

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

FILE NAME: 2400 University Avenue West
APPLICANT: Joseph Bergman, Exeter Group LLC
OWNER: Flats Venture LLC
ARCHITECT: Jeremiah Smith, BKV Group
DATE OF APPLICATION: March 22, 2017
DATE OF PUBLIC HEARING: June 22, 2017
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: University-Raymond Commercial Heritage Preservation District
PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1891-1941
CATEGORY: Contributing **WARD:** 4 **DISTRICT COUNCIL:** 12
INVENTORY NUMBER: RA-SPC-6301
CLASSIFICATION: Building Permit **ZONING:** T3
BUILDING PERMIT #:
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Alex Greenwood & George Gause
DATE OF REPORT: June 22, 2017

A. SITE DESCRIPTION:

The General Motors Truck Company Building at 2390-2400 University Avenue/735 Raymond Avenue was designed by Buechner and Orth and constructed in 1928. The one-story, flat roofed, commercial building wraps around the Twin Cities State Bank designed by the same firm. The University Avenue elevation's base is faced in St. Cloud granite and has square buff brick accents above the four storefronts and rhythmic buff brick 'T's' above the brick columns separating the storefronts. The Raymond Avenue elevation has two of the truck servicing bays remaining while the other five original bays have been infilled with brick and concrete or modified for window openings. Both street facing facades are clad in dark brown variegated texture brick rising to a brickwork cornice and a low parapet.

The building is representative of the many trucking companies settling in the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District between World War I and the Great Depression and was one of the largest automotive servicing buildings in the Twin Cities at the time of its construction. The building is categorized as contributing to the historic and architectural character of the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District which is significant for its development as the city's largest industrial neighborhood and a national transportation center. Many of the buildings are associated with the Minnesota Transfer Railway or the early trucking industry and are excellent examples of early twentieth-century factory, warehouse, and office structures. Many designed by prominent architects such as Buechner and Orth, Ellerbe and Round, and Toltz, King and Day. District buildings designed by Buechner and Orth are the Northwestern Furniture Exposition Building (1906), the Simmons Mattress Company (1909), Twin Cities State Bank (1914), and the General Motors Truck Company Garage (1928).

A 5-story, U-shaped addition was constructed in 2016 that is set far back from University Avenues and features metal and fiber cement panel façades in 3 main colors.

B. PROPOSED CHANGES:

The owner is rehabilitating the existing 6000 square foot commercial space that exists along University Avenue into two separate 3000 square foot spaces. In order to provide greater functionality and division of the existing space, the applicant proposes to replace the existing historic storefronts with new aluminum storefront systems that are dark bronze in color. The division of space as outlined by the applicant thus divides the six historic storefront bays equally between the new retail spaces with three storefront bays a piece. In the replacement of the

storefront windows, the applicant desires that center bay of each three storefront window set have a folding glass operable wall installed but has also proposed a fixed variation if the operable windows cannot be achieved. In addition to installing two folding glass walls, the applicant proposes to install two entries to each individual retail space for a total of four. The entries are proposed to be installed into the storefront bays that flank the center storefront bay. Each entry will have a door installed into an alcove to avoid the door opening into the public right-of-way along University Avenue. This installation of the entry alcoves will result in the replacement of two existing alcove entries as well as introduce two new alcove entries where they have not existed historically. Out of these two new alcoves, one will remove and setback the historic entrance to the General Motors Truck Company Building. The other new alcove will replace and modify the only existing historic two-lite storefront window. Overall, the design of the new storefront system incorporates some of the historic divisions and dimensions. The new storefront systems will replicate the historic four-lite transoms and will maintain a similar mullion and muntin dimension where the windows in the systems are fixed. However, the new storefront windows deviate from the historic division pattern below the transom. The new storefront systems replicate previous storefront alterations which have a four lite division below the transom instead of the historic two-lite division. Where the storefront windows are to be operable, the mullions and muntins will be larger to accommodate the hardware and travel room needed to make the window operable. In addition, the proposed mullions and muntins of the new storefront system will not replicate the historic coping details or the historic stamping detail. The applicant's proposal to install new aluminum storefront window systems, alcoves, and operable windows will result in the complete removal of historic storefront window fabric and introduce alcoves where they have not existed previously.

C. BACKGROUND:

On June 19, 2017 the applicant provided photos and a written statement that indicates the condition of the wood that backs the historic metal storefront window jambs, sills, mullion, and header as deteriorated. The applicant also included a statement written by the contractor that indicates a difficulty with salvaging the trim to be reused and does not feel the trim could be removed and reapplied in the same plane on top of a new window system without damage.

On June 16, 2017 HPC staff met briefly with the applicant to discuss the parameters of a small exploratory demolition and advised them on obtaining condition results to show the Commission.

On June 15, 2017 HPC staff conducted a site visit to inspect the storefront materiality and condition. The site visit resulted in staff identifying the storefront system being approximately 75% historic and finding the metal storefront to be good visual condition. However, staff also developed the inquiry if there was more historic material currently covered by previous alterations. Staff also wished to find out the condition of the wood substrate behind the metal storefront. Staff emailed the applicant explaining their concerns regarding the historic material and asked for the applicant the condition of the substrate. HPC staff suggested that the applicant conduct a small, non-invasive exploratory demolition to find the out substrate condition.

On June 14, 2017 HPC staff, after reviewing the application and preparing the report for 2400 University, questioned the materiality of the existing storefront. Research into current and historic photos prompted the staff to investigate the materiality and the overall existence of historic material at the site.

On June 1, 2017 HPC staff met with Joe Bergman and Thomas Nelson to discuss the storefront window replacement project. Mr. Bergman and Mr. Nelson presented the shop drawings for new storefront systems. Both the HPC staff and the applicants were under the impression that there was a limited amount of historic fabric currently extant. However, as the proposal

deviated in function from the existing storefront systems and proposed new door openings in a primary facade, HPC staff advised the applicant that they would be placed on the June 22 Public Hearing. HPC staff received the necessary application materials, drawings, and photos on Friday morning, June 2, 2017.

The site received HPC approval to construct a five-story addition to the roof of the existing L-shaped 1-story historic building, as well as some rehabilitation of the historic building on June 4, 2015 (File # 15-036). The applicant's team has had several meetings with HPC staff to discuss the signage proposed by the subject application. The proposal generally incorporates direction provided by HPC staff.

D. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:

University-Raymond Commercial Historic District

Sec. 74.06.3. - Design review guidelines, purpose and intent.

(a) The following guidelines for design review serve as the basis for the heritage preservation commission's permit review decisions in the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District. The guidelines define the most important elements of the historic district's unique physical appearance and are intended to state the best means of preserving and enhancing these elements in rehabilitation or new construction. When applying the guidelines, the commission, in clearly defined cases of economic hardship, will also consider deprivation of the owner's reasonable use of property.

(b) The commission shall conduct its design review for all projects in the district according to the secretary of the interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation" (1995). These standards shall be applied to all district projects in a reasonable manner and take into consideration their economic and technical feasibility. The ten (10) standards are:

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.*

Sec. 74.06.3(c)(2) Windows and Doors

A. Openings:

Existing window and door openings should be retained. New window and door openings should not be introduced into the principal elevations. Enlarging or reducing window or door opening to fit stock window sash or new stock door sizes should not be done. Infilling of window openings or installing new openings may be permissible on secondary facades if standard sizes approximate the size and proportions of the opening. Generally, a secondary facade will be considered as any facade not facing the street and not having the ornamentation and higher quality materials usually associated with street facades.

B. Panes, Sashes and Hardware:

It is desirable to retain original windows and doors, but they may need replacement for functional reasons. Replacement is clearly acceptable for functional reasons if new materials closely match original materials. Different materials may be acceptable on a case-by-case basis. Window panes should be two-way glass. No reflective or spandrel glass is permitted. The stylistic period or periods a building represents should be respected. Shutters are generally inappropriate in the district. Missing or irreparable windows should be replaced with new windows that match the original in material, size, general muntin and mullion proportion and configuration and reflective qualities of the glass. Replacement sash should not alter the setback relationship between window and wall.

C. Storm Windows:

Storm windows and doors should be compatible with the character of the building and should not damage window and door frames, or require removal of original windows and doors. Exterior storm windows should be appropriate in size and color and should be operable.

E. Lintel, 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:

Original or storefronts determined to have historical, architectural or engineering significance 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 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.

E. FINDINGS:

1. On February 23, 2005, the University Raymond Commercial Heritage Preservation District was established under Council File No. 05-52 § 1 and Chapter 73 of the Legislative Code states 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). The period of significance for the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District is 1891 to 1941.
2. The General Motor Truck Company Building is categorized as contributing to the character of the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District and is certified eligible as a contributing building for the National Register of Historic Places.
3. **Sec. 74.06.3(c)(2)(A):**
The proposal to install two alcoves that flank the center storefront window bays will result in the creation of two new door openings on the primary facade where they have not existed historically. The installation of a new alcove in Window bay 5 (third from the left) will remove the original storefront door opening that existed during the building's occupation by the General Motors Truck Company. In addition, the installation of the second alcove at window bay 1 (sixth from the left) and will remove the only remaining historic two-light storefront window and mullion that is extant from the building's initial construction in 1928. Furthermore, the detailing of the extant historic storefront framing features ornate coping and stamping in order to establish itself as the primary façade that faces University Avenue. The new proposed storefront system does not incorporate the replication of any coping details or stamping.
4. **Sec. 74.06.3(c)(2)(B):**
The proposed storefront window system will result in the complete removal and replacement of all extant historic fabric. The new systems would remove all historic transoms, sills, jambs, mullions, and muntins. While the new storefront systems are being proposed to offer improved functionality to the rehabilitated commercial spaces, they do not incorporate, or replicate the historic material, detailing, or functionality. Furthermore, the proposed operable windows do not respect the stylistic period of building as they do not match the general muntin and mullion proportions of the extant historic windows and do not respect the stylistic period as they change the original design intent of the static storefront windows.
5. **Sec. 74.06.3(c)(2)(C):**
Although the applicant is not proposing a window system that includes a storm window variant, the proposed operable windows require the remove of the existing, historic storefront windows. Furthermore the installation of track and latches would make a different set of alterations to the existing brick opening than a static storefront window system.
6. **Sec. 74.06.3(c)(2)(E)**
The proposed installation of alcove doors where not previously existing would require the elimination the sill/lintel. The sill/lintel where the angle is needed for the recessed opening would also be altered, but would be reinstalled. The granite and brick at these areas, if salvageable, are proposed to be repurposed but would most likely require additional material to accommodate the small change in linear footage. This proposal, while similar in execution to previously altered storefronts on this property would result in further separation of the design intent to have the sill/lintel flush with the main façade. The elimination and recessing of the sill/lintel adds to the creation of second plane setback from the façade which further dissolves the flush façade appearance.
7. **Sec. 74.06.3(c)(2)(E)**
The proposed new aluminum storefront systems would replace extant historic storefront

jamb, sills, mullions, muntins, and coping that has an unusually high degree of scroll work stamped into the framing along all linear edges. While some of the storefront has been altered, a high majority of the historic fabric remains in place and appears to be able to be repaired. If the historic storefront material proves to be unrepairable, it should be replicated in-kind in material, size, profile, stamping, and overall detailing. The proposed new aluminum storefronts do not incorporate the retention of any fabric, openings, or detailing, and would strip the building of significant architectural character. The proposed storefronts introduce new material that is non-compatible with historic precedence or the overall structure.

8. The proposal to replace the existing storefront windows with new aluminum storefront systems at the General Motors Truck Company Building at 2390-2400 University Avenue will adversely affect the Program for the Preservation and architectural control of the University-Raymond Commercial Heritage Preservation District (Leg. Code §73.06 (e)).

F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the findings, staff recommends denial of the building permit application. Staff or the Commission could review and approve an approval that features the repair and retention of historic storefront material. Staff or the Commission could also review and approve an in-kind replacement that replicates the extant historic fabric and detailing.

G. ATTACHMENTS:

1. HPC Design Review Application
2. Existing Elevation Drawing
3. Shop drawings and plans
4. Project Description with photos
5. Staff Historic Material Identification Key
6. Condition photos and contractor statement