

**CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
CPED – PLANNING DIVISION
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

FILE NAME: 2929 Chicago Avenue, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail-Order Warehouse and Retail Store

DATE OF APPLICATION: March 20, 2008

APPLICANTS: Charlene Roise, Hess, Roise and Company on behalf of Neighborhood Development Center (Midtown Global Market) (612) 338-1987

PUBLICATION DATE: June 18, 2008

DATE OF HEARING: June 24, 2008

END OF APPEAL PERIOD: July 7, 2008

HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail-Order Warehouse and Retail Store, Individual Landmark

CATEGORY: contributing

CLASSIFICATION: Certificate of Appropriateness for signage

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Molly McCartney, (612) 673-5811

A. SITE DESCRIPTION & BACKGROUND:

The Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail-Order Warehouse and Retail Store, also known as Midtown Exchange, or Sears Building, is designated locally as well as listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Sears, Roebuck & Co. building, now known as Midtown Exchange, represents an early phase in the development of a company that became the major retailer in the U.S. by the late twentieth century. The retail store closed in 1994 for several reasons, including Sears' commitment to a location at the Mall of America. Rehabilitation efforts were undertaken between 2004-2006 to convert the old warehouse into the Allina Hospital and Clinics headquarters, private condos, and a Global Market where local retail and restaurant vendors sell their merchandise.

In addition to the social history of the building, the Sears Building is also significant for architectural style, an example of Moderne style. Reflecting the influence of the Chicago School of architecture, the design is a straightforward, utilitarian version of what the building's architect, George C. Nimmons, called "Modern" architecture. The building features bands of windows and smooth, unornamented wall surfaces typical of the Moderne style. The influence of the Art Deco style, popular in the 1920s, appears in the dominant vertical tower and the decorated entablatures surrounding the entrances.

The official boundaries of the local and National Register nomination identify the curb line along East Lake Street is the landmark boundary. The implication of the boundary location is that projects in the sidewalk right-of-way must be reviewed for heritage preservation issues.

The Midtown Exchange has a number of existing signs, including awning signs, signs around the 1st floor entrances, building identification signs above the main entrances, and large, green neon signage atop the tower. The existing signs are not proposed to be changed.

As part of the development in 2004, design guidelines were adopted for the Sears Building by the HPC, which include signage guidelines for the building. These guidelines limit the placement of additional signage on the building. The applicant is proposing to add additional signage in the right-of-way along East Lake Street.

B. PROPOSED SIGN CHANGES:

The proposed signage in the right-of-way includes four freestanding poles that will have banners advertising the Global Market and parking ramp along 10th Avenue South. The banners will direct vehicles to the ramp on 10th Avenue South. The signs are proposed to be located near the curb line, a set back from the façade of the building. The proposed signs will not be directly in front of the building entrance on Lake Street, but will be spaced evenly along Lake Street. The proposed signs will be 17 ft. in height.

The proposed freestanding signs have a number of different elements, including fabric banners and aluminum components. The banner signs will hang from the aluminum extensions and will be made of fabric. One sign will advertise parking and the other is proposed to have an interchangeable, seasonal message. In addition to the fabric banners, an enameled aluminum parking “P” and a circular direction “arrow” will be installed on the posts as well. An enameled aluminum oval will top the sign, with the text of “Market”.

Local guidelines for signage on historically designated buildings relate to the physical and visual impact of signs on building. The guidelines are meant to direct how signs are attached to buildings as well as what types of signs are appropriate for the commercial and institutional uses. In the case of the specific guidelines for the landmark, the guidelines prohibit and new signs from being installed on the building. However it does not indicate about signage off the building, such as the proposed freestanding signs along the right-of-way.

In addition to approvals from the Heritage Preservation Commission, the poles and signs required an encroachment approval from the Right of Way office in Public Works. The signage was originally denied by staff, and then appeal to the Transportation and Public Works Committee of the City Council, which was approved on Tuesday June 10, 2008.

D. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:

**Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail-Order Warehouse and Retail Store
(Adopted 2006)**

6. Signs, Awnings, and Lighting

a. Signs and awnings should follow regulations contained in Chapter 543 of the city’s zoning ordinance. Refer also to the “Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings.” (Adopted by the HPC on June 17, 2003)

b. Signs should not conceal architectural details or features and materials should be compatible with the materials of the building to which they are attached.

c. No part of the historic facade should be irreversibly damaged or altered in the installation of signs and awnings. Limit drilling new holes into masonry. Signs must be attached to the building with holes drilled into mortar joints.

d. No part of the historic facade should be irreversibly damaged or altered in the installation of lighting. Electrical conduit and other hardware should be concealed and not installed across the building facade.

Design Guidelines for On-Premise Signs and Awnings:

1. In General:

- a. *Sign message:* 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.
- b. *Historic signs:* Maintenance or restoration of existing historic signs is encouraged and should not be counted in number of allowable signs.
- c. *Number of signs:* Each principal building entrance that faces a public street, or each ground floor principal use, whichever is less, is allowed two signs. A corner lot with a principal entrance on each street is allowed two signs per street frontage. The two signs may be a combination of one wall sign, one projecting sign, one ground sign, one banner, and awning signage. However, a property may not have both a projecting sign and a ground sign. Only one of the signs should be illuminated, except that banners and awning signs should never be illuminated. Awning signs are limited to ground floor awnings and are subject to the specific guidelines for awnings and awning signs. Parking lot signs are subject to the specific guidelines for signs accessory to parking lots.
- d. *Location of building signs:* Wherever possible, signs should be placed in traditional sign locations including the storefront sign band area. Signs should not obscure or damage architectural features including windows, doors, pilasters, columns and historic signs. Building signs should be located only on the primary façade of the building adjacent to the street and should be no higher than fourteen (14) feet, except as otherwise provided in the specific guidelines for wall signs.
- e. *Color:* Sign colors and materials should be compatible with the colors of the building and its surroundings. Dayglo, light reflecting or fluorescent colors or materials are not allowed.
- f. *Installation:* Sign installation should have a minimal impact on the building and to the extent practical allow the building to be returned to its original condition if the sign is removed. Existing signboards and sign frames should be reused to limit drilling new holes into masonry. Wall signs should be attached to the building through the mortar joints. Projecting signs should be attached to a permanent mounting plate. Awnings should be attached to window or door frames and should never damage masonry.
- g. *Illumination:* Signs may be illuminated externally, internally, or by neon. Plastic face covers should not be placed on illuminated signs. All illuminated building signs should connect to a permanent mounting plate located near the entrance. Electrical conduit should be installed through the permanent mounting plate. Not more than one brick should be damaged by the installation of the permanent mounting plate. Electrical conduit and any lighting fixture should be attached to the sign and not the building wall.

4. *Guidelines for Specific Types of Signs:*

a. *Wall Signs:*

- i. Location. Wall signs should be located between the first and second floor and should not be higher than fourteen (14) feet, except where the historic sign band is higher. Wall signs should not conceal architectural features or obstruct openings.
- ii. Size. Wall signs should be no more than two (2) feet high and thirtytwo (32) square feet in area and should not extend outward from the building more than eight (8) inches.
- iii. Materials. Wall signs may be constructed of wood, metal, painted fiberglass or painted plastic.
- iv. Installation. Wall signs should be attached to the building through the mortar joints. If illuminated, a wall sign should be placed adjacent to or over a permanent mounting plate for electrification. Electrical conduit and lighting fixtures should be attached to the top of the wall sign, and should not be attached to the building. Wall signs should not be painted directly on the surface of the building, except as part of the maintenance or restoration of an existing historic sign.

b. *Projecting Signs:*

- i. Location. 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.
- ii. Size. Projecting signs should be no more than twelve (12) square feet in area and should not project more than four (4) feet from the building. The thickness of a projecting sign should not exceed eight (8) inches.
- iii. Materials. Projecting signs may be constructed of wood, metal, painted fiberglass or painted plastic.
- iv. Installation. Projecting signs should always use a single permanent mounting plate.

e. *Awnings and Awning Signs:*

- i. Location. Awnings should fit within the window or door opening.
- ii. Number of awnings. The number of awnings may not exceed the number of window or door openings.
- iii. Number of awning signs. Awning signs are limited to ground floor awnings. There should be no more than one sign per awning. Awning signs should be no more than six (6) square feet in area. Where there are multiple awning signs on a building, all signs should be located in the same or similar position on the awnings.
- iv. Materials. Awnings should be constructed of coated or uncoated cloth fabric.
- v. Installation. Awning hardware should be attached to the window or door frame and should never damage masonry. Awnings should not be attached to or cover any part of the building wall.
- vi. Illumination. Awnings and awning signs should not be illuminated.
- vii. Awning shape. 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.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (1990)

Building Site

Recommended:

Identifying, retaining, and preserving buildings and their features as well as features of the site that are important in defining its overall historic character. Site features can include driveways, walkways, lighting, fencing, signs, benches, fountains, wells, terraces, canal systems, plants and trees, berms, and drainage or irrigation ditches; and archeological features that are important in defining the history of the site.

Retaining the historic relationship between buildings, landscape features, and open space.

Protecting and maintaining buildings and the site by providing proper drainage to assure that water does not erode foundation wall; drain toward the building; nor erode the historic landscape.

Minimizing disturbance of terrain around buildings or elsewhere on the site, thus reducing the possibility of destroying unknown archeological materials.

Surveying areas where major terrain alteration is likely to impact important archeological sites.

Protecting, e.g. preserving in place known archeological material whenever possible.

Planning and carrying out any necessary investigation using professional archeologists and modern archeological methods when preservation in place is not feasible.

Protecting the building and other features of the site against arson and vandalism before rehabilitation work begins, i.e., erecting protective fencing and installing alarm systems that are keyed into local protection agencies.

Providing continued protection of masonry, wood, and architectural metals which comprise building and site features through appropriate surface treatments such as cleaning, rust removal, limited paint removal, and re-application of protective coating systems; and continued protection and maintenance of landscape features, including plant material.

Evaluating the overall condition of materials to determine whether more than protection and maintenance are required, that is, if repairs to building and site features will be necessary.

Repairing features of buildings and the site by reinforcing the historic materials. Repair will also generally include replacement in kind - with a compatible substitute material - of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of features where there are surviving prototypes such as fencing and paving.

Replacing in kind an entire feature of the building or site that is too deteriorated to repair if the overall form and detailing are still evident-using the physical evidence to guide the new work. This could include an entrance or porch, walkway, or fountain. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible, then a compatible substitute material may be considered.

Design for Missing Historic Features

Designing and constructing a new feature of a building or site when the historic feature is completely missing, such as an outbuilding, terrace, or driveway. It may be based on historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the historic character of the building and site.

Alterations/Additions for the New Use

Designing new onsite parking, loading docks, or ramps when required by the new use so that they are as unobtrusive as possible and assure the preservation of character-defining features of the site.

Designing new exterior additions to historic buildings or adjacent new construction which is compatible with the historic character of the site and which preserve the historic relationship between a building or buildings, landscape features, and open space.

Removing nonsignificant buildings, additions, or site features which detract from the historic character of the site.

Not Recommended:

Removing or radically changing buildings and their features or site features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the building site so that , as a result, the character is diminished.

Removing or relocating historic buildings or landscape features, thus destroying the historic relationship between buildings, landscape features, and open space.

Removing or relocating historic buildings on a site or in a complex of related historic structures - such as a mill complex or farm thus diminishing the historic character of the site or complex.

Moving buildings onto the site, thus creating a false historical appearance.

Lowering the grade level adjacent to a building to permit development of a formerly below-grade area such as a basement in a manner that would drastically change the historic relationship of the building to its site.

Failing to maintain site drainage so that buildings and site features are damaged or destroyed; or, alternatively, changing the site grading so that water no longer drains properly.

Introducing heavy machinery or equipment into areas where their presence may disturb archeological materials.

Failing to survey the building site prior to the beginning of rehabilitation project work so that, as a result, important archeological material is destroyed.

Leaving known archeological material unprotected and subject to vandalism, looting, and destruction by natural elements such as erosion.

Permitting unqualified project personnel to perform data recovery so that improper methodology results in the loss of important archeological material.

Permitting buildings and site features to remain unprotected so that plant materials, fencing, walkways, archeological features, etc. are damaged or destroyed.

Stripping features from buildings and the site such as wood siding, iron fencing, masonry balustrades; or removing or destroying landscape features, including plant material.

Failing to provide adequate protection of materials on a cyclical basis so that deterioration of building and site features results.

Failing to undertake adequate measures to assure the preservation of building and site features.

Replacing an entire feature of the building or site such as a fence, walkway, or driveway when repair of materials and limited replacement of deteriorated or missing parts are appropriate.

Using a substitute material for the replacement part that does not convey the visual appearance of the surviving parts of the building or site feature or that is physically or chemically incompatible.

Removing a feature of the building or site that is unrepairable and not replacing it; or replacing it with a new feature that does not convey the same visual appearance.

Design for Missing Historic Features

Creating a false historical appearance because the replaced feature is based on insufficient historical, pictorial, and physical documentation.

Introducing a new building or site feature that is out of scale or otherwise inappropriate.

Introducing a new landscape feature or plant material that is visually incompatible with the site or that destroys site patterns or vistas.

Alterations/Additions for the New Use

Placing parking facilities directly adjacent to historic buildings where automobiles may cause damage to the buildings or landscape features or be intrusive to the building site.

Introducing new construction onto the building site which is visually incompatible in terms of size, scale, design, materials, color and texture or which destroys historic relationships on the site.

Removing a historic building in a complex, a building feature, or a site feature which is important in defining the historic character of the site.

C. FINDINGS:

1. The Roebuck and Company Mail-Order Warehouse and Retail Store is a designated Local Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The right-of-way along Lake Street is within the landmark boundaries.
2. The applicant is proposing to add four pole signs in the right-of-way along East Lake Street for way finding purposed for a parking ramp along 10th Avenue South.
3. The landmark guidelines for the Sears Building include limitations on new signage installed on the building, but do not mention signage in the right-of-way. The proposed signs will not physically impact the façade of the building.
4. The proposed signs do not block views of the building and are consistent with the Sears Building Guidelines that requirement that signs shall not conceal architectural details or features.
5. Given the height and mass of the Midtown Exchange, adding the proposed signs along East Lake Street will not diminish the physical presence of the building along the right-of-way.
6. The proposed right-of-way signs do not impair sightlines or views of the Sears Buildings are consistent with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for rehabilitation that call for identifying, retaining, and preserving buildings and their features as well as features of the site that are important in defining its overall historic character.
7. The propose signs in the right-of-way will not be detrimental to the historic integrity of the Sears Building.

D. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the HPC adopt staff findings and **approve** a Certificate of Appropriateness for signage, subject to the following conditions:

1. Final drawings including plans, elevations and details shall be submitted and approved to CPED-Planning staff.