

**Community Planning & Economic Development
Planning Division**
250 4th Street South, Room 300 PSC
Minneapolis, MN 55415



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

MEMORANDUM

TO: Heritage Preservation Commission
FROM: Brian Schaffer, 612.673.2670
DATE: October 11, 2011
RE: National Register of Historic Places Nomination – Buzza Company Building

Background

On August 22, 2011 the Minnesota Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) sent the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission a letter requesting comments on the nomination of the Buzza Company Building to the National Register of Historic Places MacRostie Historic Advisors LLC (Attachment B). The property is located at 1006 West Lake Street, between Colfax and Dupont Avenues South. More recently the property has been known as the Florence Lehmann Multi-Education Center.

As a Certified Local government, the Commission is required by federal law to participate in the National Register nomination process as follows:

- Afford the public a reasonable opportunity to comment on the nomination;
- Prepare a report as to whether or not the subject property is eligible for National Register listing; and
- Have the chief local elected official (the Mayor) submit this report and his/her recommendation to the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Officer within sixty days of notice from the SHPO.¹

The Owner has retained MacRostie Historic Advisors to nominate the subject property to the National Register of Historic Places as the first step in seeking financial aid for a substantial rehabilitation of this income-producing property. The Owner seeks state historic preservation tax credits and federal historic preservation tax credits to accomplish this goal which require:

¹ More than a simple comment letter, this report provides the City with significant decision making power in the matter. If both the Commission and the chief local elected official recommend that the subject property not be nominated to the National Register, the SHPO shall take no further action, unless within thirty days of the receipt of such recommendation by the SHPO an appeal is filed with the State. If such an appeal is filed, the State shall follow the procedures for making nomination pursuant to established procedures. Even then, the City's report and recommendations are included with the nomination submitted by the State to the Keeper of the National Register.

- The property to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places;
- The work to consist of a substantial rehabilitation (an amount greater than the pre-rehabilitation cost of the building(s));
- The work meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*; and
- The property's historic character be maintained for five years.

Attachment B includes a copy of the nomination, prepared by MacRosite and dated August 1, 2011, for your review and comment.

Previous Reviews

The Buzza Company Building has been included in previous survey efforts. CPED files indicate at least two previous surveys that included the property. In 2001 a survey conducted by Will Stark in association with a project along the Midtown Greenway concluded that "The integrity of location is excellent; of design, materials, and workmanship is poor; and of setting, feeling and association fair." The analysis further concludes that the property is not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places stating that the building "does not have sufficient integrity to convey any association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; therefore making it not eligible under Criterion A."

In 2004 the property was included in the Phase I and II Architectural History Investigation for the Lake Street Repaving and Streetscape Project. The 106 Group forwarded on the 2001 recommendation that the property is not eligible for the NRHP.

Nomination Review

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, a property must be significant within a given context and retain its integrity, defined as its ability to communicate that significance.

Significance

MacRostie has identified that the Buzza Company Building meets National Register Criteria A, the property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. The areas of significance identified are Industry and Military. The Buzza Company Building had a variety of tenants and uses since it was constructed in 1907 and in 2010 when its doors closed. The Nomination focuses on a period of significance between 1923 and 1946. This period of significance covers the time in which Buzza Company inhabited the building and when it was leased to the Minneapolis-Honeywell Regulator Company by the United States War Department during World War II.

The Nomination states that the Buzza Company Building is affiliated with a forerunner of the modern greeting card company between 1923 and 1942. The Nomination goes to state that

"During those years, the Buzza Company Building was the production headquarters of the Buzza Company, a greeting card designer, publisher and manufacturer that contributed substantially to the nation's "roman with greeting cards," specifically during

the industry's early development through the 1920s when it grew from an out of \$0million in 1913 to \$50 million by 1925.”

MacRostie has conducted excellent research into the history of the Buzza greeting card company. Using several resources they document the growth of the company and subsequent growth of the subject building. The significance of the Buzza Company is further illustrated by documenting the accomplishments and innovations of the Buzza Company. MacRostie does a thorough job of building the context for the greeting card industry and identifies the growth of Buzza as mirrored in the growth of the industry, while at the same time they identify how Buzza differentiated itself in the greeting card market.

CPED review indicates that that a context that is lacking in the Nomination is the one between the Buzza Company and the City of Minneapolis. The Nomination focuses on the achievements of the Buzza Company, the ethic of its leader, the company's ability to compete with other businesses within the industry and the its ability to attract national level talent, but it doesn't provide for a local context for the Buzza Company and the publishing and printing industries nor the applied arts for which Minneapolis was also renowned for. Both of these industries, publishing and printing and culture, fine and applied arts, are important contexts identified in the Minneapolis Preservation Plan and their local strength may have provided Buzza with a competitive edge with other firms nationwide. Additional research into the Buzza Company's relationship within these contexts in Minneapolis could provide for a more robust understanding of the Buzza Company's significance to the City of Minneapolis.

The Nomination also focuses on the Military use of the Buzza Company Building from 1942 to 1946. The building is associated with Minneapolis-Honeywell Regulator Company, in particular the use of the building during World War II. Minneapolis-Honeywell (M-H) leased the building from United States War Department and used it as its location to manufacture precision optical instruments. The Nomination states “the Buzza Company Building reflects M-H's distinguishing achievements for developing several breakthroughs in optical production during the war.”

CPED is appreciative of MacRostie's efforts to address the Military context of this site in the war efforts. Aside from the site's association with M-H as a manufacturing center of optics the Nomination could better place Buzza Company Building within the context of M-H's operations in the nation and Minneapolis during World War II. Identifying whether the optics, themselves, were developed and/or the processes for mass manufacturing the optics were developed in the Buzza Company Building would enrich the understanding of the significance of the property.

Integrity

The National Register of Historic Places divides integrity into seven aspects: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Possessing several, and usually most of these aspects allows resources to successfully communicate their historical significance within a given context.²

² National Park Service, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998) 44-49.

The Nomination provides a thorough analysis of the property's features and resources and identifies the alterations that have occurred to the property during the period of significance and after. The exterior of the building was received a stucco application in the 1990s. Based on photograph's in CPED's files the stucco project obscured some of the details of the original construction. At the time of the stucco project, most of the windows of this building were replaced. This work, as suggested in the 2001 Survey review of the property, diminishes the integrity of design, materials and workmanship. With regard to these elements of integrity the Nomination focuses on what remains intact, which includes: the spatial design including the footprint and the various building sections, Classical revival-influenced detailing on the street elevations, terrazzo floors, and the interior of the tower portion of the building. The Nomination's analysis concludes that "Despite the alterations the Buzza Company Building has received, the building remains intact with seven aspects of integrity."

The stucco and window replacement are potentially reversible and CPED believes that property posses enough integrity to convey its significance. CPED does encourage the Nominator to work with the Property Owner to sensitively reverse stucco and other alterations completed in the 1990s that diminish the property's integrity.

Staff Recommendation:

The Nominator has prepared an extensive nomination that clearly indicates their consideration of the subject property's contributions to the history of our nation. Staff applauds their investigation, and encourages its continuance. CPED recommends that the Commission adopt this CPED report (with suggestions for additional research), approve the nomination, and direct staff to transmit the report to the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Attachments

- A. Buzza Company Building National Register of Historic Places Nomination prepared by MacRostie
- B. 2001 Survey Form
- C. 2004 HPC Building Inventory Form
- D. CPED File Photographs before and after Stucco and Window Replacement