

CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
CPED PLANNING DIVISION
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT
BZH #25785

FILE NAME: 225 3rd Avenue S, 425 2nd Street S, 300 Washington Avenue S, and 500 Washington Avenue S

CATEGORY/DISTRICT: Individual Landmark

CLASSIFICATION: Certificate of Appropriateness

APPLICANT: CSM Depot LLC, 612-395-7036

DATE OF APPLICATION: April 7, 2009

PUBLICATION DATE: May 5, 2009

DATE OF HEARING: May 12, 2009

APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION: May 22, 2009

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: John Smoley, Ph.D., (612) 673-2830

REQUEST: Install signs and amend the master sign plan

A. SITE DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND:

The Milwaukee Road Depot and Freight House is a three-story Renaissance Revival building and accompanying train shed. These buildings occupy the southern side of a large downtown block bordered by 3rd Avenue S, Washington Avenue S, 2nd Street S, and 5th Avenue S. The depot and train shed were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 and designated as an individual Landmark by the City of Minneapolis in 1979. Built between 1897 and 1899, the structures represent one of the many railroads that operated in Minneapolis in the late nineteenth century and established the city as the industrial and commercial center of the upper Midwest.

In 2001 CSM Depot LLC completed the construction of an extensive commercial complex onsite consisting of a hotel, event center, water park, ice skating rink, and parking facility. The depot and train shed are the only two historic buildings on site. The remainder of the parcel consists of new construction. All buildings onsite are subject to the provisions of the Zoning Code. Only the depot and train shed must abide by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings.

In 2001 the Heritage Preservation Commission approved a master sign plan for the entire property. In subsequent years the Applicant made minor changes to the master sign plan with Certificates of No Change. As of this date, only the 2007 amendment has not been superseded by subsequent approvals. Beyond these minor amendments, numerous signs have been added to the complex without staff or Heritage Preservation Commission approval. The Applicant has

come forward seeking Heritage Preservation Commission approval of these signs and several additional signs as well, as described in the application.

B. PROPOSED CHANGES:

The Applicant seeks an amendment to the master sign plan and approval of new signage on the noncontributing portions of this lot only, as indicated in the application and accompanying plans.

The City of Minneapolis' Zoning Code and the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings require multiple tenant buildings possess a master sign plan. Following approval of master sign plans by the Heritage Preservation Commission, staff normally issues Certificate of No Change for signs that are consistent with approved master sign plans.

In the case of this property, a deviation from these standards is appropriate. Since the site has a higher percentage of non-contributing than contributing resources, staff recommends the master sign plan be conditioned to require a Certificate of Appropriateness for changes to signage on contributing resources (i.e. the depot and train shed). Staff additionally recommends the master sign plan be conditioned to require a Certificate of No Change for changes to signage on noncontributing resources.

C. FINDINGS REQUIRED FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS:

Certificate of Appropriateness

In general. 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 depot and train shed are significant for their embodiment of events between 1800 and 1899, i.e. their representation of one of the many railroads that operated in Minneapolis in the late nineteenth century and established the city as the industrial and commercial center of the upper Midwest. Regardless of what changes are made to the subject property, it will maintain its historical significance, but proposed changes may affect its integrity (i.e. the property's ability to communicate its historical significance). Since the property will maintain its integrity if the proposed alteration is made (see findings 3-5 below), the proposed alterations are compatible with and continue to support the criteria of significance and period of significance for which the landmark was designated.

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

The exterior and some interior portions of these buildings, not their heavily modified site, communicate their historical significance. The applicant is requesting approval of exterior signs that are not on the property's contributing resources. None of the signs are billboards or specifically designed to advertise activities at great distances. The alterations are compatible with and support the exterior and interior designation in which the property was designated.

(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 will not impair the integrity of the contributing resource (residence).

Location: The Applicant proposes no changes to the contributing resource's location, thus the project will not impair the contributing resource's integrity of location.

Design: The Applicant proposes no changes to the contributing resource's design, thus the project will not impair the contributing resource's integrity of design.

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

Materials: The Applicant proposes no changes to the contributing resource's materials, thus the project will not impair the contributing resource's integrity of materials.

Workmanship: The Applicant proposes no changes to the contributing resource's workmanship, thus the project will not impair the contributing resource's integrity of workmanship.

Feeling: The Applicant proposes to install a detached garage on the site where a detached garage existed during the majority of the historic district's period of significance and in a portion of the district where numerous other detached garages exist, thus the project will not impair the property's integrity of feeling.

Association: The Applicant proposes no changes that would break the residence's association with vernacular design and development common to the district, thus the project will not impair the property'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.

The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings do not permit many of the existing and proposed signs and sign features, including messages, numbers of signs, illumination, mounting, location, materials, area, type, and size. Nevertheless, the proposed signs will not materially impair the significance and integrity of the landmark because they are proposed to be located on noncontributing resources only and are not billboards designed to transmit advertising messages across great distances. The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings were adopted by the Heritage Preservation Commission in 2003, after the approval of the master sign plan for this property. The Guidelines do not explicitly state that they apply only to contributing resources, but staff recommends that the guidelines be only applied to this property's contributing resources, which make up roughly one-third of the parcel.

(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 most recent standards for the treatment of historic properties established by the National Park Service are *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* authored by Kay Weeks and Anne Grimmer and published in 1995. The most appropriate treatment for this historic resource is rehabilitation.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Rehabilitation, Building Exterior, Storefronts) recommend preserving historic signs on storefronts if the signs are important to their overall character. When property owners attempt to replace missing historic features of storefronts, the guidelines do not recommend using inappropriately scaled signs and logos or other types of signs that obscure, damage, or destroy remaining character defining features of the historic building. The Applicant seeks to install signs on the subject property. All of the proposed signs are on non-contributing buildings opened in 2001. The proposed signs and master sign plan are consistent with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

(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.

Action item 8.1.1 of the City of Minneapolis' comprehensive plan states, "Protect historic resources from modifications that are not sensitive to their historic significance." The project complies with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

The subject property lies within the Historic Mills District Master Plan area (2001 update), which has no standards related to signage that are applicable to this project.

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:

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

The depot and train shed are significant for their embodiment of events between 1800 and 1899, i.e. their representation of one of the many railroads that operated in Minneapolis in the late nineteenth century and established the city as the industrial and commercial center of the upper Midwest. The exterior and some interior portions of these buildings, not their heavily modified site, communicate their historical significance. The parcel has been heavily modified since its designation in 1979. Conversion to a hotel/ice rink/water park/and parking facility in 2001 maintained the depot and train shed, but more than doubled the square footage of buildings onsite. The proposed signage will not be attached to any contributing resources, nor is it designed to transmit advertising across great distances, thus the proposal is sensitive to the historic portions of the property.

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

The proposed signs are not required to comply with the Zoning Code's standards related to Site Plan Review, but are required to comply with chapter 543 (On-Premise Signs). The proposed signs comply with the Code, with two exceptions.

The proposed size of the parking lot freestanding sign (S22) exceeds Zoning Code standards for size, height, and illumination. The Zoning Code stipulates that such signs be no more than 8 square feet in area, be no more than 6 feet high, and not be illuminated. Staff recommends the project be conditioned to obtain a variance or comply with the Zoning Code's standards for parking lot signs.

The proposed light pole banner signs (S20) may be maintained as temporary signs, posted for no more than 60 days each year. Otherwise, a variance must be obtained. Staff recommends conditioning the project to comply with one of these options.

(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 Applicant seeks to install signs on the subject property. All of the proposed signs are on non-contributing buildings opened in 2001. The most appropriate treatment for this historic resource is rehabilitation. The proposed signs and master sign plan are consistent with the very limited sign standards in *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, which only apply to the preservation and replacement of historic signs.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT

Staff received no public comment related to the project.

E. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings and **approve** a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work subject to the following conditions:

1. A Certificate of Appropriateness shall be required for changes to signage on contributing resources (i.e. the depot and train shed) and for changes to the terms of the master sign plan.
2. A Certificate of No Change shall be required for changes to signage on noncontributing resources.
3. Obtain a variance or comply with the Zoning Code's standards for parking lot signs.
4. The proposed light pole banner signs (S20) may be maintained as temporary signs, posted for no more than 60 days each year. Otherwise, a variance must be obtained.
5. CPED-Planning Preservation Staff shall review and approve the final plans and elevations prior to building permit issuance.

Attachments

- A. Vicinity Map (prepared by staff)
- B. Application (submitted by Applicant)
- C. Plans (submitted by Applicant)
- D. Letter to Councilmember and Neighborhood Group (submitted by Applicant)
- E. Master Sign Plan
- F. 2007 Amendment to Master Sign Plan
- G. Relevant Excerpts of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Rehabilitation Standards)
- H. Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings