

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Planning Division

**Certificate of Appropriateness**  
BZH-26265

**Date:** January 12, 2010

**Proposal:** Certificate of Appropriateness to allow for parapet cap replacement and parapet brick repair

**Applicant:** John Felton of Building Restoration Corporation, North Star Lofts Condominium Association

**Address of Property:** 117 Portland Avenue South

**Project Name:** Parapet Repair and Replacement

**Contact Person and Phone:** John Felton of Building Restoration Corporation, 612.789.2800

**Planning Staff and Phone:** Brian Schaffer, 612.673.2670

**Date Application Deemed Complete:** December 22, 2010

**Publication Date:** January 12, 2010

**Public Hearing:** January 19, 2010

**Appeal Period Expiration:** January 29, 2010

**Ward:** Ward 7

**Neighborhood Organization:** Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association

**Concurrent Review:** None

**Attachments:** Attachment A: Materials submitted by CPED staff – page 13  
1. Map of District  
2. Map of Subject Site  
  
Attachment B: Materials submitted by Applicant – page 16  
1. Application  
2. Letter sent to Council Member and Neighborhood Group  
3. Applicant’s statement addressing required findings  
4. April 2009 “North Star Lofts 2009 Investigation Recap and Observation Report” by Building Restoration Corporation  
5. November 4, 2009 Submittal to CPED-Planning by Building Restoration Corporation.

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Planning Division

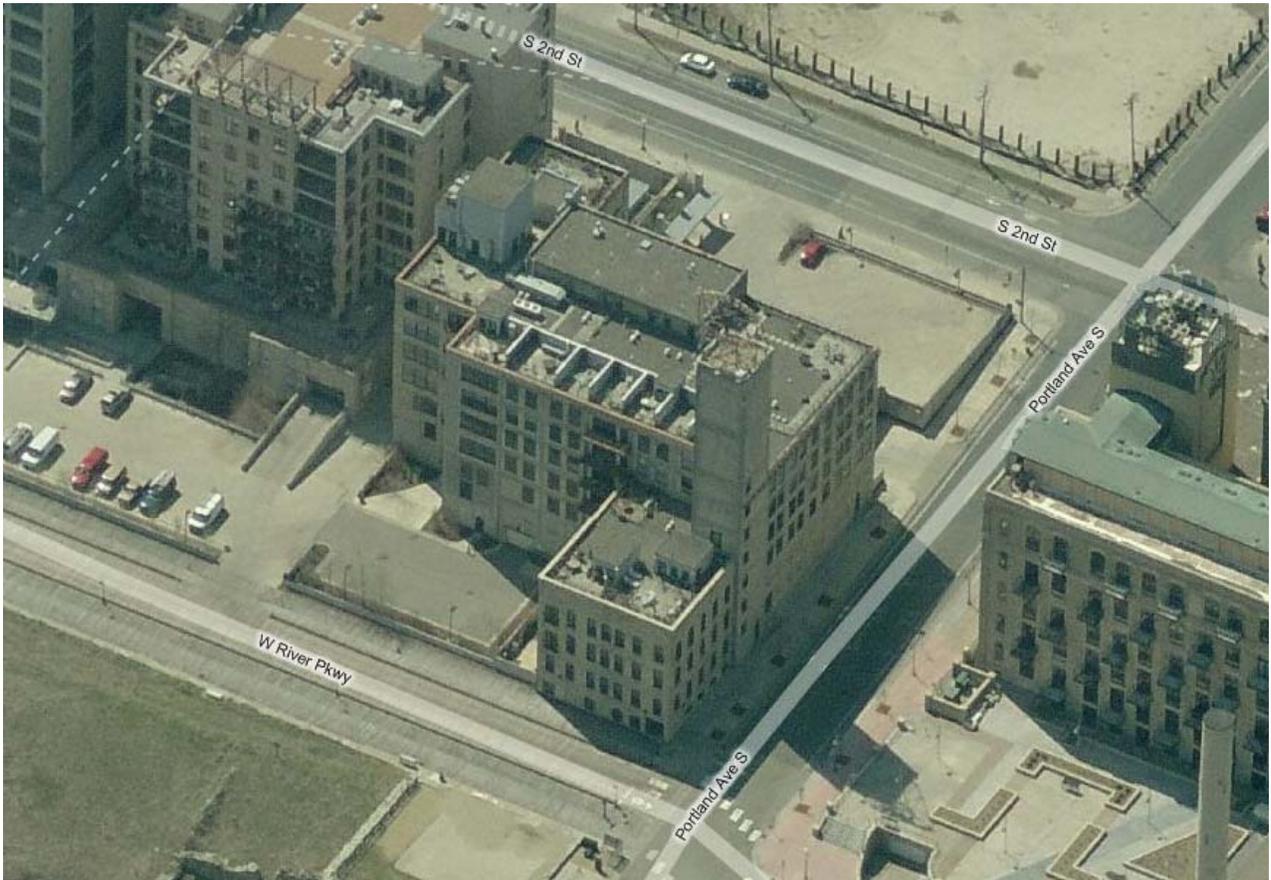
6. November 12, 2009 Submittal to CPED-Planning by Building Restoration Corporation.
7. Roof Plan of building indicating project scope and parapet wall thickness.
8. Photographs of the building

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Planning Division



**North Star Woolen Mill:** 117 Portland Avenue looking East. 1925

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Planning Division



**North Star Lofts:** 117 Portland Avenue: 2009 Source: Bing.com maps.

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Planning Division

<b>CLASSIFICATION:</b>	
Local Historic District	St. Anthony Falls Historic District
Period of Significance	1825-1950
Criteria of significance	Industry/Commerce, Architecture/Engineering, Social History
Date of local designation	1971
Applicable Design Guidelines	St. Anthony Falls Historic District Design Guidelines

<b>PROPERTY INFORMATION</b>	
Current name	North Star Lofts
Historic Name	North Star Woolen Mill
Current Address	117 Portland Avenue
Original Construction Date	1864, 1925
Original Contractor	1925 construction – C.F. Haglin
Original Architect	
Historic Use	Mill-factory and warehouse
Current Use	Residential
Proposed Use	Residential

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Planning Division

**BACKGROUND:**

The North Star Woolen Mill is an important building in the history of the national textile market. Founded in 1864 by Eastman, Gibson and Company the North Star Woolen Mill captured a place in the national textile market by specializing in the manufacture of fine woolen blankets. By 1925 the North Star Mill had grown to be the largest blanket mill in the country. By the 1940s, the company closed down and the plant was used as a warehouse.

The configuration of the present structure is a result of an extensive remodeling in 1925, when the former mill was virtually replaced by the current six-story building. A steel frame was constructed around the old structure; then starting from the top, new wall sections were built around the old walls, which were subsequently demolished. Only where the original stonework abutted adjacent buildings were segments of the nineteenth-century masonry left intact and incorporated into the new wall.

On January 13, 1998 the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission approved a certificate of appropriateness for the rehabilitation of the building into condominiums. The scope of work included cleaning and restoring the brick and tuck pointing and the replacement of two sections of parapet caps with sheet metal. The work also included the addition of balconies on the north and south facades of the building, roof top decks and railings.

**SUMMARY OF APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL:**

In April of 2009, Building Restoration Corporation performed an investigation of the masonry for the property management of the North Star Lofts. See attachment B-4 for the report. In the report the Building Restoration Corporation identified several areas of concern which included the clay tile parapet caps, exterior brick masonry repairs, concrete cracking and spalling, and brick coating removal.

In November 2009, Building Restoration Corporation on behalf of the property owners approached CPED with a plan to replace the existing clay tile parapet caps with sheet metal caps. The applicant also proposed paint removal and brick repair which included tuckpointing. This November 4, 2009 proposal is included as attachment B-5

At the request of CPED, the applicant provided staff with a survey of the parapet wall widths and financial feasibility analysis that explored other design options that would allow for the clay tile parapet caps to remain or be replaced in-kind. The applicant provided CPED with this information in a report dated November 12, 2009. This report is included as attachment B-6.

The applicant has identified damage to the masonry of the parapet wall that is due to moisture intrusion. Based on the materials provided by the applicant the two main sources of the this moisture intrusion are the clay parapet tile caps and previous brick repairs that according to the applicant were "poor quality repairs," "shortcuts" and "incomplete work."

To correct the parapet cap moisture intrusion problem the applicant is proposing to replace the clay tile parapet cap with a sheet metal cap. The applicant states that:

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Planning Division

The motivation to consider a sheet metal cap option stems from another shortcut take during the renovation. Over time, due to water exposure and lack of maintenance the original cap system failed and the masonry parapets were saturated with water and went through many freeze and thaw cycles. One of the results is the parapets are now wider than originally intended. The increase in width is not uniform as some areas are more affected than others, but they are too wide for the clay tile caps to fit over them. One of the components of the roof is the metal covered membrane that runs up the backside of the parapet wall and adds to the wall thickness. If these issues had been taken into account during the renovation, section of the parapet wall could have been rebuilt, the back sides could have been sawn, or some other solution invented. As it is now, the cost of rebuilding the parapets in order to accommodate the caps would be extremely expensive. The visual impact of such widespread rebuilding would be significant and not provide the save level of long term protection and preservation of the building as the installation of the proposed sheet metal option.

The applicant states that clay tile parapet caps are designed to be installed on a 13 inch wide wall. The survey by the applicant indicates the parapet wall ranges in thickness from 12 and 3/8 inches to 13 and 7/8 inches.

The applicant stated that in order to fix the parapet wall to allow for the clay tile parapet caps to be reinstalled it would need to be rebuilt. The applicant concluded that the process of rebuilding the parapet would be cost prohibitive compared to the proposed project. The total proposed project is budgeted around \$160,000, with approximately \$24,000 for the proposed sheet metal parapet cap. To rebuild the parapets so that a clay tile cap could be reinstalled would cost "around \$400,000, plus scaffolding, permits, roofing expense, dumpsters and related construction expenses. The applicant states that this would be in addition to the budget proposed for painted coating removal, brick repair and tuckpointing.

The applicant has also included brick repair, tuck pointing and removal of "a coating similar to cementitious 'Thorocoat' paint" on the northeast side of the building.

The applicant also states that the initial project budget for the parapet brick repair and painted coating removal may not be enough to do the entire brick repair and that additional phases may be needed to complete the repairs as the condominium association can raise the money. The applicant has identified the areas of work that are proposed to be included in the first phase of this project. The areas of work are indicated on a roof plan for the building (see attachment B-7)

The applicant has included a few color samples with test pictures. The applicant is recommending a "Sierra Tan" color that is similar to the color of the other sheet metal parapet caps on the adjacent buildings in the North Star Woolen Mill complex.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None received as of January 11, 2009

**CETIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS:** Certificate of Appropriateness to allow for a wall sign that does not conform with the Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings

***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 the development of industries surrounding the water power generated by St. Anthony Falls.

The parapet cap replacement would help stabilize the parapet wall, which has experienced deterioration from water infiltration. The repair of the brick parapet would help to stabilize the parapet. These projects would be consistent with the industrial significance of the building and the district.

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

The property is designated for association with manufacturing and processing industries that took advantage of the hydroelectric power of St. Anthony Falls. The proposed work does not detract from the overall massing or fenestration patterns of the building. It retains parapet wall, which provides an upper termination to the building's massing. The color and design of the cap will introduce a design that differs from the original clay tile parapet cap. However, in 1998 two of the three (three story building and tower) different parapet caps were replaced with a sheet metal cap in the color proposed. The buildings still retain their integrity and support the designation of the building.

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

The proposed sheet metal cap and brick repair would ensure the structural integrity of the parapet wall and likely ensure the continued integrity of the building. The other solution for repair identified by the applicant would be to rebuild the parapet wall. This option would introduce considerably more new material and could compromise the integrity of the materials for the building. The introduction of new materials to rebuild the parapet wall will be more visually intrusive than the proposed sheet metal cap.

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Planning Division

- (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.***

In 1980, the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission adopted the St. Anthony Falls Historic District Design Guidelines. These guidelines do not offer specific guidance on alterations to existing buildings.

- (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 and Guidelines for Rehabilitation are likely the most applicable to the project as the building was rehabilitated in 1998-99. The applicant also consulted the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Restoration.

Under masonry the guidelines for rehabilitation recommend "Identifying, retaining, and preserving masonry features that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building such as walls, brackets, railings, cornices, window architraves, door pediments, steps, and columns; and details such as tooling and bonding patterns, coatings, and color." The parapet cap may not be the most noticeable masonry feature of the building, but it still contributes to the character of the building and retaining or reinstalling the clay tile parapet cap would meet this guideline.

The masonry section of the guidelines for rehabilitation state that "removing a masonry feature that is unrepairable and not replacing it; or replacing it with a new feature that does not convey the same visual appearance" is not recommended. The proposed sheet metal parapet cap does not convey the same visual appearance of the clay tile parapet cap. It will have a higher profile and not share the variation in profile created by the overlap coupling system of the clay tile. The contrast in visual appearance can be seen by looking at pictures of the subject building as two of the three roof parapets are capped in sheet metal.

However, the applicant states that the only option to retain or reinstall the clay tile cap would be to rebuild the parapet wall so that its width can be uniform enough to allow for proper cap installation. The masonry section of the guidelines for rehabilitation state that the following is not recommended "replacing or rebuilding a major portion of exterior masonry walls that could be repaired so that, as a result, the building is no longer historic and is essentially new construction." The applicant argues that replacement of the parapet wall to retain the clay tile cap would not be recommended as the visual impact of rebuilding the parapet wall would be more detrimental to the integrity of the building than replacing the parapet cap with sheet metal.

- (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 subject site is located within the plan area of the Historic Mills District Master Plan adopted in 1998. An update addressing the Guthrie Theater site was adopted in 2001. The plan does not offer specific guidance on the treatment of material on historic buildings. However, it does encourage the preservation of historic buildings and encourages new buildings to have a parapet walls.

***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) ***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 materials provided by the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the significance of the building and the St. Anthony Falls District.

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

Chapter 530 of the Zoning Ordinance does not offer guidance on the particular masonry features of a parapet wall.

- (10) ***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 treatment can be best described as rehabilitating. The applicant addresses some of the guidelines for restoration in their analysis.

***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:***

- (11) ***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 ultimate goal of this proposed project is to stabilize the parapet wall and prevent further deterioration from exposure to water infiltration. This will preserve the integrity and

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Planning Division

significance of all the contributing properties within the district. The removal of the clay tile parapet cap and replacement with a sheet metal cap could represent the chipping away of the historic fabric of the district. Sheet metal caps have been installed on other portions of buildings in the North Star Blanket Mill complex and other buildings within the district. The sheet metal parapets do have a subtle visual impact on the district and do not convey a similar visual appearance. To retain or reuse the clay tile parapet cap would require the reconstruction of the parapet wall, which would have a more detrimental visual impact on the district.

**(12) *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.***

Granting the certificate of appropriateness for the proposed work would be in keeping with the previously approved capping of the three-story and tower portions of the North Star Woolen Blanket Mill. While the sheet metal parapet caps convey a different visual appearance the alteration is subtle and will not negatively alter the essential character of the historic district.

Repairing and in-kind replacement of deteriorated brick will also be in keeping the spirit and intent of the ordinance and will not negatively alter the essential character of the district.

The applicant has not provided staff with a brick sample or a process to which the painted coating will be removed.

**(13) *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.***

Due condition of the parapet wall the only demonstrated option to retain the clay tile parapet cap would be the rebuilding of the entire parapet. The parapet wall replacement would have a more detrimental impact on the integrity of the building than replacing the parapet cap with clay tile. The replacement of the parapet cap is based on an evaluation of alternatives that would have a more detrimental impact to the integrity of the building and the district and is not solely financial related. This parapet cap replacement does not set a precedent for similar approvals in other locations within the district

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

CPED-Planning staff recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings and **approve** the Certificate of Appropriateness to allow for parapet cap replacement and parapet brick repair with the following conditions:

1. The color of the sheet metal parapet cap shall be “Sierra Tan.”
2. The applicant shall submit a brick sample of the brick proposed for any brick replacement for approval by CPED-Planning Preservation and Design staff before construction to ensure that it matches as closely feasible the existing brick.
3. The applicant shall submit a project scope that outlines the procedures to be used in the tuckpointing, brick repair, and painted coating removal. The procedures used shall be in compliance with the masonry section of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation.
4. A comprehensive maintenance plan that focuses on maintenance and stabilization of the building elements identified in the report prepared by Building Restoration Corporation in April 2009 entitled “North Star Lofts 2009 Investigation Recap and Observation Report” shall be completed by the property owner within two years of this approval.

**Attachment A:** Submitted by CPED staff

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Planning Division

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Planning Division

**Attachment B: Materials submitted by Applicant**