mid-19th century, Boom Island was an actual island in the river. The channel on the east side was in-filled in the mid 20th century. Boom Island was home to several “boom” companies, which would sort logs floating down the river to go to the correct milling companies further downstream. The site was largely undeveloped through the 19th century, and was used primarily for the boom operations and lumber storage. Around the turn of the 20th century, the Wisconsin Central Railroad constructed extensive yards on the site, and the BF Nelson Paper Company expanded their operation into the area. (See Appendix B-27.)

The rail yards and BF Nelson Paper Company buildings were demolished in the mid 1970s, after which the site was used primarily as a construction storage yard. The Minneapolis Park Board developed the sites into parkland beginning in the mid-1980s. (See Appendix B-10.)

Not all of the project area falls within the boundary of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District. The Boom Island Park site lies within the district, and a portion of the BF Nelson Park site is within the district. The majority of the changes proposed at the BF Nelson site (the parking lot and plaza area) fall outside of the boundary of the district. However, because a portion of the site is located within the district, the entire project is subject to review to determine if any impacts will be made to or within the district.

SUMMARY OF APPLICANT’S PROPOSAL:

The Applicant is proposing to make a number of improvements to the park sites. These include: alterations to the existing trail systems in both parks to improve circulation and functionality, installation of pedestrian scale lighting, installation of a new driveway, parking lot plaza area and benches at the BF Nelson Park site, relocation of the “Pioneers Monument” to the plaza area (already completed), removal of some paved trails and scattered picnic tables at the Boom Island Park site, improvement of existing picnic shelters at Boom Island Park, and soil correction at Boom Island to remove contaminated soils and improve drainage and soil conditions on the site. Additionally, the Boom Island boat launch will be dredged and the canoe landing re-graded to improve access.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comment had been received by the time this report was published.

CETIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS: Certificate of Appropriateness for park alterations and improvements.

Findings as required by the Minneapolis Preservation Code:

The Planning Division of the Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development Department has analyzed the application based on the findings required by the Minneapolis Preservation Ordinance. Before approving a certificate of appropriateness, and based upon the evidence presented in each application submitted, the commission shall make findings based upon, but not limited to, the following:

(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 St. Anthony Falls Historic District is significant for its connection to the Mississippi River and St. Anthony Falls area, as well as the milling industry that grew up around the river and falls. The district contains a number of mill and warehouse buildings, as well as early residential structures. The subject sites contained rail yards and industrial buildings at the time of designation, which were removed in the mid 1970s. The subject sites have been developed as parks since the 1980s. The proposed project will maintain the property as parkland.

The Applicant is proposing a number of alterations and improvements meant to increase the functionality and usability of the site for City residents. The proposed improvements would be compatible with the criteria of significance for the St. Anthony Falls Historic District. The new trail connections would be bituminous material, matching the existing trails in the parks. Re-grading and bringing in fill to the Boom Island site is needed to correct heavily compacted soils on the site which inhibit the development of grass, trees and other vegetation. There is also a small area of contaminated soils on the site that need to be removed and replaced with clean fill. Correction of these conditions will allow trees and other vegetation to grow more readily on the site while also providing a more natural view of the river. Installation of the new driveway and parking area at BF Nelson Park would be done outside of the district boundary. The new driveway and parking area will improve accessibility to the park, river, and St. Anthony Falls Historic District. The new light posts would increase safety in the interior of the park, and would match other lights already used in riverfront parks within the St. Anthony Falls Historic District on the Stone Arch Bridge and in Mill Ruins Park.

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

The site has been vacant since the mid 1970s, shortly after the district was designated. It has been used as parkland since the mid 1980s. The proposed alterations are meant to

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improve the functionality and conditions within the parks, which should serve to encourage visitors to interact with the riverfront.

This proposal is in accordance with the 2009 interpretive plan for the area (*Power of the Falls: Renewing the Vision for the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Zone*) developed by the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board. One of the goals of this plan is “Re-energize interpretive programming in the Heritage Zone”, and the first strategy for achieving this goal is “Develop better access to historical and natural features: Create programs and infrastructure to get more people on the water; develop new trails and improve existing trails.” Improving the existing trail system, improving access to the parks through the installation of the new driveway and parking area, improving view sheds of the river and increasing safety in the parks by installing lighting will all help work towards this goal.

The Applicant has stated that they have received a grant from the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board to develop an interpretive plan for the park, which is not yet complete. While not reflected in the current proposal, the eventual execution of this interpretive plan will help to further meet the goals of the *Power of the Falls* plan and further support the designation and interpretation of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District. While the current proposal is not incompatible with the designation of the district, completion of the interpretive work would strengthen the degree to which the park uses would support the designation of 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.*

Both the City of Minneapolis’ Heritage Preservation Regulations and the National Register of Historic Places identify integrity as the authenticity of historic properties and recognize seven aspects that define a property’s integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Based upon the evidence provided below, the proposed work would not impair the integrity of the historic district.

Location: The Applicant is not proposing to change the location of any contributing resource, thus the project will not impair the integrity of location.

Design: The Applicant is proposing to alter the existing trail system in the park, remove a playground installation and picnic tables that date from the 1980s, and re-grade portions of the Boom Island park site to improve drainage and views of the river. They are also proposing to install lighting standards that match those found elsewhere in the park system in the riverfront area. The proposed driveway, parking area and benches at BF Nelson are all located outside of the district boundary, and their installation should not have any impact on the adjacent areas within the district. The proposed changes would not result in any significant change to the design of the parks. The proposed changes will not impair the integrity of design.

Setting: The Applicant proposes no offsite changes, thus the project will not impair the site’s integrity of setting.

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Materials: The Applicant is proposing to alter existing bituminous trails, removing some and extending others. They are also proposing to remove picnic tables that do not date from the district's period of significance, and alter concrete aprons around existing picnic shelters to improve accessibility. They are also proposing to install a new bituminous parking area and driveway on a portion of the BF Nelson site that lies outside of the district boundaries. None of this proposed work would directly impact material from the period of significance, and thus would not impair the integrity of materials.

It is possible that there are archeological resources present on both park sites. Portions of building foundations dating from the period of significance may be located belowground on both sites. One such suspected resource, a foundation from a round house on the Boom Island site, is identified on the plan sheets. (See Appendix B-20. Note that no work is being proposed in the vicinity of this resource.) Additionally, given the proximity to the river, it is possible that there are artifacts from pre-contact indigenous populations on the site. Soil corrections on the Boom Island site will require a process known as "scarification". In this process, the top 12 inches (approximately) of dirt are mechanically turned to break up and loosen the compacted soils, allowing an easier mix with the new fill. For these reasons, staff recommends that the project be conditioned to ensure that, should archaeological resources be uncovered during construction activities, the Applicant shall retain an archaeologist to analyze the potential impact to archaeological resources onsite and recommend appropriate treatments, with a follow-up report delivered to the Heritage Preservation Commission. The Applicant has included a letter outlining the steps they propose to take in the event that archeological resources are discovered on the site during the course of work. (See Appendix B-42- B-43.)

Workmanship: The Applicant is proposing alterations and improvements to existing park facilities that date from the 1980s and later. The proposed work would not impair the integrity of workmanship.

Feeling: The subject properties have been parks since the mid-1980s. The proposed changes are meant to enhance their usability as parks. The project would not impair the property's integrity of feeling.

Association: The Applicant proposes no changes that would break the district's association with the industrial development of the city, thus the project will not impair the district's integrity of association.

- (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.***

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The applicable design guidelines for this project are the St. Anthony Falls Historic District Design Guidelines, which were adopted by the Heritage Preservation Commission in June of 1980.

The Applicant is proposing alterations and improvements to existing park facilities that have been in place since the mid 1980s and do not date from the period of significance.

The St. Anthony Falls Historic District Design Guidelines deal almost exclusively with infill construction and provide very little guidance for a park improvement project.

The "General Regulations" section of the Guidelines states: "Infill construction shall be visually compatible with historic structures within the sub-area with regard to siting, height, proportions of facade, walls of continuity, rhythm of projections, directional emphasis, materials, nature of openings, texture, roof shapes, details, and color." The Applicant is not proposing to construct any new buildings or other similar structures as part of this project. The primary new material being added through this project would be bituminous paving, which would match existing paving within the parks and would be compatible with other paving surfaces found in the district. As previously stated, the proposed light standards match lighting already found elsewhere in the district, including on the Stone Arch Bridge and in Mill Ruins Park.

- (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 Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are most applicable to the proposed project.

In regard to making changes to historic sites, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation recommend: "Identifying, retaining, and preserving building and landscape features which are important in defining the historic character of the setting." The Mississippi River is the primary character defining feature accessed from these sites. The proposed work is meant to include accessibility to and interaction with the river. The proposed work meets this guideline.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation state: "Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken." As previously stated there is the potential for below ground archeological resources on the sites, in the form of both artifacts from pre-contact indigenous populations and remnants of milling and industrial buildings dating from the district's period of significance. Again, staff recommends that the project be conditioned to ensure that, should archaeological resources be uncovered during construction activities, the Applicant shall retain an archaeologist to analyze the potential impact to archaeological resources onsite and recommend appropriate treatments. The Applicant has provided a letter outlining a

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procedure to be followed in the event that archeological resources are discovered on the site. (See Appendix B-42 – B-43.) This will help ensure compliance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards.

- (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 alterations are considered a major alteration and require a Certificate of Appropriateness application.

As proposed, the project would conform to policy 8.1.1 of The Minneapolis Plan, which states: “Protect historic resources from modifications that are not sensitive to their historic significance.” This policy would be met because, as conditioned, the proposed work would not have an impact on the integrity or significance of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District.

The proposed improvements are also in keeping with policy 1.1.5 of The Minneapolis Plan, which is: “Ensure that land use regulations continue to promote development that is compatible with nearby properties, neighborhood character, and natural features; minimizes pedestrian and vehicular conflict; promotes street life and activity; reinforces public spaces; and visually enhances development.” The park improvements will be compatible with the nearby properties, many of which are residential uses. It will promote activity in the parks, and will reinforce the parks as an asset for the neighborhood and City.

It will also be in keeping with section 7.1.3, which states, “Provide safe pedestrian and bike routes to open spaces and parks.” This will be met through the reconfiguration of the existing trail system to make it safer and easier to use.

The work would also support section 7.3.1: “Ensure that access to the city’s lakes, streams and the Mississippi River continues to be maintained for the benefit of present and future citizens of Minneapolis.” This objective would be met by improving access to the Mississippi River by improving the trail systems within the parks.

Finally, making improvements to the park is in keeping with the Land Use Plan and the Parks Plan, which both indicate the continued use of the subject properties as parks.

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:

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

The Applicant submitted material addressing each of the 12 findings required for a Certificate of Appropriateness. (See Appendix B-7 - B-9.) The Applicant included a copy of the statement of significance from the designation, but did not specifically address how they believe the project is in keeping with it.

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

The proposed does not require site plan review as outlined in Title 20, Chapter 530 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances.

- (9) 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 proposed work falls under the scope of rehabilitation. The Applicant did not specifically address any of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards in their findings. As outlined in finding number 5 of this report, staff has found that the proposed work is in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

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:

- (10) 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 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 (1858-1940) for which the district was designated. The future interpretive work would strengthen this. The subject properties have been parks for over 25 years, and the improvements will enhance the usability of the sites for this purpose. The work will not impact any other resources in the district.

- (11) 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 spirit and intent of the City of Minneapolis' Heritage Preservation Regulations is to preserve historically significant buildings, structures, sites, objects, districts, and cultural landscapes of the community while permitting appropriate changes to be made to these

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properties. The Applicant is proposing alter the existing trail systems in both parks to improve circulation and functionality, install pedestrian scale lighting to increase safety, install a new driveway, parking lot and plaza area at the BF Nelson Park site, remove scattered picnic tables at the Boom Island Park site, improve of existing picnic shelters at Boom Island Park, and perform soil correction work at Boom Island to remove contaminated soils and improve drainage and soil conditions on the site. The changes will not negatively alter the essential character of the historic district.

(12) 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 work meets all applicable standards and guidelines and is sensitive to the subject property and the district as a whole. 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. Improvement of these large park areas should encourage increased interaction between residents and visitors and the St. Anthony Falls Historic District.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

CPED-Planning staff recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings and **approve** the Certificate of Appropriateness for park alterations and improvements, subject to the following condition(s):

1. CPED-Planning shall review and approve the final plans.
2. If significant archaeological resources are uncovered during construction activities, the Applicant shall retain an archaeologist to analyze the potential impact to archaeological resources onsite and recommend appropriate treatments. A follow-up report will be submitted and presented to the Heritage Preservation Commission.
3. The Applicant shall obtain all other necessary City approvals prior to the commencement of work.
4. The Certificate of Appropriateness approval shall expire if it is not acted upon within one year of approval, unless extended by the Planning Director in writing prior to the one-year anniversary date of the approvals.
5. No future work on this site shall take place prior to receiving the necessary City approvals, including those related to the property's local designation status.

Attachment A: Submitted by CPED staff

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Attachment B: Materials submitted by Applicant

Attachment C: Materials submitted by other parties