

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development - Planning Division
Certificate of Appropriateness
BZH-27508

Proposal: Install signs and awnings

Applicant: Kaufman Signs, 612-788-6828

Address of Property: 311 (315) 1st Avenue North

Planning Staff: John Smoley, Ph.D., 612-673-2830

Date Application Deemed Complete: October 15, 2012

Public Hearing: November 5, 2012

Appeal Period Expiration: November 15, 2012

Ward: 7

Neighborhood Organization: Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association

Concurrent Review: n/a

Attachments:

- Staff Report – A1-A10
- Materials Submitted by CPED – B1-B2
 - Zoning District Map – B1
 - Historical Photographs of Adjacent Blocks – B2
- Materials Submitted by Applicant – C1-C11
 - Project Description – C1-C2
 - Plans and Photographs – C3-C11
- Materials Submitted by Other Parties – n/a

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CLASSIFICATION:	
Local Historic District	Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District (contributing resource)
Period of Significance	1865-1930 (Warehouse)
Criteria of Significance	Events, Architecture, Master Architects
Date of local designation	1978
Date of National Register listing	1989
Applicable Design Guidelines	<i>Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District Design Guidelines</i> <i>The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties</i>

PROPERTY INFORMATION	
Current name	Insert Coins
Historic Name	Hooker Building
Current Address	311 1st Avenue North
Historic Address	315 1st Avenue North
Original Construction Date	1884
Original Architect	F.B. Long & Company
Historic Use	Wholesale store
Current Use	Offices and bar
Proposed Use	Offices, restaurant/ bar

BACKGROUND:

The subject property is a large commercial building located mid-block on 1st Avenue North between 3rd Street North and 4th Street North (Attachment B1) on the southeastern side of the Warehouse Historic District.

The first three stories of the Hooker Building wholesale store are incorporated within three archways which terminate above the third story's semicircular windows. The fourth story has three groups of windows with finely detailed arches and the fifth story has corresponding groups of windows framed by decorative Queen Anne Style brickwork. A corbelled cornice terminates in a series of recessed arches. The storefront has been modified and the windows replaced but the structure still retains integrity.

SUMMARY OF APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL:

The Applicant wishes to install three awnings, three awning signs, and one projecting sign on the front of the building.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Staff has received no public comment on the project.

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.

Regardless of what changes are made to the subject property, it will maintain its historical significance, but proposed changes may affect its integrity (i.e. the property's ability to communicate its historical significance), as discussed in finding #3 below.

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

The exterior portions of the building communicate the building's significance. The building is significant for its architecture and association with master architect Franklin B. Long. Signs existed on the building during its period of significance, therefore permitting some signage on the building is in keeping with the property's designation. The appropriateness of the specific

design, location, and other attributes of the signs and awnings are discussed below in finding #4.

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

The Applicant's proposed blockage of historic window openings and use of inappropriate features (illuminated metal awnings) will impair the building's integrity of design.

(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.*

Master Sign Plan

The Heritage Preservation Commission has not adopted a master sign plan for the Hooker building.

The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission *Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings*

The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission *Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings* states that a Certificate of Appropriateness is required for sign or awning proposals that do not conform to the design guidelines. The proposal does not comply with the design guidelines, as discussed below.

Number of Signs

Guideline 1c of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission *Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings* states that each principal entrance that faces a public street, or each ground floor principal use, whichever is less, is allowed two signs. The applicant is proposing one projecting sign and three awning signs for one tenant: Insert Coins (Attachment C3).

Sign Message

Guideline 1a of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission *Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings* states that 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. While the proposed blade sign with the name of the establishment and two address signs meet this standard, the tag line ("Interactive Nightlife") sign on one awning does not (Attachment C4).

Location

Guideline 4bi of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission *Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings* states that, "Projecting signs should be located near a building entrance and should not be higher than fourteen (14) feet. Projecting signs should not conceal architectural features or obstruct openings, and should not be suspended from the soffit."

The applicant proposes to hang the projecting sign above the building's center window, as opposed to over entrances on either side bay, to help maintain the symmetry of the building's design (Attachment C8). Unfortunately, the sign will project 23' into the air, blocking a portion of one second floor window opening (Attachment C3).

Size

Guideline 4bii of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission *Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings* states that, "Projecting signs should be no more than twelve (12) square feet in area and...the thickness of a projecting sign should not exceed eight (8) inches." The proposed sign is 15 square feet in area and 14 inches thick (attachment C4). Given the size, bulk, and scale of the building, the proposed sign does not seem too large.

Materials and Installation

The proposed projecting sign meets the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission *Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings* standards for materials (being constructed of metal and painted plastic) and installation (using a single permanent mounting plate), but the awning signs do not. Guideline 4eiv states that awnings should be constructed of cloth fabric, not metal, as is proposed (Attachment C4-C6).

Illumination

Guideline 1c of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission *Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings* states that, "Only one of the signs should be illuminated, except that banners and awning signs should never be illuminated. The applicant is proposing two illuminated signs, the projecting sign and one awning sign (Attachment 6). While the illumination of the projecting sign is appropriate, the illumination of the awning sign is not.

Awning Shape

The proposed awnings violate all of the local sign guidelines related to awning shape. Guideline 4evii states, "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." The proposed awnings are curved, though the windows they hood are not. The awning is only twelve inches high but it projects four feet from the building (Attachment C4-C5). While this height is too short for the awning's width, it exceeds the maximum skirt drop of twelve inches.

Approval Criteria

The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission *Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings* states that, in determining whether to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for a sign or awning proposal, the HPC will consider special situations including building condition, building orientation, historic precedence and exceptional design proposals, but the applicant has not demonstrated that any of these special situations exist.

The project description notes that metal canopies are used in many of the old buildings in Minneapolis. Historical photographs (Attachment B2) of First Avenue North from 1912, the middle of the historic district's period of significance, demonstrate that few awnings existed at that time. When they did exist, fabric awnings dominated street sides, and simple metal awnings covered loading docks or other service sides of warehouse district buildings. More elaborate, flat metal awnings occasionally existed over covered entrances to fancier buildings, such as hotel lobbies and theaters.

Fabric awnings in keeping with the design guidelines would complement the building and create effective opportunities for signage. Indeed, the space's previous tenant employed non-illuminated fabric awnings that attracted crowds of patrons for a number of years. Staff recommends the project be conditioned to deny the metal awnings but permit non-illuminated fabric awnings in keeping with the design guidelines.

The most recent occupant of this tenant space did attract crowds, and they created security problems. The applicant has cited this as a special circumstance that justifies the rationale for installing lit awnings. The former Karma nightclub did indeed possess a bad reputation for rowdy patron behavior, but this behavior took place both inside and outside of the nightclub. Furthermore, the behavior was not the result of inadequate lighting.

The Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District Design Guidelines

Such an approval would also be in keeping with the *Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District Design Guidelines*. These guidelines focus mostly upon awnings in relation to their design, materials, and placement on new buildings, rather than historic buildings, but the principles are very appropriate for application on historic buildings, and are in keeping with the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission *Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings*. The district design guidelines state:

- 3.63. Canopies and awnings shall complement the fenestration patterns of the building.
- 3.64. Awnings shall be attached above the fenestration but below the cornice, sign panel, or below the transom of the storefront.
- 3.65. The awning area, in elevation, shall not exceed 20% of the first floor facade elevation area.
- 3.66. Curved and back-lit awnings or canopies shall not be allowed.
- 3.67. Metal canopies, compatible with the industrial heritage of the area are considered appropriate.
- 3.68. Solid fabric awnings associated with first floor entryways or windows and above or below transom windows are appropriate.

(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 Applicant is conducting a rehabilitation of the subject property.

The proposed signs are consistent with the very limited sign standards in the rehabilitation guidelines of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* which recommends preserving historic signs.

(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.

Comprehensive plan policy 8.1 states that the City will, "Preserve, maintain, and designate districts, landmarks, and historic resources which serve as reminders of the city's architecture, history, and culture." The proposed work will not help preserve the landmark. While it will help attract patrons to a use capable of generating building maintenance/preservation funds, it will obscure historic openings and introduce inappropriate design elements (illuminated metal awnings) to the historic building.

Implementation Step 8.1.1 of the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth indicates that the City shall protect historic resources from modifications that are not sensitive to their historic significance. For the reasons noted above, the project will modify the building in ways that are insensitive to its historical character.

(7) Destruction of any property. Before approving a certificate of appropriateness that involves the destruction, in whole or in part, of any landmark, property in an historic district or nominated property under interim protection, the commission shall make findings that the destruction is necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property, or that there are no reasonable alternatives to the destruction. In determining whether reasonable alternatives exist, the commission shall consider, but not be limited to, the significance of the property, the integrity of the property and the economic value or usefulness of the existing structure, including its current use, costs of renovation and feasible alternative uses. The commission may delay a final decision for a reasonable period of time to allow parties interested in preserving the property a reasonable opportunity to act to protect it.

The project does not involve the destruction of the property.

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:

(8) 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's proposed blockage of a window opening and use of inappropriate features (illuminated metal awnings) does not indicate a clear understanding of the property's architectural significance.

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

The proposal does not trigger Site Plan Review required by Zoning Code Chapter 530.

(10) 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 application does comply with the rehabilitation guidelines of *the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* as discussed in finding #5.

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:

(11) 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 proposal introduces inappropriate features (illuminated metal awnings) into a late nineteenth and early twentieth century industrial historic district. This sets an inappropriate precedent in the district.

(12) 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 proposal introduces inappropriate features (illuminated metal awnings) into a late nineteenth and early twentieth century industrial historic district. This will negatively alter the character of the historic district.

(13) 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.

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The request might set a precedent for future cases, but will not formally authorize changes to other Landmarks, Historic Districts, or properties under interim protection without staff or HPC review.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development - Planning Division recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt the findings above and **approve** the Certificate of Appropriateness for signage on the building located at 311 (315) 1st Avenue North subject to the following conditions:

1. The projecting sign is approved with the following conditions:
 - a. the sign shall be mounted to the building between structural bays;
 - b. the applicant shall work with staff to determine the best mounting points and entry point for electrical conduit; and
 - c. the sign shall not block any windows.
2. The metal awnings are denied, but non-illuminated fabric awnings in keeping with the design guidelines shall be permitted.
3. The tag-line awning sign is denied, but the address awning signs shall be permitted on fabric awnings.
4. By ordinance, approvals are valid for a period of two years from the date of the decision unless required permits are obtained and the action approval is substantially begun and proceeds in a continuous basis toward completion. Upon written request and for good cause, the planning director may grant up to a one year extension if the request is made in writing no later than November 5, 2014.
5. By ordinance, all approvals granted in this Certificate of Appropriateness shall remain in effect as long as all of the conditions and guarantees of such approvals are observed. Failure to comply with such conditions and guarantees shall constitute a violation of this Certificate of Appropriateness and may result in termination of the approval.
6. CPED-Planning Staff shall review and approve the final plans and elevations prior to building permit issuance.