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MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 6, 2013

TO: Heritage Preservation Commission

FROM: Janelle Widmeier – Senior City Planner

SUBJECT: Mill City Quarter – 300 2nd Street South and 428 2nd Street South

BACKGROUND

Conceptual plans for this project were last presented to the Heritage Preservation Commission and City Planning Commission at the November 15, 2012 Joint Committee of the Whole Meeting. The applicant has submitted updated plans and would like to discuss the project before submitting a Certificate of Appropriateness application for Phase I. The applicant has provided additional information on the proposed massing of the building and exterior materials and colors.

The Mill City Quarter project includes two phases. The first phase would consist of a new 6-story, mixed use building with ground floor retail and up to 150 dwelling units on the property of 300 2nd Street South (the west parcel). The second phase would be a residential building on the property of 428 2nd Street South (the east parcel). “The swoop,” a property under separate ownership, is located between the two parcels. A parking lot is located on the swoop property, which will need to be improved when reconfigured as a result of the proposed redevelopment.

The site is located in the St. Anthony Falls Historic District. The site is zoned C3A Community Activity Center District, DH Downtown Height Overlay District, MR Mississippi River Critical Area Overlay District and DP Downtown Parking Overlay District.

COMMENTS AND CHANGES FROM LAST MEETING

Comments and feedback from the last meeting included the following:

- More room is needed along 3rd Avenue at the first floor. (The applicant indicated that this could be accomplished by reducing the drive aisle widths in the enclosed parking garage, which would require a zoning variance.) It was noted that a larger setback on 3rd Avenue wouldn't

greatly expand the pedestrian realm with the existing Mill Place (the building to the north) setback.

- The northwest corner of the building should look more like the rest of the building, but the ochre-colored material could be used to emphasize common spaces. Because there isn't a principal entrance on 3rd Avenue, subdue the building material colors on that elevation.
- Between Phase I and II, building heights should be varied to prevent creating new context in the historic district.
- Use of fiber cement is not appropriate and has not been appropriately used previously. Its durability is not comparable to brick. More details need to be provided for the proposed fiber cement.
- Commissioners were generally in favor of Option B for the swoop property.

Changes to the plans from the last meeting include the following:

- Exterior material colors
- Rounded architectural elements on the upper floors have been eliminated
- Driveway access from 2nd Street has been eliminated (part of previous Option A site plan)
- Placement of plantings were adjusted to suggest a more volunteer growth pattern

DISCUSSION ITEMS

The Commission should refer to the [St. Anthony Falls Historic District Design Guidelines](#) as well as the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties to guide feedback on the proposed development. In the SAFHDDG, the site is located in the Water Power Character Area. Primarily Chapter 9 New Infill Building Guidelines of the plan applies to this proposal.

The SAFHDDG include the following provisions relating to building mass and materials:

Building Mass, Scale and Height

Intent

A new building should be compatible in height, mass and scale with its context, including the specific block, the character area, and the historic district as a whole. This should be a primary consideration for the design of a new building. Each new building also should convey a human scale, reflect similar building massing and façade articulation features of the context, and be compatible with the district skyline. (See Character Areas in Chapter 10 for building mass, scale and height guidelines specific to each character area.)

Requirements

9.8 Maintain the traditional size of buildings as perceived at the street level.

- a. The height of a new building should be within the height range established in the context, especially at the street frontage.
- b. Floor-to-floor heights should appear similar to those of traditional buildings.

9.9 The overall height of a new building shall be compatible with the character area.

- a. A building height that exceeds the height range established in the context will be considered when:

- It is demonstrated that the additional height will be compatible with adjacent properties, within the character area as a whole, and for the historic district at large.
- Taller portions are set back significantly from the street.
- Access to light and air of surrounding properties is respected.
- Key views are maintained. (See page 51 for more information on key views.)

9.10 Position taller portions of a structure away from neighboring buildings of lower scale.

- a. Locate the taller portion of a new structure to minimize looming effects and shading of lower scaled neighbors, especially when adjacent to smaller historic structures.
- b. Taller portions of a building should be compatible and not loom over adjacent buildings at any time.

9.11 Provide variation in building height in a large development.

- a. In order to reduce the perceived mass of a larger building, divide it into subordinate modules that reflect traditional building sizes in the context. Too much variation in building height is inappropriate.
- b. Vary the height of building modules in a large structure, and include portions that are similar in height to historic structures in the context. However, avoid excessive modulation of a building mass, when that would be out of character with simpler historic building forms in the area. Too much variation in building massing is inappropriate.

9.12 Maintain the scale of traditional building widths in the context.

- a. Design a new building to reflect the established range of the traditional building widths in the character area.
- b. Where a building must exceed this width, use changes in design features so the building reads as separate building modules reflecting traditional building widths and massing. Changes in the expression and details of materials, changes in window design, facade height or materials are examples of techniques that should be considered.
- c. Where these articulation techniques are used, they shall be expressed consistently throughout the structure, such that the composition appears as several building modules. Attention to the designs of transitions between modules is important. Too much variation, which results in an overly busy design, is inappropriate.

9.13 A block-long building facade is inappropriate.

- a. A block-long building width will be considered if the facade reads as separate building modules.

9.14 A new commercial or mixed-use building should incorporate a base, middle and cap.

- a. Traditionally, buildings were composed of these three basic elements. Interpreting this tradition in new buildings will help reinforce the visual continuity of the area.

9.15 Establish a sense of human scale in the building design.

- a. Use vertical and horizontal articulation techniques to reduce the apparent mass of a larger building and to create visual interest.
- b. Express the position of each floor in the external skin of a building to establish a scale similar to historic buildings in the district.
- c. Use materials that convey scale in their proportion, detail and form.

- d. Generally, the facade in most contexts should appear as a relatively flat surface, with any projecting or recessed “articulations” appearing to be subordinate to the dominant form. Exceptions are in lower scale single-family settings.
- e. Design architectural details and other features to be in scale with the building. Using windows, doors, storefronts (in commercial buildings) and porches (in lower scale residential buildings) that are similar in scale to those seen traditionally is appropriate.

Building Materials

Intent

Building materials should reflect the range of textures, modularity and finish of those employed traditionally. They also should contribute to the visual continuity of the specific context. They should be of high quality and proven durability in similar applications.

Requirements

9.20 Building materials shall be similar in scale, color, texture and finish to those seen historically in the context.

- a. Masonry (i.e., brick and stone) that has a modular dimension similar to those used traditionally is appropriate.
- b. A facade that faces a public street should have one principal material, excluding door and window openings, and may have one to two additional materials for trim and details. Permitted materials include, but are not limited to, brick, stone, terracotta, painted metal, exposed metal, poured concrete and precast concrete.
- c. The material also should be appropriate to the context.

9.21 Contemporary materials that are similar in character to traditional ones will be considered.

- a. Generally, one primary material should be used for a building with one or two accent materials. Accent materials should be used with restraint.
- b. A second material may be used on side or rear walls in a context in which such a tradition is demonstrated historically. It is inappropriate in the Water Power Area.
- c. A glass curtain wall will be considered as a principal material.
- d. Contemporary, alternative materials should appear similar in scale, durability and proportion to those used traditionally.
- e. Cementitious-fiber board, with exemplary detailing, will be considered in lower scaled residential settings. Other imitation or synthetic siding materials, such as plastic, aluminum or vinyl, are inappropriate in the lower scale residential contexts.

9.22 Use high quality, durable materials.

- a. Materials should be proven to be durable in the local Minneapolis climate.
- b. The material should maintain an intended finish over time, or acquire a patina, which is understood to be a likely outcome.
- c. Materials at the ground level should withstand ongoing contact with the public, sustaining impacts without compromising the appearance.

Water Power Character Area Building Design

10.9 A new facade should reflect the established range of building widths.

- a. A block-long facade building massing is not appropriate.

ACTION REQUESTED

The Heritage Preservation Commission is asked to provide the applicant and staff with feedback and guidance on the proposed project. 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:

- Project narrative from applicant
- Updated plans and renderings
- Plans and renderings from previous meeting