

MINNEAPOLIS CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT REPORT
HERITAGE PRESERVATION DESIGNATION

DATE OF CPC REVIEW: September 19, 2005

ADDRESS OF PROPERTY: 2843 Elliot Avenue, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail-Order Warehouse and Retail Store (related addresses include: 2929 Chicago Avenue, 2901 Elliot Avenue, 900-930 East Lake Street)

STAFF CONTACT AND PHONE: Amy Lucas, 612-673-2422

PROPERTY OWNER: Midtown Exchange Hotel, LLC; Midtown Exchange Apartments Limited Partnership; Chicago Lofts LLC

CONTACT PERSON AND PHONE: Charlene Roise, Hess Roise Consultants,
612-338-1987

WARD: 8 NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION: Central Neighborhood Improvement Association, Midtown Phillips, Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association, Phillips West Neighborhood

BACKGROUND:

The designation study for the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail-Order Warehouse and Retail Store was completed in 1994. At that time, the item was not forwarded to City Council. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) was sent a copy of the proposed designation pursuant to the requirements of state law and section 599.250 of the city's Heritage Preservation Regulations. The SHPO found the property met the local designation criteria; said comments are attached in a letter dated August 3, 1995. On July 29, 2005 the property was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. On August 12, 2005, the property owner submitted an application requesting heritage designation of the property. At the public meeting of August 23, 2005, the Heritage Preservation Commission reviewed the nomination request and directed the planning director to commence the designation process.

REPORT SUMMARY:

The attached designation study finds the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail-Order Warehouse and Retail Store meets designation criteria 1 and 4 contained in section 599.210 of the city's Heritage Preservation Regulations:

- (1) *The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history.*

The building represents a relatively early phase in the development of a company that became a major retailer in the United States. The Sears building represents both the mail order business on which the company was founded, and also the retail store which began to dominate the business soon after the construction of the Minneapolis structure. The Sears tower on Lake Street provided a commanding presence that not only created a focus for retail activity, but acted as a dominant landmark visible throughout south Minneapolis. The move of Sears to an outlying area, rather than the downtown business district was a precursor to the suburban malls that would begin to dominate retailing three decades later.

(4) *The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction.*

The Sears building is also significant because it represents a well-conserved example of the industrial designs of George Nimmons and Company. Nimmons was prominent among architects for his concept of industrial design and its impact on employees, and he wrote widely of his applications in leading architectural magazines.

AUTHORITY FOR REVIEW:

Chapter 599 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, Heritage Preservation Regulations, authorizes the City Planning Commission to review and comment on all proposed designations as follows:

599.260. City planning commission review. The planning director shall submit all proposed designations to the city planning commission for review and comment on the proposal within thirty (30) days. In its review, the city planning commission shall consider but not be limited to the following factors:

- (1) The relationship of the proposed designation to the city's comprehensive plan.
- (2) The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding area.
- (3) The consistency of the proposed designation with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the city council.

FINDINGS:

1. The relationship of the designation to the city's comprehensive plan. The proposed designation promotes preservation of an historic resource and supports the following goal and policies of *The Minneapolis Plan*:

Goal 6. *Preserve, enhance and create a sustainable natural and historic environment citywide.*

Policy 1.7. *Minneapolis will recognize and celebrate its history.*

Policy 9.2. *Minneapolis will continue to preserve the natural ecology and the historical features that define its unique identity in the region.*

Policy 9.4. *Minneapolis will promote preservation as a tool for economic development and community revitalization.*

- 2. The effect of the designation on the surrounding area.** The proposed designation will preserve a unique local landmark. The designation will not negatively affect the surrounding area.
- 3. The consistency of the designation with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the city council.** No small area plans for this area of Minneapolis have been adopted by the City Council. However, the Lake Street Midtown Greenway Corridor Framework Plan was approved by the City Planning Commission in 1999. The designation is consistent with the plan which promotes the rehabilitation and reuse of the Sears building as a mixed-use center. Between April of 2004 and July of 2005, the City approved multiple land use applications for the redevelopment of this site. These applications included the rehabilitation of the historic portions of the Sears building.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT:

Planning Staff recommends that the City Planning Commission **adopt** the above findings and **forward** such findings and comments to the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission.

Attachments:

1. Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail-Order Warehouse and Retail Store designation study, July 1994.
2. State Historic Preservation Officer comments, August 3, 1995.