

**CITY OF SAINT PAUL
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

FILE NAME: 262 Fourth Street East
DATE OF APPLICATION: July 1, 2013
APPLICANT: Historic Window Works LLC
OWNERS: Roger Nielsen/Janet Hawn
DATE OF PUBLIC HEARING: July 25, 2013
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Historic Lowertown Heritage Preservation District
CATEGORY: Contributing
CLASSIFICATION: Revision to the Certificate of Approval - File #13-176438/May 17, 2013
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Christine Boulware
DATE: July 21, 2013

A. SITE DESCRIPTION:

The Hackett Block is a six-story, Romanesque-Style building that was designed by Clarence Johnston Sr. and constructed in 1890. The building features a corbelled brick cornice, small rounded-arched window openings on the top floor, third and fourth floor windows are grouped within large rounded arches spanning the two floors, rectangular windows on the second story, and first floor storefronts divided by huge cut stone piers. Centered over the fourth floor windows is a cut stone sign reading "Hackett Block." The storefront entry has changed from the center to the western bay. The property is categorized as contributing to the Historic Lowertown Heritage Preservation District.

B. BACKGROUND:

On April 22, 2013, an application to repaint the storefront, build and install planter boxes with posts and chains, and repaint the front doors was submitted for HPC review and approval. HPC staff conducted an initial review to determine whether the non-historic planter boxes could be reviewed administratively or require review by the HPC. Prior to LRT construction along Fourth Street East, low, wooden planter boxes existed between the bays of the storefront; the boxes were removed during LRT construction. Historic photos were reviewed as well as more recent photos and staff determined the application could be reviewed administratively (generally, a public hearing would be required for alteration and new construction at the front of a building).

Staff concluded, in the findings in the Certificate of Approval:

1. The property is categorized as contributing to the Lowertown Historic District
2. A historic photo shows a ledge-like feature at the bulkhead of the storefront. The proposed planter boxes will convey a similar profile.
3. The proposal will not have a negative impact on the property or Program for Preservation in the Lowertown Historic District.

The Certificate of Approval #13-176438 was issued on May 17, 2013 with the following conditions:

1. Planter boxes shall not be attached to the building and shall not project beyond the building façade.
2. Planter boxes shall not have a post and chain feature.
3. Boxes shall be painted within six months of permit issuance.

Staff was then notified that the boxes were being built at a taller height than what was originally proposed and conditionally approved. Staff was told that a reason for the change was to prevent people from sitting on the boxes.

C. PROPOSED REVISIONS:

The applicant is seeking approval to build the planter boxes at a taller height as indicated on the revised drawings. This work has been completed and is being treated as an after-the-fact review.

D. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

- 1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*
- 2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
- 3. 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.*
- 4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*
- 5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
- 6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*
- 7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*
- 8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*
- 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
- 10. 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.*

ARTICLE VI. - HISTORIC LOWERTOWN HERITAGE PRESERVATION DISTRICT

Lowertown Historic District Design Review Guidelines, Sec. 74-112

Guidelines for Design Review

I. New construction.

E. Materials and detail. The materials of new construction should relate to the materials and details of existing adjacent buildings. New buildings in the district should provide more detailing than typical modern commercial buildings, to respond to the surrounding buildings and to reinforce the human scale of the district. Walls of buildings in the district are generally of brick, or occasionally of stone. All non-masonry surfaces, if painted, should be of colors compatible with the masonry character of the district.

H. Landscaping and street furniture. When lots are used for green space or parking, a visua hole in the street "wall" may result. Landscape treatment can eliminate this potential problem by avoiding a wall of enclosure for the street. Traditional street elements of the area, such as granite curbs, should be preserved. New street furniture should complement the scale and character of the area.

II. Restoration and rehabilitation.

General Principles for Restoration and Rehabilitation

- a. *All work should be of a character and quality that maintain the distinguishing features of the building and the environment. The removal of architectural features is not permitted.*
- b. *Deteriorated architectural features such as cornices, chimneys and roof treatment, window and door openings, and exterior surface treatment should be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. In the event of replacement, new materials should match the original in composition, design, color, texture and appearance. Duplication of the original design based on physical or pictorial evidence is preferable to using conjectural or "period" designs or using part of other buildings.*
- B. *Windows and doors.*
- e. *Lintels, arches and sills: Lintels, sills, architraves, pediments, hoods and steps should be retained or repaired if possible. Existing colors and textures should be matched when repairing these elements.*
- f. *Storefronts: Existing storefronts should be retained and repaired including windows, sash, doors, transoms, signage, and decorative features where such features contribute to the architectural and historic character of the building. Where original or early storefronts no longer exist or are too deteriorated to save, the commercial character of the building should be retained through: 1) contemporary design which is compatible with the scale, design, materials, color and texture of the historic buildings; or 2) an accurate restoration of the storefront based on historical research and physical evidence. Storefronts or new design elements on the ground floor, such as arcades, should not be introduced which alter the architectural and historic character of the building and its relationship with the street or its setting or which cause the destruction of significant historic fabric. Materials which detract from the historic or architectural character of the building, such as mirrored glass, should not be used. Entrances through significant storefronts should not be altered.*
(Ord. No. 17120, § 2, 3-22-84)

E. FINDINGS:

1. On March 22, 1984, the Historic Lowertown Heritage Preservation District was established under Ordinance No. 17120, § 2. The Heritage Preservation Commission shall protect the architectural character of heritage preservation sites through review and approval or denial of applications for city permits for exterior work within designated heritage preservation sites §73.04.(4).
2. ***Classification of the buildings.*** The Hackett Block is classified as contributing to the architectural character and integrity of the Historic Lowertown Heritage Preservation District.
3. Prior to the LRT construction along Fourth Street East, low planter boxes were located in two bays of the storefront. HPC staff was not able to locate any approvals for the construction and installation of those planter boxes. The boxes were removed for the reconstruction of the sidewalk in front of 262 Fourth Street East. Because the planter boxes were not original features of the storefront, staff researched historic and recent photos and determined that the reconstruction of the planter boxes, as shown in the original sketch (without the post and chain feature), would not have a negative impact on the property or the Program for Preservation in the Historic Lowertown Heritage Preservation District.

The Certificate of Approval - File #13-176438 concluded that 1) *The property is categorized as contributing to the Lowertown Historic District; 2) A historic photo shows a ledge-like feature at the bulkhead of the storefront. The proposed planter boxes will convey a similar profile; 3) The proposal will not have a negative impact on the property or Program for Preservation in the Lowertown Historic District.* It was issued on May 17, 2013 with the following conditions: 1) *Planter boxes shall not be attached to the building and shall not project beyond the building façade; 2) Planter boxes shall not have a post and chain feature; 3) Boxes shall be painted within six months of permit issuance.*

4. On June 21, staff received an inquiry about the boxes being built at 262 Fourth Street East and determined that the boxes were being built at a taller height than what was originally proposed and conditionally approved.
5. The revised planter boxes are nearly twice the height of those on the plans reviewed and approved by HPC staff; they are not the same scale and proportion as the planter boxes that were at the site previously.
6. Continuous, permanent planter boxes across the storefront bays are not a traditional element of this building or the Lowertown Historic District. The installation of the planter boxes, in both scenarios, did not alter or remove any historic material or details, but did cover the earlier step and curb at the storefront.
7. The painted wood with a recessed panel detail does resemble a traditional storefront bulkhead for materials and details, but not with scale and proportion.
8. The Lowertown guidelines state, *restoration of the storefront should be based on historical research and physical evidence. Storefronts or new design elements on the ground floor, such as arcades, should not be introduced which alter the architectural and historic character of the building and its relationship with the street or its setting or which cause the destruction of significant historic fabric.* The previous planter boxes and recent plans approved by HPC staff had a height proportion that was similar to that of a traditional storefront bulkhead and did not significantly alter the character of the building or its relationship to the street. The revised planter boxes that were constructed are taller and thus the proportion of the storefront is altered which alters the character of the building and its relationship to the street. The planter boxes as constructed have a negative impact on the architectural character of the Hackett Block.
9. The proposal will have an adverse affect on the Program for the Preservation and architectural control of the Historic Lowertown Heritage Preservation District (Leg. Code §73.06 (e)).

F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the findings, staff recommends approval the original administrative Certificate of Approval with the combined findings and conditions as stated in File #13-176438 dated May 17, 2013 and this staff report. Staff would also recommend discussion regarding a timeline for correcting the completed work if the HPC adopts staff findings and recommendation. Staff does not recommend approval of the revision.

G. ATTACHMENTS:

1. Original application and Certificate of Approval with photos and plans
2. Revised plans and recent photo