

**CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

FILE NAME: 2546 2nd Avenue South (BZH 25932)

APPLICATION: Certificate of Appropriateness

APPLICANT: Meyer Scherer and Rockcastle (Jeffrey Mandyck) on behalf of Minneapolis College of Art and Design

COMPLETE APPLICATION: June 10, 2009

PUBLICATION DATE: June 30, 2009

DATE OF HEARING: July 7, 2009

APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION : July 17, 2009

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Aaron Hanauer (612) 673-2494

REQUEST: Certificate of Appropriateness for a Gateway Sign.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND:

District/Area Information	
Historic District	Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District
Period of Significance	1858-circa 1939
Neighborhood	Whittier
Historic Property Information	
Address	2546 2 nd Avenue South
Construction Date	Prior to 1895
Original Contractor	Unknown
Original Architect	Unknown
Historical Use	Residential
Current Use	Residential

PROPOSED WORK AND ANALYSIS

The applicant is proposing to construct a monument sign that will act as the main campus entry signifier in conjunction with the Gateway Garden and parking lot proposal (see Appendix A36, A72, A88). The sign is proposed to be located on the northwest corner of 2nd Avenue South and 26th Street East. It is also proposed to be built with a formed concrete and an anti-graffiti coating. Attached to the 26th Street face are fourteen inch anodized aluminum letters in MCAD Blue that spell out “MCAD.” They are spaced to fill the width of the sign face. Directly underneath the initials “MCAD” are five inch anodized aluminum letters, that spells out the school’s name, “Minneapolis College of Art and Design.” The letters are also proposed to be in “MCAD Blue.” They are spaced to fill the width of the sign face. The letters are proposed to be internally lit via blue LED lights, so as to cast light back onto the concrete, creating a halo effect around each letter and making them visible in the evening hours. The applicant states that the sign face was designed to serve as art space for displaying student art within the Gateway Garden.

FINDINGS: CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS: NEW CONSTRUCTION

The applicant has provided a general description of the sign as well as analysis on how they feel the proposed parking lot and gateway garden meet the Certificate of Appropriateness findings (see

Appendix A36-A40). The following is a summary of the applicant's assessment on how the construction of the proposed Gateway Garden and surface parking lot meet the twelve Certificate of Appropriateness application findings set out in Provision 599.350 of the Heritage Preservation Ordinance as well as an analysis of the findings provided by CPED.

Per Provision 599.350, the commission may approve, approve with conditions, or deny an application for 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 Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District is designated namely for its significance in residential architecture. The district is also recognized for its identification with the art institutions, including MCAD. The applicant's sign proposal with conditions of approval will not detract from the residential architectural significance of the district and will provide identification of the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. The applicant provides details on how the sign is in compliance with this finding (see Appendix A37 and A38).

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

The applicant's sign proposal with conditions of approval will not detract from the exterior designation in which the property was designated (residential architecture and the art institutions). The applicant provides details on how the sign is in compliance with this finding (see Appendix A38).

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

The applicant's sign proposal with conditions of approval will not detract from the integrity of the historic district. If conditions of approval are attached, the sign in the proposed location will also not have an adverse impact on the integrity of the contributing structures near by, in particular the *brick Romanesque style double houses at 200-204 and 206-210 East 26th Street* (see Appendix A72 and B8)

(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 applicant's sign proposal is not in full compliance with the Minneapolis Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings. In particular, the proposal is not in compliance with the following On-Premise Sign Guidelines

- ii. Size. Ground signs should be no more than thirty-two (32) square feet in area and should not be higher than eight (8) feet.

- iii. Materials. Ground signs should be constructed of materials similar to those found on the existing building or compatible with the existing building. Acceptable materials include brick, stone, stucco, metal or wood.

The ground sign is proposed to be 64 square feet in size. The applicant states, “The size of the MCAD sign is justified by its role as a gateway to MCAD (see Appendix A37). It would be a hardship to attempt to accomplish the level of visual identification needed for a major institution entrance within a sign structure that was only thirty-two square feet. The applicant states that the sign face will also serve as art space for displaying student art within the Gateway Garden (see Appendix A89). Although, the ground sign has the opportunity to provide an opportunity to display student art, CPED believes the sign is too large and that the Heritage Preservation Commission Guidelines provide adequate signage for the current situation (see Finding 6 for additional explanation).

The applicant is also proposing for the sign to be constructed of concrete. The Heritage Preservation Guidelines state that acceptable materials are brick, stone, stucco, metal or wood. The applicant has not demonstrated why the sign could not be one of the acceptable materials.

The applicant’s proposal is in compliance with the following Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District Guidelines:

- The use of signs in the Washburn-Fair Oaks area will be business or institutional identification. Large freestanding advertising signs are not encouraged (the sign is considered an identification sign rather than advertising sign).
- Sign dimensions shall be large enough to be visible to normal street traffic but small enough to allow the building's basic design to be visible.
- The type of sign shall complement the structure, enhancing the building's design and materials.
- The surface design, such as the identification symbol (logo), the lettering and related patterns or pictures shall be harmonious with building age and design.

The district guidelines also add the following guidance as it pertains to signs, “Within both Washburn-Fair Oaks and Fifth Street S.E. preservation districts exists diversity in age, style and in Washburn-Fair Oaks, use. The particular site of the permit request is important in analyzing the design considerations.

(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 applicant explains that the proposed sign is in compliance with Secretary of Interior Standard 9 and Standard 10 (see Appendix A39):

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

CPED believes the proposed sign, with conditions of approval, will meet these criteria.

(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 following policies of the comprehensive plan and implementation steps should be considered when reviewing the proposed project

1. Policy 1.2. Ensure appropriate transitions between uses with different size, scale, and intensity
 - a. Implementation Step 1.2.2: “Ensure that lighting and signage associated with non-residential uses do not create negative impacts for residential properties.”

CPED Comments: The proposed sign calls for an LED light that is “MCAD Blue.” The campus currently has a sign along Stevens Avenue with the MCAD Blue. This color although in its location on the skyway can be seen blocks away, the color is subtle when there is no sunlight.

2. Policy 10.2: Promote an attractive environment by minimizing visual clutter and confusion caused by a proliferation of signage.

CPED Comments: The proposed sign would not create sign clutter along 26th Street East. Currently, there is no signage for MCAD or the other art institutions that can be viewable from 26th Street East.

3. Policy 10.21 Unique areas and neighborhoods within the city should have a special set of sign standards to allow for effective signage appropriate to the planned character of each area/neighborhood.
 - a. Implementation step 10.21.2 To promote street life and activity, signs should be located and sized to be viewed by people on foot (not vehicles) in order to preserve and encourage the pedestrian character of commercial areas that have traditional urban form.
 - b. Implementation step 10.21.3: Encourage effective signage that is appropriate to the character of the city’s historic districts and landmarks, and preserves the integrity of historic structures.

CPED Comments: The proposed sign is not in compliance with Policy 10.21 of the Comprehensive Plan. The sign is proposed to be 64 square feet in sizes and 8 feet in height to allow for vehicles to be able to see the sign along 26th Street East (see Appendix A37). CPED feels that a sign that is 32 square feet in size and conforms to other the HPC Guidelines measurements could still provide a positive identity for the campus and be viewable to vehicles and pedestrians. An example of such a sign would be one that measured four feet high by eight feet wide. A sign of these measurements would still be viewable to vehicles. It would also reduce the changes of their being a public safety concern by not having a large structure that someone can hide behind (see Appendix A72-A74).

(c) 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.

Please see Findings 1-6 above.

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

The applicant will be required to receive a zoning variance for the sign due to its size. This will require a review in front of the City Planning Commission.

(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 applicant's proposal would be considered rehabilitation of the parcel at 2544 2nd Avenue South.

(d) 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.

Please see Findings 1-6 above.

(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.

Please see Findings 1-6 above.

(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.

Please see Findings 1-6 above.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

CPED notified property owners within 350 feet of the Demolition of Historic Resource application on January 27, 2009. As of February 2, 2009, the Whittier Alliance and one neighbor have submitted comments (see Attachments C).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

CPED recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings and **approve** the construction of the Gateway sign with the following conditions:

1. The proposed sign shall meet the square footage requirements of 32 square feet;
2. The proposed sign shall be constructed of brick, stone, stucco, metal or wood;
3. More details shall be provided to ensure that the lights meet the Heritage Preservation regulations definition of internally illuminated.

4. CPED-Planning Preservation Staff shall review and approve the final plans prior to sign permit issuance.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Application

Appendix B: CPED Information

Appendix C: Public Comments