



**Sears, Roebuck and Company
Mail-Order Warehouse and Retail Store
2929 Chicago Avenue South**

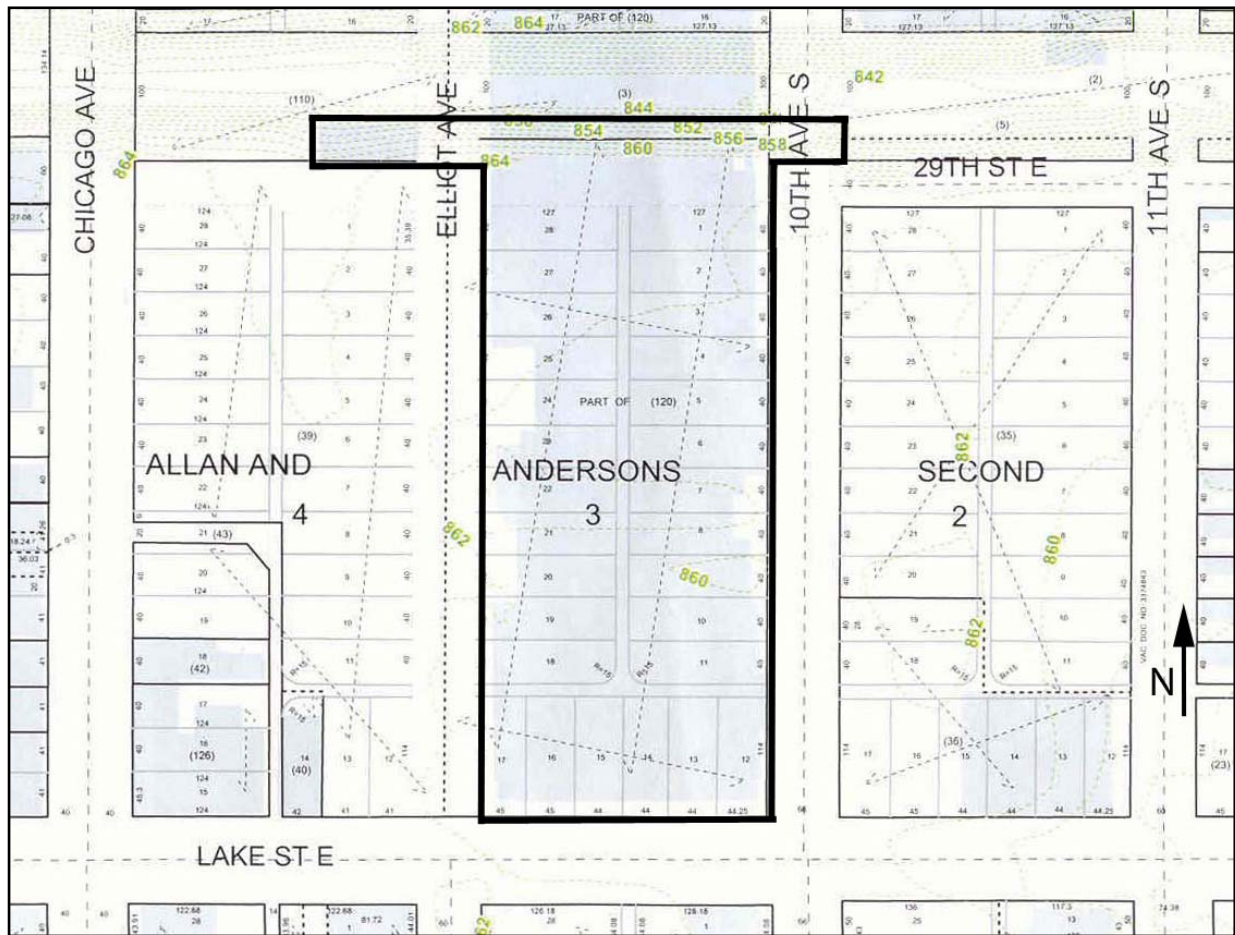
Design Guidelines

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
June 2006

The Sears, Roebuck and Company Design Guidelines provide a framework for evaluating proposed alterations to the existing building. Guidelines should be consulted before planning exterior maintenance tasks such as cleaning and roofing, as well as major rehabilitation and additions.

Plans for all exterior alterations are reviewed by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) and staff of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development–Planning Division. A *Certificate of No Change* is approved by staff for minor alterations that follow the adopted guidelines. A *Certificate of Appropriateness* is reviewed by the Heritage Preservation Commission for major alterations and additions. The HPC and Planning Division staff evaluate each project for consistency with the appropriate design guidelines.

For more information, contact the Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development–Planning Division at (612) 673-2597.



Locally designated property boundaries



West facade, 2006



West facade, north end, 2006

Description

The Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail-Order Warehouse and Retail Store is located at 2929 Chicago Avenue in south Minneapolis. The original structure, dating from 1927-1928, covers an entire block. In 1929, six stories were added to the north section of the building, increasing the height from three to nine stories. The primary facades face west over a vacated portion of Elliot Avenue South and south along East Lake Street. Only the first four stories along Lake Street are considered primary facade; the upper stories are secondary. The east facade on Tenth Avenue South and the north facade facing the Midtown Greenway (formerly a railroad line of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and Saint Paul Railway Company) are both secondary facades.

Reflecting the influence of the Chicago School of architecture, the design is a straightforward, utilitarian version of what the building’s architect, George C. Nimmons, called “Modern” architecture. The building features bands of windows and smooth, unornamented wall surfaces typical of the Moderne style. The influence of the Art Deco style, popular in the 1920s, appears in the dominant vertical tower and the decorated entablatures surrounding the entrances.



West and south facades, 2006



South facade, 2006

The building is of reinforced-concrete construction with a slab foundation and slab floors. It is faced in cream and tan brick with light mortar, and trimmed with limestone. The facades are dominated by rectangular window openings that hold fixed and operable awning windows. The primary facades consist of a series of recessed wall surfaces organized around the building’s defining element, a 211-foot-tall central tower. The tower is delineated by brick piers infilled with glazing, with a decorative limestone border at the top. Large letters spelling out “SEARS”

were once affixed to the tower's parapet on each elevation, but were removed in 1995. New "MIDTOWN" signs project above the east and west parapets and are supported by framework mounted to the tower's roof. A twelve-story section is set back from the tower. A four-story section is to the south and a nine-story section is to the north. Signs for "ALLINA COMMONS" are mounted on frames attached to the roof on the east and west sides of the nine-story section. Attached to the building's north wall—and located in the former railroad corridor—is a single-story train shed, part of the original construction. Structural elements of the train shed are integrated with structural elements of the reinforced-concrete, deck-girder bridges at Elliot and Tenth Avenues.



South and east facades, 2006



East and north facades, 2006

The building's brick parapets were originally capped with limestone. During the 2004-2006 rehabilitation, some of the limestone was replaced with cast stone and, at higher elevations, sheet metal caps. The parapets conceal flat composition roofs. Mechanical equipment installed during the rehabilitation is situated on the roofs of the north, central, and south sections and the train shed; some is visible from the street.

The building's ornamentation is primarily concentrated around an entrance bay at the base of the tower on Elliot Avenue. The entryway is surrounded by a three-story Bedford limestone composition with piers and low-relief spandrel panels. Set back from the projecting entry at the tower base is another limestone composition consisting of stylized pelicans carved in a heraldic motif above geometric and foliate low-relief beds. This central element is flanked by a composition of four prominent Egyptianate geometric motifs, each set in a spandrel panel framed by stylized balls and diamonds. A less elaborate version of the treatment of the main entry is repeated at the retail store entrances south of the tower on Elliot Avenue and on Lake Street. Both have "Sears, Roebuck and Co. Retail Store" carved in a limestone panel above, and are flanked by limestone and brick piers surmounted by stone panels, each containing a low-relief rosette or foliate design. Display windows line the street level on each side of the central Lake Street entrance. The same window pattern continues for one bay on the west and east facades. The Tenth Avenue facade has two public entrances to the building, which are simpler in design than the entrances on the west and south facades. The south entrance is historic and the north entrance was added during the rehabilitation. Two loading dock areas are also located on the Tenth Avenue side.

The building was vacated by Sears in 1994 and sat empty for a decade. It was rehabilitated for offices, housing, retail, and commercial use between 2004 and 2006. The rehabilitation met the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, and the project received federal historic rehabilitation tax credits. The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places and locally designated in 2005.

Design Guidelines

The Sears, Roebuck and Company Building Design Guidelines are based upon *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, which follow. The intent of the *Standards* is to promote the preservation of historic materials and features that contribute to a property's significance.

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
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.

1. Masonry

a. Decorative Masonry Features

Decorative masonry features should be retained in repair or renovation projects. Deteriorated brick, stone, mortar, and other materials should be replaced with material used in the original construction or with materials that resemble the appearance of the original as closely as possible.

b. Cleaning and Waterproofing

Masonry cleaning should be conducted only to halt deterioration and by means such as low pressure water, soft brushes, and/or appropriate chemical treatment. Sandblasting should not be used under any circumstances. Waterproof and water repellent coatings should not be used unless there is evidence of water penetration.

c. Repointing and Replacement

Original mortar joint size and profile should be retained and/or duplicated in repointing. Mortar mixtures should duplicate the cement proportion and should duplicate the original mortar in color and texture. New brick and stone should match the color, size, texture, profile and detail of the historic material wherever possible. Above the second story, caulking may be used for re-occurring mortar failure or cracking caused by stress. The caulking should match the color of the brick or stone.

d. Resurfacing

Repairs to historic masonry surfaces should duplicate the original in color and texture, if evidence exists. Smooth or heavy dashed surfaces should be avoided unless they were used on the historic surface. Stucco, artificial stone, brick veneer, or vinyl or aluminum products should not be applied over historic masonry surfaces.

e. Painting and Paint Removal

The original color and texture of masonry surfaces should be retained and unpainted stone and brick surfaces should not be painted. Surfaces that are painted can be repainted as needed. The removal of paint from painted masonry surfaces should only be attempted if unpainted surfaces are historically appropriate and if removal can be accomplished without damage to the masonry.

2. Roofs, Parapets, and Cornices

a. Parts of the original parapets were modified during the 2004-2006 rehabilitation. The roofline that now exists, including the parapets and other elements, should be maintained. No sections of the parapet should be covered or removed in the future.

b. Where a parapet is missing, replacements should be based on historic photos or other evidence.

c. Original masonry copings should be maintained. Where coping is missing on common (party) or upper-story walls, metal coping with an appropriate painted finish is acceptable. It should not extend on the exterior building wall farther than the approximate height of existing coping.

d. Modern roofing materials such as rolled rubber are suitable for flat roofs not visible from the street.

e. New rooftop equipment that projects above the roofline should be set back from the primary building elevation. It should not be visible from the street level. Some rooftop equipment was installed during the 2004-2006 rehabilitation; this can remain, and can be replaced with other equipment of the same size and proportion, in a neutral color.

3. Windows

a. Windows and Sash: Size and Shape

All existing historic window openings should be retained, and window openings should not be enlarged or reduced to fit new units. New windows should be compatible with existing historic units. New window openings should not be introduced into principal elevations.

b. Sash and Glazing

Historic metal sash should be conserved rather than replaced. If historic sash requires replacement, the size and number of panes of glass in each sash should not be altered. New sash, if installed, should duplicate the existing, including the division of lights (simulated divided lights are allowed, following the design used for the 2004-2006 rehabilitation). Clear glass should be used unless historical documentation shows other treatments (clear Low-E glass is allowed).

Replacement windows will be metal (steel or aluminum) with a painted or baked enamel finish. The operation of replacements and the arrangement of lights should match the original or the windows installed during the 2004-2006 rehabilitation.

c. Trim

All decorative trim around the windows should be retained, including brick or stone lintels and sills. If replacement is necessary, the original profile should be replicated.

4. Entries and Storefronts

a. Size and Shape

All historic entry and storefront components should be retained. Entry openings should not be enlarged or reduced to fit a new door.

New entry openings should not be introduced into principal elevations. Any new entry openings and doors should be compatible with existing historic units. Interior dropped ceilings should be set back at least 5 feet from exterior doors and windows.

b. Trim

Original or historic features of the entry and storefronts, including brick and stone details, bulkheads, and transoms, should be retained. If replacement is necessary, historic trim details should be replicated.

c. Entrances

The current doors date from the 2004-2006 rehabilitation. If replacement of doors is necessary, the replacement should be compatible with the material, design, and hardware of the doors installed in the 2004-2006 rehabilitation.

5. Architectural Features

All decorative trim should be retained. This includes brick or stone detail, and stone lintels and sills. If replacement is necessary, the original design including materials, color, texture and profile should be replicated.

6. Signs, Awnings, and Lighting

a. Signs and awnings should follow regulations contained in Chapter 543 of the city's zoning ordinance. Refer also to the "Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings." (Adopted by the HPC on June 17, 2003)

b. Signs should not conceal architectural details or features and materials should be compatible with the materials of the building to which they are attached.

c. No part of the historic facade should be irreversibly damaged or altered in the installation of signs and awnings. Limit drilling new holes into masonry. Signs must be attached to the building with holes drilled into mortar joints.

d. No part of the historic facade should be irreversibly damaged or altered in the installation of lighting. Electrical conduit and other hardware should be concealed and not installed across the building facade.

e. Sign variances were granted in 2005 for three signs installed on the roofs of the building. Signs with the word "MIDTOWN" were approved for the east and west facades of the central tower. The "ALLINA COMMONS" signs were approved for the east and west facades of the north section. Signs with words "MIDTOWN GLOBAL MARKET" were approved for the

southeast and southwest corners of the south section. A variance was also granted for the “MIDTOWN EXCHANGE” sign mounted to the fifth-story parapet above the main entrance on the west facade.

f. New signage in should follow the precedents for location and size established by the signs approved in 2005 (section 6e). A historic variance must be requested for new signage.

Historic Photographs



West facade, Sears, Roebuck and Company, ca. 1928.
Photograph: *Forum*, September 1929



Main entrance, Sears, Roebuck and Company, ca. 1928.
Photograph: *Forum*, September 1929



West facade, Sears, Roebuck and Company, ca. 1928.
Photograph: Minnesota Historical Society



South and west facades, Sears, Roebuck and Company, ca. 1928.
Photograph: Minnesota Historical Society



West facade, Sears, Roebuck and Company, ca. 1932
Photograph: Sears Archives



West facade, Sears, Roebuck and Company, ca. 1958
Photograph: Sears Archives