

**Community Planning & Economic Development
Planning Division**
250 South 4th Street, Room 110
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1385



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

MEMORANDUM

TO: Heritage Preservation Commission

FROM: Chris Vrchota

DATE: April 5, 2011

RE: Conceptual Review, 2501 Stevens Avenue S- Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) Morrison Building- Water Infiltration Abatement Project

Background:

The subject property is a 2 story stucco veneered building constructed around 1916¹. The building is considered a contributing resource within the Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District.

MCAD has experienced a number of issues with flooding of the basement level of the Morrison Building, including 2 in the summer of 2010. According to the Applicant, it appears that the grade at the rear of the building has been altered significantly since its original construction. An entry and windows that were once at grade are now below grade. In heavy rain events, water runs down the stairwell and enters the building through the doorway. There are also water infiltration issues at a front entry to the 1973 addition to the building, through various windows around the building, and through another below grade entry at the rear of the building. The Applicant requested a concept review with the Heritage Preservation Commission to discuss the issues that they are experiencing and their proposed solutions to gain feedback before moving forward with more detailed plans and pursuing a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Summary of Applicant's Proposal:

The Applicant is proposing a number of alterations to the building intended to address the water infiltration problems. The Applicant has provided an extensive proposed scope of work. (See Appendix C, Pages 1–16, “Project Background and Description” for the full scope of work proposed by the Applicant. Please note that page numbers are provided in the upper right-hand corner.) The Applicant has identified four main areas of concern, which they refer to as “Problem Areas” in the scope of work, describing the specific issues at each and the proposed remedies. The next section will provide a brief overview of the problem areas and proposed solutions.

¹ The building permit records for properties at MCAD and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) often have more than one building tied to an address, making it difficult to discern which permits are tied to each building. This makes it difficult to discern the date of construction, architect, and other details for individual buildings.

Discussion Items

Staff and the Applicant are looking for general feedback on the proposed project and specific feedback on the proposed solutions for each of the “Problem Areas”.

Problem Area 1- Entry ramp and door on front (south) elevation

There is an existing set of double doors leading to a stairwell to the basement level of the building. This portion of the building is an addition constructed in 1973. The concrete ramp/sidewalk leading to the doors slopes towards the building, leading runoff to run towards the doors and into the building. The grading of adjacent areas contributes to this problem.

The applicant is proposing to remove the existing sidewalk and ramp, replacing it with a new concrete sidewalk and ramp that meets ADA accessibility requirements and incorporates trench drains at the bottom and midpoint of the ramp as well as at the door threshold. Landscaping adjacent to the ramp would be raised and separated from the sidewalk by a retaining wall to better control runoff. Finally, a secondary sidewalk connecting the main entry to the ramp would be removed to reduce the amount of impervious material in the area. (See Appendix B-2 - B-4.) Finally, the Applicant is proposing to replace the existing double entrance doors with new doors and hardware. Details for the proposed replacements have not been provided yet.

Problem Area 2- Basement Entry on rear (north) elevation

There is a stairwell leading down to a basement entrance on the rear of the building. The Applicant has stated that they believe that this entrance was once at grade, but that the surrounding ground has been raised, creating the below grade entry. The areas adjacent to this site are sloped towards the building, leading water to build up against the building foundation and flow down the stairwell during heavy rain events. The drain at the bottom of the stairwell does not function well, and is connected to the City’s sanitary sewer system, a configuration which is no longer permitted. In heavy rain events, water pooling at the bottom of the stairwell runs into the building, partially flooding the basement level.

The Applicant is proposing to remove the doorway and related stairwell and concrete slab, re-grade the adjacent area to slope away from the building towards an existing catch basin, and sod the area to reduce the amount of impervious surface. (See Appendix B-2 - B-4.)

Problem Area 3- Mechanical Equipment on rear (north) elevation

There is a collection of mechanical equipment in a corner on the north side of the building, adjacent to the doorway discussed under Problem Area 2. The concrete slab that rests under the equipment has settled and broken apart. The adjacent grade slopes towards the corner and building, rather than away from the building and towards the catch basin. The window sills sit close to the grade level.

The Applicant is proposing to install a new concrete slab under the mechanical equipment, sloped towards a central drain which would be piped directly to the catch basin. Curbing would be added adjacent to the window openings to prevent infiltration. The mechanical equipment, which would need to be removed to install the concrete slab beneath, would be re-installed as-is after the work is completed. (See Appendix B-2 - B-4.)

Problem Area 4- North Wing Perimeter and West Wing

A number of window wells along the perimeter of the north wing do not drain properly, leading them to fill with water during rain events, sometimes to the level of the window sills. A below-grade entry on the west side of the wing is also prone to flooding.

The Applicant is proposing a mix of solutions for the windows and wells, including correcting drainage issues in some wells, replacing existing, deteriorated wood windows with new aluminum windows matching those found elsewhere on the building, and removing two below grade windows and infilling the openings. The Applicant is also proposing the removal of the door to the basement on the west wing, infilling the door opening and converting the stairwell into a window well.

Action Requested

The Heritage Preservation Commission is asked to provide the Applicant and staff with feedback and guidance on the proposed project, particularly regarding the four items for which the Applicant has specifically requested feedback on. This input will be used by the Applicant as they prepare a formal application, and by staff when reviewing the application and preparing the staff report.

Attachments

Appendix A- Material Provided by Staff:

- A-1- Location Map
- A-2 – Aerial Photo of Site (Source: Bing Maps)

Appendix B- Plan Sheets Provided by the Applicant

- B-1- B-6- Plan sheets

Appendix C- Other Materials Provided by the Applicant

- Project Background and Description
- Photos and Photo Key

Appendix A: Submitted by CPED staff

Appendix B: Materials submitted by Applicant

Appendix C: Additional Materials Provided by Applicant