

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

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FILE NAME: Resler Building (Nate's Clothing)

ADDRESS: 401 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North (27 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street)

DATE OF APPLICATION: August 11, 2008

APPLICANT: Daniel Green, Miller Dunwiddie (612) 278-7754

DATE OF HEARING: September 16, 2008

EXPIRATION OF APPEAL PERIOD: September 26, 2008

HPC SITE/DISTRICT: North Loop Warehouse Historic District; Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District

CATEGORY: Contributing

CLASSIFICATION: Certificate of Appropriateness

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Molly McCartney, (612) 673-5811

DATE: September 16, 2008

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**A. SITE DESCRIPTION:**

Constructed in 1913, the Resler Building is a large brick five-story rectangular shaped Commercial style building located at the northwest corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North and 4<sup>th</sup> Street North. The building, commonly referred to as 'Nate's Clothing' after a long-term tenant, is contributing to the City of Minneapolis North Loop Warehouse Historic District is also contributing to the National Register of Historic Places Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District. The building has simple ornamentation typical of the Commercial style consisting of three part Chicago Commercial style windows on the first and second floors, a stone belt course separating the first and second floors, concrete sills, and simple brackets that support the flat, projecting cornice. The building most recently housed Nate's Clothing on the first floor; a projecting vertical neon sign with the words "Nate's Clothing" is located on the North 4<sup>th</sup> Street façade. An additional painted sign with the words "Nate's Clothing" is located at the cornice line on the adjacent building to the east.

The rectangular shaped building is built to the property line on each of its principal facades; adjacent buildings to the west along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North are similar in materials, scale and massing; along 4<sup>th</sup> Street North, however, is a surface parking lot and two, three, and seven story buildings. The 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue north façade of the Rensler building features nine bays with Chicago Commercial style three part windows on the first and second floors. A recessed entrance is located in the bay immediately south of the central bay. Lower level windows have non-historic glass block in-fill. The north or 4<sup>th</sup> Street North façade features a recessed entrance and is three bays with Chicago Commercial style three part windows on the first and second floors, and lower level glass block in-fill. Immediately south of the Rensler building is the 5 story Robitshek building; the remainder of the block has 2, two story buildings. Opposite the Rensler building at the intersection of 4th Street North and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North is a surface parking lot.

**B. PROJECT BACKGROUND:**

At the July 15, 2008 HPC meeting the applicant submitted a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for proposed interior and exterior modifications for the building's continued use as office space and first floor retail. The project called for rehabilitation, restoration, and new construction (Attachment B). The Rensler building is currently undergoing a Certified Restoration for tax credits through the Minnesota

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service (See Attachment B, pages 11-12).

The following changes were conditionally approved by the HPC (Attachment C: HPC Actions 7-25-08):

**Windows:** The lower or garden level glass block in-fill located on the north and west facades will be replaced with new windows with a mullion pattern to match those shown in historic photographs. The replacement glass will be translucent.

**Entrances:** The existing entrance on 4<sup>th</sup> street will be retained. A new recessed entrance will be created in the center of the North 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue façade, utilizing an existing bay; the windows will be retained.

**Interior modifications.** A new elevator shaft in line with the central corridor will connect all floors including the new proposed 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> levels. The existing south stairwell will be upgraded and will be extended to the new 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> levels. The existing stairs from the lower level to the first level will be replaced. In addition to replacement of the non-historic glass block windows on the lower level, the north half of the floor will be converted to commercial use. A new code compliant stairway will be cut into a center bay of the floor above for access to the first level.

At the July 15, 2008 HPC meeting a proposed two story rooftop addition as described below was **not** approved. The applicant was asked to submit more detailed drawings and designs for the following:

**New construction not approved:** The applicant proposed to add two new levels on the existing rooftop, set back one structural bay from the west and north facades. Each of the proposed new stories would be 12 ft. in height. The addition would be constructed of steel panels with three part windows that would mimic the Chicago style Commercial windows on the first and second levels. The addition would also include the elevator penthouse and mechanical units.

## **C. PROPOSED CHANGES**

A new Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed rooftop addition was resubmitted by the applicant. The revised design calls for the addition of a one story penthouse measuring 12 ft. in height with the penthouse walls pulled back one structural bay from all primary street facades. The proposed material is to be weathering steel. The applicants have supplied further information, such as an additional elevation, illustrated three-dimensional drawings, visibility analysis, and material sample.

There are also a number of other changes that are included this review, including first level storefront windows, proposed steel canopies, and first floor awnings.

The applicant proposed to rehabilitate the existing storefront windows, including rehabilitation the wood frames and trim and replacement of the glass with a 1" insulated, low-e glazing. The existing window light pattern will be retained.

The applicant are also proposed two steel canopies, one at the north entrance along 4<sup>th</sup> Street North and the other at the newly approved west entrance on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North. The proposed canopy along 4<sup>th</sup> Street North is 8 ft. 5 in. by 14 ft 7 in. and the canopy along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North is smaller projecting 3 ft. from the building and 6 ft 8 in. in width. The plans submitted show how water will drain off the canopies through gutter as well as recessed lighting in the canopies.

The applicant also proposes in the written applicant to add awnings to the storefront windows on the first floor. Based on the site plan, the proposed awnings appear to meet location requirements for awnings, per the Minneapolis Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings. Additional information such as color and installation method would be needed prior to sign permit sign off.

**D. APPLICABLE REGULATION, POLICIES, AND GUIDELINES:**

**Warehouse Historic District Guidelines**  
Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (1978)

1. Masonry repair.
  - A. No exterior sandblasting is permitted.
  - B. Chemical cleaning is not permitted on glazed brick, glazed terra cotta, limestone, marble or other masonry material susceptible to damage from chemical exposure.
  - C. Repointing of masonry joints shall be done with a mortar composition and color to match original mortar, joints shall be tooled to match original profile.
  
2. Storefronts.
  - A. Wherever existing storefronts remain, critical details shall be retained, e.g., cast iron columns, wood molding, trim, terra cotta ornament.
  - B. Modifications to entries shall be permitted as required for the adaptive reuse of the buildings. Modifications shall be constructed with materials to match original storefronts.
  - C. Handicap accessibility shall be done within the building where ramping with guard rails is required on street facades. Appropriate modifications to the facade will be permitted for on-grade access.
  - D. New storefronts will be permitted where original storefronts have been removed. New storefronts shall replicate original where historical photos exist or be designed in the spirit of the original buildings with characteristics as follows:
    - Clear glass
    - Transoms over storefront
    - Recessed entry doors
    - Raised panels below storefronts
    - Use of historic columns compatible with the buildings and era
    - Storefronts shall be divided into bays corresponding with the window bay pattern above. Bays may be divided with brick, cast iron, terra cotta panels or other historically compatible materials.
  
3. Window replacement.
  - A. Windows which have unique architectural or historically significant details which cannot be duplicated must be retained.
  - B. Window replacement other than item A) shall be permitted if original windows are badly deteriorated or provide inadequate thermal performance. (Use of interior storm windows shall be encouraged.)
  - C. Replacement windows may be wood or aluminum. Window paning shall be provided to replicate existing wood moldings.
  - D. Replacement windows must have a true offset, single- or double-hung operation. (They need not be operable.)
  - E. Replacement windows will have a paint finish. (Anodized windows will not be permitted.)
  - F. Replacement windows shall have clear glass unless historical documentation suggests otherwise.

4. Roofing.
  - A. Modern roofing materials will be permitted on flat roofs.
  - B. Original copings on street facings shall be retained or replaced. Metal coping with a paint finish will be permitted as replacement for brick copings on common walls.
  - C. Roof top additions which project above parapet walls such as deck, skylights, penthouses, and mechanical equipment shall be set back from the primary building or street facades at least one structural bay.
  
5. Dropped interior ceilings.
  - A. Interior dropped ceilings shall be held away 5'0" from exterior window when they drop below the existing window head.
  
6. Removal of historical fabric.
  - A. Selective removal of original building materials is allowed when deterioration has occurred or for remodeling as part of an adaptive reuse. HPC approval is required to remove any historic building materials.
  
7. Health and safety code requirements.

Exterior alterations required by health and safety codes also require HPC review. When necessary, the HPC can argue for exceptions to the building code when life safety issues are not involved.

**The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation**

U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service

1990

**Roofs**

**Recommended:**

Identifying, retaining, and preserving roofs - and their functional and decorative features - that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building. This includes the roof's shape, such as hipped, gambrel, and mansard; decorative features such as cupolas, cresting, chimneys, and weathervanes; and roofing material such as slate, wood, clay tile, and metal, as well as its size, color, and patterning.

**Alterations/Additions for the New Use**

Installing mechanical and service equipment on the roof such as air conditioning, transformers, or solar collectors when required for the new use so that they are inconspicuous from the public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure character-defining features.

Designing additions to roofs such as residential, office, or storage spaces; elevator housing; decks and terraces; or dormers or skylights when required by the new use so that they are inconspicuous from the public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure character-defining features.

**Not Recommended:**

Introducing a new roof feature that is incompatible in size, scale, material, and color.

Radically changing a character-defining roof shape or damaging or destroying character-defining roofing material as a result of incompatible design or improper installation techniques.

**Mechanical Systems: Heating, Air Conditioning, Electrical, and Plumbing**

**Recommended:**

### **Alterations/Additions for the New Use**

Installing a completely new mechanical system if required for the new use so that it causes the least alteration possible to the building's floor plan, the exterior elevations, and the least damage to historic building material.

### **Building Site**

#### **Recommended:**

### **Alterations/Additions for the New Use**

Designing new exterior additions to historic buildings or adjacent new construction which is compatible with the historic character of the site and which preserve the historic relationship between a building or buildings, landscape features, and open space.

### **Alterations/Additions for the New Use**

Introducing new construction onto the building site which is visually incompatible in terms of size, scale, design, materials, color and texture or which destroys historic relationships on the site.

### **District/Neighborhood**

#### **Recommended:**

### **Alterations/Additions for the New Use**

Designing and constructing new additions to historic buildings when required by the new use. New work should be compatible with the historic character of the district or neighborhood in terms of size, scale, design, material, color, and texture.

### **Health and Safety Code Requirements**

#### **Recommended:**

Upgrading historic stairways and elevators to meet health and safety codes in a manner that assures their preservation, i.e., so that they are not damaged or obscured.

Adding a new stairway or elevator to meet health and safety codes in a manner that preserves adjacent character-defining features and spaces.

### **Building Site**

### **New Additions to Historic Buildings**

#### **Recommended:**

Designing new additions in a manner that makes clear what is historic and what is new.

Considering the attached exterior addition both in terms of the new use and the appearance of other buildings in the historic district or neighborhood. Design for the new work may be contemporary or may reference design motifs from the historic building. In either case, it should always be clearly differentiated from the historic building and be compatible in terms of mass, materials, relationship of solids to voids, and color.

Designing additional stories, when required for the new use, that are set back from the wall plane and are as inconspicuous as possible when viewed from the street.

#### **Not Recommended:**

Designing a new addition so that its size and scale in relation to the historic building are out of proportion, thus diminishing the historic character.

Designing and constructing new additions that result in the diminution or loss of the historic character of the resource, including its design, materials, workmanship, location, or setting.

Constructing additional stories so that the historic appearance of the building is radically changed.

### **Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings (2003)**

#### **1. In General:**

- a. *Sign message:* All signs, except window signs, real estate signs, project information signs, auxiliary signs, temporary signs and portable signs, are limited to the name and address of the establishment.
- b. *Historic signs:* Maintenance or restoration of existing historic signs is encouraged and should not be counted in number of allowable signs.
- c. *Number of signs:* Each principal building entrance that faces a public street, or each ground floor principal use, whichever is less, is allowed two signs. A corner lot with a principal entrance on each street is allowed two signs per street frontage. The two signs may be a combination of one wall sign, one projecting sign, one ground sign, one banner, and awning signage. However, a property may not have both a projecting sign and a ground sign. Only one of the signs should be illuminated, except that banners and awning signs should never be illuminated. Awning signs are limited to ground floor awnings and are subject to the specific guidelines for awnings and awning signs. Parking lot signs are subject to the specific guidelines for signs accessory to parking lots.
- d. *Location of building signs:* Wherever possible, signs should be placed in traditional sign locations including the storefront sign band area. Signs should not obscure or damage architectural features including windows, doors, pilasters, columns and historic signs. Building signs should be located only on the primary façade of the building adjacent to the street and should be no higher than fourteen (14) ft., except as otherwise provided in the specific guidelines for wall signs.
- e. *Color:* Sign colors and materials should be compatible with the colors of the building and its surroundings. Day-glo, light reflecting or fluorescent colors or materials are not allowed.
- f. *Installation:* Sign installation should have a minimal impact on the building and to the extent practical allow the building to be returned to its original condition if the sign is removed. Existing signboards and sign frames should be reused to limit drilling new holes into masonry. Wall signs should be attached to the building through the mortar joints. Projecting signs should be attached to a permanent mounting plate. Awnings should be attached to window or door frames and should never damage masonry.
- g. *Illumination:* Signs may be illuminated externally, internally, or by neon. Plastic face covers should not be placed on illuminated signs. All illuminated building signs should connect to a permanent mounting plate located near the entrance. Electrical conduit should be installed through the permanent mounting plate. Not more than one brick should be damaged by the installation of the permanent mounting plate. Electrical conduit and any lighting fixture should be attached to the sign and not the building wall.
- e. *Awnings and Awning Signs:*
  - i. Location. Awnings should fit within the window or door opening.
  - ii. Number of awnings. The number of awnings may not exceed the number of window or door openings.

- iii. Number of awning signs. Awning signs are limited to ground floor awnings. There should be no more than one sign per awning. Awning signs should be no more than six (6) square feet in area. Where there are multiple awning signs on a building, all signs should be located in the same or similar position on the awnings.
- iv. Materials. Awnings should be constructed of coated or uncoated cloth fabric.
- v. Installation. Awning hardware should be attached to the window or door frame and should never damage masonry. Awnings should not be attached to or cover any part of the building wall.
- vi. Illumination. Awnings and awning signs should not be illuminated.
- vii. Awning shape. Awnings should project downward and outward from the openings in straight lines unless they are reflecting the curved shape of the opening. The projection of an awning should be less than its height. An awning drop or skirt should not exceed twelve (12) inches.

## **E. ANALYSIS**

### **Penthouse**

The Rensler building, a five story rectangular shaped building with facades and entrance facing 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North and 4<sup>th</sup> street North is located on a prominent corner in the City of Minneapolis North Loop Warehouse Historic District and the National Register Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District. The Rensler building occupies a prominent intersection in the districts and faces three 7-story buildings to the north along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North. The proposed one story rooftop addition would not be visible from the street in front of these buildings. Other properties in the area however, include 2-, 3-, and 7- story buildings on the north side of 4<sup>th</sup> Street North, and 5 and 2 story buildings immediately south along 4<sup>th</sup> Street North. The area also includes surface parking lots, the most prominent located at the north side of the intersection of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North and 4<sup>th</sup> Street North. Surface parking is also located on 4<sup>th</sup> Street North at on the south half of the block.

As part of the certified restoration application submitted to the National Park Service and the Minnesota SHPO, the applicant provided a mock-up visibility overlay showing existing views of the Rensler building, and a mock-up of a proposed two story addition (Attachment C). The applicant stated that the addition would not be visible from the ground level in the hatched area indicated on the mock-up (Attachment III, C, page 2).

The staff report for the July 15, 2008 HPC meeting stated that the proposed two story addition would meet district guidelines in terms of height—12 ft.—for each story. The proposed two story addition would also have met the district and Secretary of the Interior’s guidelines in that it would be set back one structural bay from each of the primary facades. Staff also stated that the 2 story addition would nonetheless be incompatible to the existing building in terms of size, scale, color, material, and massing (Attachment III page 9-10).

The revised design calls for the addition of a one-story addition measuring 12 ft. in height from the top of the existing cornice with the addition walls pulled back one structural bay from all primary street facades. The proposed material is to be weathered steel and glass windows. The applicants have supplied further information, such as an additional elevation, illustrated three-dimensional drawings, visibility analysis, and material sample. Shown on the elevation drawings, but not shown on the mock up, are rooftop mechanical equipment which project 4 ft to 8 ft. from the top of the addition. While adding height to the addition, they are setback even further from both facades along 4<sup>th</sup> Street South and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North.

### **Windows**

There are also a number of other changes that are included this review, including first level storefront windows, proposed steel canopies, and first floor awnings.

The applicant proposed to rehabilitation the existing storefront windows, including rehabilitation the wood frames and trim and replacement of the glass with a 1” insulated, low e glazing. The existing window light pattern will be retained. These changes are consistent with both local guidelines and the Standards for retaining historic windows and window patterns.

### **Canopies**

The applicant are also proposed two steel canopies, one at the north entrance along 4<sup>th</sup> Street North and the other at the newly approved west entrance on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North. The proposed canopy along 4<sup>th</sup> Street North is 8 ft. 5 in. by 14 ft 7 in. and the canopy along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North is smaller projecting 3 ft. from the building and 6 ft 8 in. in width. The plans submitted show that water will drain off the canopies through gutter as well as recessed lighting in the canopies. The applicant has submitted a historic photo that shows a canopy on the north elevation. The proposed canopies meet the Standards which call for using documentation for the replacement of missing features and the proposed plans show how water runoff from the canopies would not damage the building. The canopies should be attached to the building through mortar and not masonry. Material or colors have not been indicated. Additional information such as color and installation method would be needed prior to sign permit sign off.

### **Awnings**

The applicant also proposes in the written applicant to add awnings to the storefront windows on the first floor. While the site plans indicate the projection of the awnings, the elevations do not detail them. Based on the site plan, the proposed awnings appear to meet location requirements for awnings, per the Minneapolis Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings. Material or colors have not been indicated. Additional information such as color and installation method would be needed prior to sign permit sign off.

## **E. FINDINGS**

1. The Rensler Building is a contributing resource in the City of Minneapolis North Loop Warehouse Historic District and is also contributing to the National Register of Historic Places Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District.
2. The proposed one story rooftop addition will be located in an area of the Warehouse District that includes two, three, five and seven story buildings and surface parking lots.
4. The proposed 12 ft., one-story rooftop addition, clad in weathered steel and glass, will be set back one structural bay from the north and west facades of the building in keeping with the District guidelines. Addition mechanical equipment is proposed to top the addition, which will be setback from the primary facades of the penthouse.
5. The proposed one story rooftop addition will be 12 ft. in height, in keeping with the District guidelines as well as standards recommended by the National Park Service in the *Interpreting the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards (ITS) Number 36: Rooftop Additions, June, 2006*.
6. The proposed changes to the existing first-floor storefront windows, include rehabilitation the wood frames and trim, include replacement of the glass with a 1” insulated, low e glazing. The existing window light pattern will be retained. These changes are consistent with both local guidelines and the Standards for retaining historic windows and window patterns.

7. The applicant are also proposed two steel canopies, one at the north entrance along 4<sup>th</sup> Street North and the other at the newly approved west entrance on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North. The proposed canopies meet the Standards which call for using documentation for the replacement of missing features and the proposed plans show that water runoff from the canopies would not damage the building. The canopies should be attached to the building through mortar and not masonry.

8. The applicant also proposes in the written applicant to add awnings to the storefront windows on the first floor. While the site plans indicate the projection of the awnings, the elevations do not detail them. Based on the site plan, the proposed awnings appear to meet location requirements for awnings, per the Minneapolis Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings. Additional information such as color and installation method would be needed prior to sign permit sign off.

#### **F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** the staff findings and **approve** the Certificate of Appropriateness with the following conditions:

1. The canopies should be attached to the building through mortar joints and not masonry.
2. All final elevations, site, canopy and awning plans are subject to approval by CPED - Planning staff.

#### Attachments:

- I. Certificate of Appropriateness application, August 11, 2008.
  - a. Letter from National Park Service dated July 18, 2008 in re roof top addition, floor plans, new systems, and canopies.
  - b. Letter from Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office dated May 17, 2008 in re tax credit project
  - c. Photographs of subject site, including revised photographs with addition (with proposed materials) and Mock-up Visibility Overlay map
  - d. Floor plans and elevation plans
- II. HPC Actions, July 15, 2008.
- III. Staff report, July 15, 2008 with the following attachments:
  - A. Map of North Loop Warehouse Historic District.
  - B. Certificate of Appropriateness application, June 9, 2008.
  - C. Supplement material regarding rooftop sight line test, June 2, 2008.
  - D. Interpreting the Secretary of the Interior's Standards (ITS) Number 36: Rooftop Additions, June, 2006.