

255 East Sixth Street, St Paul, Minnesota  
Appeal of Heritage Preservations Decision  
To deny approval of design concept

June 15, 2011

On June 9, 2011 HPC denied the installation of the corner glass block wall at the south east corner of 255 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street in the Lowertown Historic District. The structure a noncontributing Modernist structure has suffered in the past from a long history of deferred maintenance. It was purchased a year ago by the Brooks Group with the intent of rehabbing and putting it back into service by creating restaurant space, safe parking and office space, resulting in additional jobs and additional venues for Lowertown in this long neglected building without the assistance of public funding.

In August 2010 the overall design concept was well received by HPC at a business meeting, although some members admitted the difficulty that HPC would have applying guidelines to the building. The overall concept was presented as conceived to HPC two weeks later.

Some progress has been made in getting some approvals through HPC, the process has been long and complicated with no clear decision being made by staff or HPC on the exterior concept of the building, which has resulted in the loss of a tenant, increased permitting, design and construction costs as well as loses in tenant revenue.

The decision to create a small group composed of members of HPC to expedite the decision process for the completion of approvals in regards to lighting, storefront, exterior concept, selection of artwork for the exterior and overall concept resulted in approvals of store front windows and little else. When we requested to reconvene the small group in an attempt to seek approval of the glass block to complete the screening of the parking and to prevent the entry of pigeons into the parking area, we were blind-sided by the request for additional drawings and no decision could be made nor was there a consensus of opinion. So we were forced to go back to the full HPC and seek a decision on the installation of the glass block at the corner and force a decision. The denial and subsequent appeal is further delaying the completion of a wall that will complete enclosing the parking ramp from the ever invasive pigeons and seal off the access to the abandoned fire escape.

From a design perspective the “boxy” profile is held by the currently exposed structural beams. The angled exposed corner is a good response to the Clipped corner of the Allen building, KTCA building, Parkside apartment building and proposed design for the adjacent St Paul Saints Stadium, all located within the Historic Lowertown district. The exposed fire escape not only creates visual interest but is also a typical feature with in the district. This concept not only gives the building a sense of entry, but further re-enforces the some of the architectural features of the more unique structures located within Lowertown. The guidelines for HPC’s Historic Lowertown District clearly state that they are “Guidelines and not regulations”, however they are clearly being applied in this case only as regulations through the consistent difficulties in seeking additional approvals.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David Brooks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING &  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
Cecile Bedor, Director



CITY OF SAINT PAUL  
Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor

25 West Fourth Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Telephone: 651-266-6700  
Facsimile: 651-228-3220

June 10, 2011

Dan Gleeson  
Gleeson Architects  
1175 HWY 36 E  
Maplewood, MN 55109

Re: 255 Sixth Street East - Lowertown Historic District, HPC File #11-017

Dear Mr. Gleeson:

As you know, the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC), considered at its June 9, 2011 meeting your application for a building permit to install glass block walls behind the existing fire escape stairs at the property listed above. The HPC voted 7 - 2 to deny your application. This decision was based on the discussion at the public hearing, public testimony and findings by HPC staff.

You or any aggrieved party has the right to appeal the Heritage Preservation Commission's decision to the Saint Paul City Council under Chapter 73 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code. Such an appeal must be filed within 14 days of the date of the HPC's order and decision. Chapter 73 states:

*(h) Appeal to city council. The permit applicant or any party aggrieved by the decision of the heritage preservation commission shall, within fourteen (14) days of the date of the heritage preservation commission's order and decision, have a right to appeal such order and decision to the city council. The appeal shall be deemed perfected upon receipt by the division of planning [DSI] of two (2) copies of a notice of appeal and statement setting forth the grounds for the appeal. The division of planning [DSI] shall transmit one copy of the notice of appeal and statement to the city council and one copy to the heritage preservation commission. The commission, in any written order denying a permit application, shall advise the applicant of the right to appeal to the city council and include this paragraph in all such orders.*

Please feel free to contact staff at 651-266-9078 with any questions or for assistance in creating an application that would comply with the Lowertown Historic District guidelines.

Sincerely,

*Christine Boulware*

Christine Boulware  
Historic Preservation Planner

cc: Cecile Bedor, PED Director (via email)  
Steve Ubl, Senior Building Inspector (via email)  
Jim Bloom, Building Official (via email)  
Dave Brooks, owner ✓  
File





Dr. P. Anand  
Shanghai Institute of Architecture