

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development
Planning Division

Certificate of Appropriateness
BZH-26856

Date: June 7, 2011

Proposal: Certificate of Appropriateness for a campus master sign plan.

Applicant: Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle

Address of Property: 2501 Stevens Avenue South (Main address of MCAD Campus)

Project Name: MCAD Master Sign Plan

Contact Person and Phone: Jeffrey Mandyck, 612-375-0336

Planning Staff and Phone: Chris Vrchota, 612-673-5467

Date Application Deemed Complete: May 6, 2011

Publication Date: May 24, 2011

Public Hearing: June 7, 2011

Appeal Period Expiration: June 17, 2011

Ward: Ward 6

Neighborhood Organization: Whittier Alliance

Concurrent Review: N/A

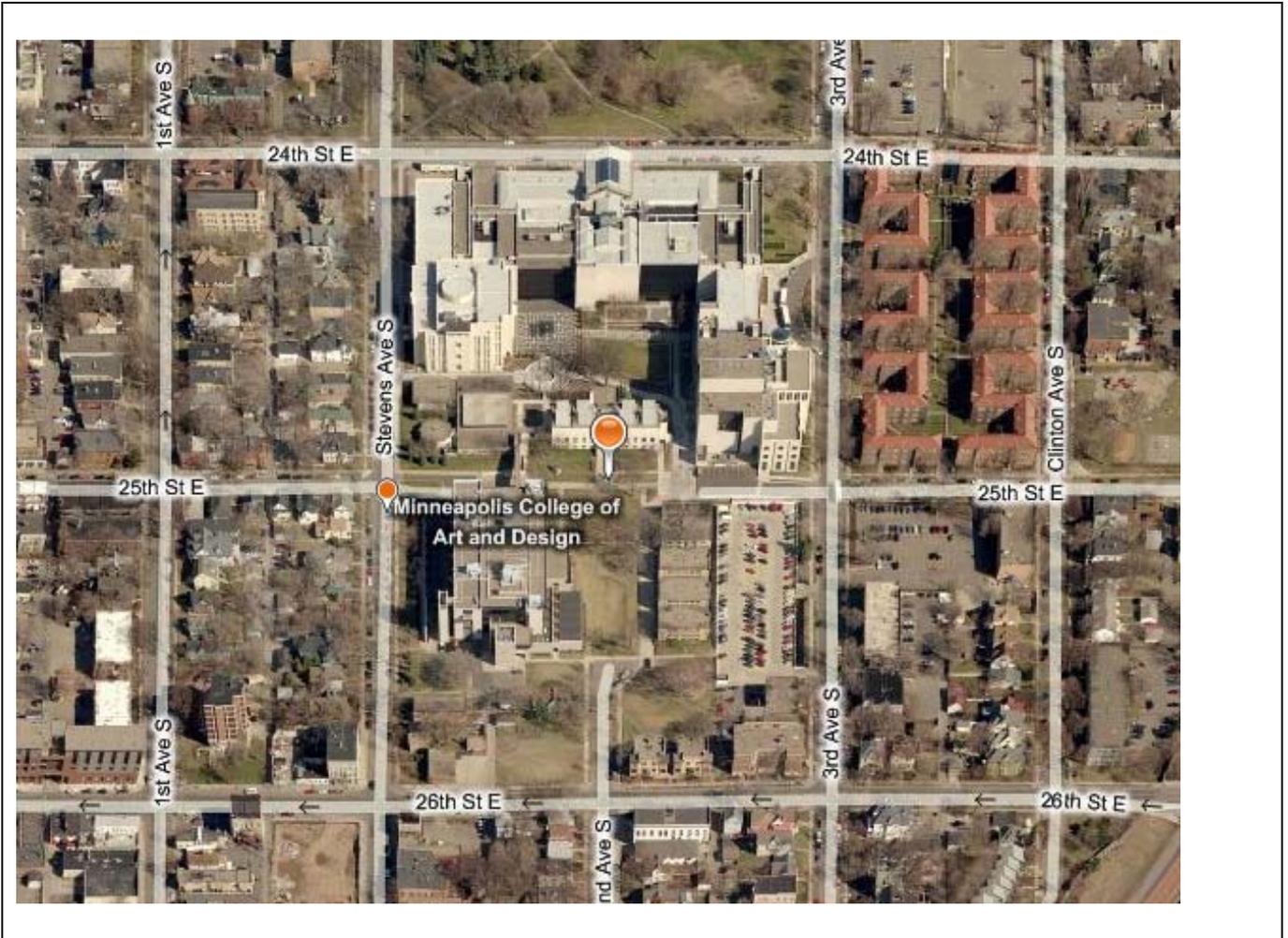
Attachments: Attachment A: Materials submitted by CPED staff –

- 350' map (A-1)

Attachment B: Materials submitted by Applicant –

- Notification letters to Council Member and neighborhood organization (B-1 – B-6)
- Application Form (B-7 – B-8)
- Project narrative and required findings (B-9 – B-17)
- Plans, drawings and photos (B-18 – B-29)

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Aerial Photo of Minneapolis College of Art and Design Campus
Source: Bing Maps

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CLASSIFICATION:	
Local Historic District	Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District
Period of Significance	1858- circa 1939
Criteria of significance	Broad patterns of development
Date of local designation	1976
Applicable Design Guidelines	Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District Design Guidelines, Secretary of Interior Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties

PROPERTY INFORMATION	
Current name	Minneapolis College of Art and Design
Historic Name	Minneapolis College of Art and Design
Current Address	2501 Stevens Avenue S (Primary Campus Address)
Historic Address	2501 Stevens Avenue S (Primary Campus Address)
Original Construction Date	Varies by building
Original Contractor	Unknown
Original Architect	Unknown
Historic Use	Institutional
Current Use	Institutional
Proposed Use	Institutional

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BACKGROUND:

The Minneapolis College of Art and Design, along with the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and Children's Theater Company, encompasses two full city blocks in the center of the Washburn Fair-Oaks Historic District. It is comprised of a number of buildings, which are a mixture of historic and modern.

SUMMARY OF APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL:

The Applicant is a campus wide master sign plan. The primary signs for which the Applicant is seeking approval are:

- Two back-lit, 31.25 square foot entrance monument signs. One located at the intersection of 26th Street and 2nd Avenue South; One located at Stevens Avenue South and 25th Street East. (Signs labeled A and C on Appendix B-18; plans on Appendix B-21.) Materials include aluminum, translucent polymer and LED lighting.
- Two internally illuminated, 8 square-foot directional signs for inter-campus way-finding. Both are located towards the middle of the campus, one at the north side of Lot C, one south from the Morrison Building. (Signs labeled D1 and D2 on Appendix B-18; plans on Appendix B-21.) Materials include aluminum, translucent polymer and LED lighting.
- One non-illuminated, 11.45 square foot painted metal wall sign on the south side of the Main Building. (Sign labeled B-1 on Appendix B-18; plans on Appendix B-24.)
- One non-illuminated, 17.5 square-foot metal wall sign on the north side of the connection between the Morrison Building and the Liberal Arts Building. (Sign labeled B-2 on Appendix B-18; plans on Appendix B-25.)

Plans submitted by the Applicant do identify a number of other signs on the campus, including building addresses and parking lot and circulation signage. These types of signs are not regulated by the preservation or zoning ordinances. As such, they will not be addressed in this report.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comments had been received by the time of publication.

CETIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS: Certificate of Appropriateness for a campus master sign plan.

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 Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District is significant for its collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential structures, ranging from mansions to more modest dwellings to multi-family housing. The district is also recognized for its identification with the art institutions, including MCAD.

With the exception of the two entrance signs, the proposed signs will be located within the campus and have limited visibility from the adjacent streets and residential structures. The signs, while obviously of modern design, will not detract from the residential architectural significance of the district and will provide identification of the Minneapolis College of Art and Design.

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

The portions of the subject property constructed during the period of significance contribute to the Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District's significance. The proposed changes would not lessen the contributing buildings' contributions in a district significant for its collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential structures. The majority of the proposed signs would be internal to the campus and would not be visible from other contributing properties. The design of the signs, while modern, are compatible with the campus and provide identity to this institution dedicated to design. The signs also avoid creating a false sense of history through their identifiably modern design and materials. The alteration is compatible with and supports the exterior designation in which the property was designated.

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

Both the City of Minneapolis' Heritage Preservation Regulations and the National Register of Historic Places identify integrity as the authenticity of historic properties and recognize seven aspects that define a property's integrity: location, design, setting, materials,

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workmanship, feeling and association. Based upon the evidence provided below, the proposed work would not impair the integrity of the district.

Location: The Applicant is not proposing to change the location of any resources, thus the project will not impair the integrity of location.

Design: The proposed work is limited to the installation of six new signs. Four of the signs are free-standing and would not impact the design of any building. The remaining two signs are wall signs. The signs can be mounted to the building walls with minimal impact to the building, and could be removed without any lasting impact on the building. The proposed work would not impact the integrity of design.

Setting: Proposed work is likely to have the biggest impact on the integrity of setting. While the directional signs and building identification signs are placed on the interior of the campus and away from the right-of-way and other contributing resources, the two proposed entry monument signs are along public streets, and in the case of the sign along Stevens Avenue, across from other properties within the district. The signs are a modern design. While the lower portions of the sign are a simple metal panel with lettering identifying the campus, the monument signs also include 1'x8' polymer towers, back-lit by LED lighting. The campus already stands apart from the surrounding residential structures. While these signs are obviously modern, they do further the unique identity of the campus.

Materials: None of the proposed work would require the removal or alteration of any original building material. The proposed work would not impact the integrity of materials.

Workmanship: The proposed work would not result in any detailed or skillfully crafted detail elements on any building. The proposed work would not impact the integrity of workmanship.

Feeling: The proposed signs are identifiably modern, and noticeably different within the context of the historic district. However, the MCAD/MIA campus is a distinct and entity within the district, substantially different from the surrounding residential properties that make up the majority of the district. The proposed signage would help build the identity of the campus without having a substantial change on the sense of feeling already experienced in the area around the campus.

Association: The project will not impair the property's integrity of association.

- (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.***

The applicable design guidelines for this project are the Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings, adopted in 2003. (Commissioners can find these Guidelines

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on pages 6.1.1-6.1.7 of their Preservation Resource Binders.) The Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District Design Guidelines, adopted by the Heritage Preservation Commission on July 30, 1976, contain very limited references to signs; as such, signs are primarily reviewed using the Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings.

The proposed signage is almost entirely in compliance with the Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings. The number of signs, size and location of all signs, and proposed locations all meet the guideline requirements.

The proposed back-lighting of the two entrance monument signs is the only aspect of the project that is not in compliance with the Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings. Back-lit signs are listed as a non-permitted sign type in the guidelines. The guidelines do allow for signs not meeting the standards to be approved through a Certificate of Appropriateness. The introductory section of the guidelines states: "Appropriateness for a sign or awning proposal, the HPC will consider special situations including building condition, building orientation, historic precedence and exceptional design proposals." MCAD considers this to be a special situation.

The proposed light towers are considered back-lit signs. However, the lighting element is part of the design itself. The monument signs are inversions of the directional signs within the campus. The intent of the master sign plan is to create an identifiable pattern of signs for the campus. Staff believes that the proposed signs, when considered as part of a larger package, meet the "exceptional design proposal" stipulation because of the quality of the design and construction materials, and the way that the signs relate to the other signs in the master sign plan, creating a unified design theme on the campus.

- (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 for Rehabilitation are most applicable to the proposed project.

Standard #3 states: "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." The MCAD/MIA campus is an institutional block in the heart of an historic residential district. While portions of the campus are also historic, the needs and form of the campus continue to evolve over time. The proposed signage would be identifiably modern, thus avoiding creating a false sense of history, yet compatible to the campus.

Standard #10 states: "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." The proposed signage could easily be removed in the future with no change to the essential form or integrity of any property on or off the campus.

- (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 proposed alterations are considered a major alteration and require a Certificate of Appropriateness application.

As proposed, the project would conform to policy 8.1.1 of The Minneapolis Plan, which states: "Protect historic resources from modifications that are not sensitive to their historic significance." The proposed work meets the applicable local design guidelines and would not have a significant impact on the integrity of the structure or the district.

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 Applicant submitted a document addressing the 12 required findings (see Appendix B-12 – B-16). The Applicant stated that they have reviewed the applicable regulations and documents, and that the proposed size, style and lighting of the signs are compatible with other signs on adjacent institutions as well as within the district. The Applicant did not identify any specific signs within the district that they feel the signs are compatible with.

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

The proposed work will require review by the City Planning Commission for variances to allow a back-lit sign and for changes to an approved Planned Unit Development (PUD).

- (9) *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 proposed work falls under the scope of rehabilitation. The Applicant has stated that they believe the proposed work is in keeping with the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation because the signs are compatible with the massing, size, scale lighting and architectural features of the historic district in the vicinity and because the signs could be removed with no further impact. (See Appendix B-13 – B-14).

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:

- (10) 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 proposed signs are limited to the MCAD campus. The majority of the signs would have limited or no visibility from other properties within the historic district. While the signs are of a modern design, they would be tied to the identity of the MCAD campus, which is already an identifiably distinct and different feature within the district. The proposed alterations are compatible with and will ensure continued significance and integrity for all contributing properties in the district based on the period of significance.

- (11) 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.***

The spirit and intent of the City of Minneapolis' Heritage Preservation Regulations is to preserve historically significant buildings, structures, sites, objects, districts, and cultural landscapes of the community while permitting appropriate changes to be made to these properties. As an institutional use, the MCAD campus is inherently different than the surrounding residential structures. While it is an important part of the district and neighborhood, the campus has a different and distinct character of its own. The master sign plan seeks to create a unified theme for signage on the campus. The proposed work would be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and would not negatively alter the essential character of the Washburn Fair-Oaks Historic District.

- (12) 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.***

Most of the proposed signs are internal to the campus and will have little or no visibility from adjacent properties. The southernmost monument sign is adjacent to the southern boundary of the historic district. The monument sign on the west side of the campus is adjacent to historic properties. However, it is clearly part of the MCAD campus, which is distinctly different from the surrounding residential properties. If approved, the certificate of appropriateness will not be injurious to the significance and integrity of other resources in the district and will not impede the normal and orderly preservation of surrounding resources as allowed by the preservation ordinance.

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

CPED-Planning staff recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings and **approve** the Certificate of Appropriateness for a campus master sign plan with the following condition(s):

1. CPED-Planning reviews and approves final site plan and sign plans.
2. Illuminated signs shall include controls for adjusting the brightness of the illumination. Illumination levels shall be adjusted if they are found to be a nuisance.
3. All workmanship must be completed in conformance with the Secretary of Interior Standards, see: <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/>
4. The Applicant shall obtain all other necessary City approvals prior to the commencement of work.
5. The Certificate of Appropriateness approvals shall expire if not acted upon within one year of approval, unless extended by the Planning Director in writing prior to the one-year anniversary date of the approvals.

Attachment A: Submitted by CPED staff

Attachment B: Materials submitted by Applicant