

**Community Planning & Economic Development  
Planning Division**

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**City of Minneapolis**  
*Department of Community Planning  
& Economic Development - CPED*

## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Heritage Preservation Commission  
FROM: Brian Schaffer, Senior City Planner 612.673.2670  
DATE: November 5, 2009  
RE: Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District: Design Guidelines

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On January 13, 2009 the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) nominated the National Register of the Historic Places (NRHP) Minneapolis Warehouse District for local designation and directed City of Minneapolis staff to commence a designation study of the district. In conjunction with the designation study CPED staff chose to develop design guidelines for the proposed historic district. To develop robust design guidelines that reflect the input of all the stakeholders in the area CPED designed the public outreach process outlined below.

CPED convened a technical advisory group with representatives from the following organizations:

- City of Minneapolis CPED-Planning: Downtown Principal Planner
- City of Minneapolis Department of Public Works
- Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
- North Loop Neighborhood Association
- State Historic Preservation Office
- Preserve Minneapolis
- Minneapolis Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

Outreach and engagement efforts in a media/press release in May 2009 and targeted email outreach to the following recognized neighborhood, business and other active organizations in the area for distribution among their membership or contacts. These organizations include:

- Ward 5 & 7 Councilmember Offices
- Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
- North Loop Neighborhood Association
- Warehouse District Business Association
- 2010 Partners
- Preserve Minneapolis
- Minneapolis AIA
- ULI Minnesota

CPED hosted three public meetings:

- May 14, 2009: Community Meeting on History and Character of Warehouse District
- June 9, 2009: Community Meeting Components of Compatible Design in Warehouse District
- July 9, 2009: Community Meeting to Review and Discuss Draft of Design Guidelines

CPED also presented and discussed the design guidelines with the HPC in two public HPC Business meetings:

- June 16, 2009: HPC Business Meeting: Discuss Components of Compatible Design in Warehouse District
- July 21, 2009: HPC Business Meeting Discuss Draft Design Guidelines

CPED has also worked with Minneapolis AIA to review and test the design guidelines to ensure that draft design specific requirements in the guidelines are usable and result in the alterations and new construction that meets the spirit and principals of the guidelines. The guiding principals of the design guidelines were developed by the Technical Advisory Group with input from the community and the HPC.

In addition to targeting input from design professionals with the AIA, CPED hosted a Developer Forum to discuss and review the design guidelines with the local development community. CPED also had several meetings and discussions with stakeholders and the city's strategic partners in the area.

CPED has been developing the design guidelines in conjunction with the designation because CPED recognized the need for more specific guidance based on the district's resource, that offers more clarity and certainty in interpretation for property owners, applicants, staff, the HPC and elected officials than the Secretary of the Interior Standards offer. The organization of the draft design guidelines reflects the description of the district's integrity and significance previously discussed in this designation study. The guidelines are divided into three sections:

- *Site, Alley and Infrastructure Guidelines* – protecting the integrity of these landscape resources while balancing livability and the requirements of the various modes of transportation.
- *Guidelines for Alterations to Existing Properties* – protecting the integrity of contributing structures.
- *Design Guidelines for New Construction* – ensuring infill design within the district that is compatible with its resources.

The Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District Design Guidelines were designed to best ensure the integrity of the district, while promoting a harmony with the livability needs of a burgeoning neighborhood and the need to encourage the right measures of market participation to make sure these resources are used - instead of neglected - and ensure the district can continue to become a vibrant community that celebrates its heritage.

The feedback on the design guidelines has been mostly very positive. Most importantly the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) reviewed a draft of the design guidelines dated July 31, 2009 and provided the following comment:

“The Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District Design Guidelines represent a significant body of work that should serve the city well in providing a clear basis for making decisions about changes that may affect the appearance of individual properties or the overall character of the district.”

The SHPO review of the design guidelines was done pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 471.193, subd. 6., and Section 599.300 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinance. While there have been many positive comments regarding the design guidelines; there have also been concerns raised about the design guidelines. Some of the concerns include:

- How to better balance and orientate the specific requirements of the design guidelines with the spirit and intent of the design guidelines.
- How to better balance the need for prescriptive guidelines that offer a reasonable expectation of interpretation in review for property owners, developers, staff, the HPC and elected officials without stifling creative design.
- How to better offset the uniqueness of the “Railyards Subarea” through design interpretation.
- How the proposed design guidelines can provide the right level of proactive guidance and support to adopted City and Hennepin County policies that call for a multimodal station located in the “Railyards Subarea.”

Based on these comments the HPC advised CPED determined that it would be prudent to reexamine the design guidelines and make the appropriate revisions. The goal for these revisions is to address the concerns listed above. The process and timeline for these revisions is outlined below.

- November 2009: CPED revise design guidelines to address comments and input received between July and October of 2009.
- December 1, 2009: Publish revised draft of design guidelines for review by the HPC and the public.
- December 8, 2009: HPC Business Meeting: Discussion of revised design guidelines with the HPC and Technical Advisory Group. This is a public meeting and interested parties are encouraged to attend.
- January 2010: HPC Public Hearing on the design guidelines (January 2010 calendar has not been set yet, date of hearing to be determined)

Moving the designation forward without adopted design guidelines is not unusual- it is actually common place. The Minneapolis Code of Ordinances and the State Statutes do not require that the City have adopted design guidelines in place at the time of the designation. The most recent two local historic district designations did not start the process of the developing design guidelines until after the designation was approved by the City Council. After the designation and before the guidelines area adopted, alterations in the district will be reviewed using the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, just like during Interim Protection.

CPED is proposing the above timeline so that enough time can be taken to make appropriate revisions, take additional comment during the HPC Business meeting, and address those comments in a timely manner.