

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

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FILE NAME: Streetscape alteration at northeast corner of Jackson and Sixth Streets  
DATE OF APPLICATION: August 20, 2012  
APPLICANT: Daniel Gleeson, Gleeson Architects  
OWNER: (Public Right-of-Way) BUILDING OWNER: Lowertown Acquisitions Corp LLC.  
DATE OF HEARING: September 20, 2012  
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Individual Site located within the Lowertown Historic District  
CATEGORY: Pivotal  
CLASSIFICATION: R-O-W permit  
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Christine Boulware/Amy Spong  
DATE: September 18, 2012

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**A. SITE DESCRIPTION:**

Named after the neighborhood that sprouted at the “Lower Landing” on the Mississippi River, Lowertown grew into a major warehouse and distribution center serving the entire Upper Midwest. Lowertown’s railroad, manufacturing, and wholesaling companies expressed their sense of pride and permanence in the structures they erected nearly a century ago. Lowertown’s historic significance was cemented in 1983 when it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Most of the streets in the Lowertown area were platted in May of 1849; most were not graded or improved until the 1870s. Until 1877, the land between Jackson and Broadway, and Fourth and Seventh Streets, encompassing much of the present-day Lowertown, was a large rocky hill, the top of which was more than fifty feet above the present street level of Mears Park.

The current streetscape has replica three and five globe light fixtures, concrete sidewalks, a few street trees and a band of red brick pavers along the curbing in various states of repair. There are also basic traffic and wayfinding poles and signs. It is unclear what is left of granite curbing in this stretch of Sixth Street.

The street railway system was electrified in the early 1890s. The main lines through Lowertown travelled on Fourth, Fifth, Seventh, Jackson and Broadway Streets. The Merchant’s National Bank Building (Bank Building), 366 Jackson Street, was erected at a major intersection.

The Merchant’s National Bank (a.k.a. McColl Building) is a four-story commercial building designed by Edward P. Bassford and constructed in 1892 of rusticated, red sandstone. Architecturally, the building is a well articulated example of the Romanesque style. The first floor was designed as a banking facility with office space on the top three floors. The building features round-arched windows at the top and bottom levels and rectangular window openings divided by polished granite colonettes, carved stone lintels, elaborate finials and a parapet with blind arcading. Each vertical bank of windows is divided by a turret extending above the roofline. The site is individually listed on the National Register and as a local Heritage Preservation Site. It is also located within the Lowertown Historic District.

**B. PROPOSED CHANGES:**

The applicant is proposing to remove the existing sidewalk and curbing along the west and south sides of the building and replace it with a new, two-tone concrete sidewalk with scored box pattern in the slab with a broom finish. Color no. 1 on the plans matches the red sandstone on the building and color no. 2 is a “standard” concrete color. The sidewalk would have an integral curb and city tree grates historic replica light fixtures would be reinstalled. A new accessible ramp would be installed at the corner.

The drawings show the installation of five bronze inlays in front of the entrance on Jackson Street. Details of the inlays were not supplied for review.

### **C. DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES:**

#### **Lowertown Design Guidelines**

##### ***New Construction***

##### ***Landscaping and Street Furniture***

*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.*

#### **Restoration and Rehabilitation**

*General Principles for Restoration and Rehabilitation:*

*1. All work should be of a character and quality that maintains the distinguishing features of the building and the environment. The removal of architectural features is not permitted.*

*2. Deteriorated architectural features 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 original design based on physical or pictorial evidence is preferable to using conjectural or period designs or using part of other buildings.*

*3. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship characteristic of structures of a period should be treated sensitively. Furthermore, if changes in use of a building are contemplated, they should be accomplished with minimum alteration to the structure and fabric.*

*4. In general, it is expected that buildings will be restored to their original appearance. However, alterations to buildings are sometimes significant because they reflect the history of the building and the district. This significance should be respected, and restoration to an 'original' appearance may not always be desirable. All buildings should be recognized as products of their own time and not be altered to resemble buildings from another era.*

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

##### **District/Neighborhood**

##### **Recommended:**

*-Identifying, retaining, and preserving buildings, and streetscape, and landscape features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the district or neighborhood. Such features can include streets, alleys, paving, walkways, street lights, signs, benches, parks and gardens, and trees.*

*-Retaining the historic relationship between buildings, and streetscape and landscape features such as a town square comprised of row houses and stores surrounding a communal park or open space.*

*-Protecting and maintaining the historic masonry, wood, and architectural metals which comprise building and streetscape features, through appropriate surface treatments such as cleaning, rust removal, limited paint removal, and reapplication of protective coating systems; and protecting and maintaining landscape features, including plant material.*

*-Protecting buildings, paving, iron fencing, etc. against arson and vandalism before rehabilitation work begins by erecting protective fencing and installing alarm systems that are keyed into local protection agencies.*

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

*-Repairing features of the building, streetscape, or landscape by reinforcing the historic materials. Repair will also generally include the replacement in kind - or with a compatible*

*substitute material - of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of features when there are surviving prototypes such as porch balustrades, paving materials, or streetlight standards.*

*-Replacing in kind an entire feature of the building, streetscape, or landscape that is too deteriorated to repair - when the overall form and detailing are still evident - using the physical evidence to guide the new work. This could include a storefront, a walkway, or a garden. 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 the building streetscape, or landscape when the historic feature is completely missing, such as row house steps, a porch, streetlight, or terrace. It may be a restoration based on historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the historic character of the district or neighborhood.*

### **Alterations/Additions for the New Use**

*-Designing required new parking so that it is as unobtrusive as possible, i.e., on side streets or at the rear of buildings. "Shared" parking should also be planned so that several businesses' can utilize one parking area as opposed to introducing random, multiple lots.*

*-Designing and constructing new additions to historic buildings when required by the new use. New work should be compatible with the historic character of the district or neighborhood in terms of size, scale, design, material, color, and texture.*

*-Removing nonsignificant buildings, additions, or streetscape and landscape features which detract from the historic character of the district or the neighborhood.*

### **Not Recommended:**

*-Removing or radically changing those features of the district or neighborhood which are important in defining the overall historic character so that, as a result, the character is diminished.*

*-Destroying streetscape and landscape features by widening existing streets, changing paving material, or introducing inappropriately located new streets or parking lots.*

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

*-Failing to provide adequate protection of materials on a cyclical basis so that deterioration of building, streetscape, and landscape feature results.*

*-Permitting buildings to remain unprotected so that windows are broken; and interior features are damaged.*

*-Stripping features from buildings or the streetscape such as wood siding, iron fencing, or terra cotta balusters; or removing or destroying landscape features, including plant material.*

*-Failing to undertake adequate measures to assure the preservation of building, streetscape, and landscape features.*

*-Replacing an entire feature of the building, streetscape, or landscape such as a porch, walkway, or streetlight, 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, streetscape, or landscape feature or that is physically or chemically incompatible.*

*-Removing a feature of the building, streetscape, or landscape 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, streetscape or landscape feature that is out of scale or otherwise inappropriate to the setting's historic character, e.g., replacing picket fencing with chain link fencing.*

**Alterations/Additions for the New Use**

*-Placing parking facilities directly adjacent to historic buildings which cause the removal of historic plantings, relocation of paths and walkways, or blocking of alleys.*

*-Introducing new construction into historic districts that is visually incompatible or that destroys historic relationships within the district or neighborhood.*

*-Removing a historic building, building feature, or landscape or streetscape feature that is important in defining the overall historic character of the district or the neighborhood*

**D. FINDINGS:**

1. The proposed streetscape alterations are located within the local Lowertown Historic District and are adjacent to the individually designated Merchant's National Bank (National Register). Staff was able to locate several pictures over time to show how the sidewalk at the Bank Building evolved.
2. *Partial demolition.* The current colored curbs, brick inlay pattern and concrete and aggregate sidewalks were installed when Galtier Plaza was constructed in the 1980s. Street trees were installed during that time along with light fixtures that replicate the three- and five-globe lights that were present historically. Removal of the curbs and sidewalks is appropriate as that design had no historical basis and is not compatible with the historic character of the Lowertown Historic District. It was also installed outside the Period of Significance for the building and the historic district. Street trees and grates were also installed outside the Period of Significance; putting them back in the same locations would be acceptable as they do not block prominent views of the building. The light fixtures are based on historical documentation and will be reinstalled.
3. Currently, there is not a master plan or overall vision for making repairs/alterations to public infrastructure within Lowertown. The Greater Lowertown Master Plan Summary (adopted by the Saint Paul City Council as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan on April 18, 2012) includes a strategy to conduct a study on "historic streetscape and infrastructure to inform future open space and streetscape proposals." The study would inform future proposals and explore where historic features should be restored to provide greater interpretation and reinforce the District's character.
4. The current proposal to introduce a new sidewalk pattern, two-color scheme with both troweled and broom finishes on this section around the Bank Building does not "reinforce the District's character" and does not restore original features to provide for greater interpretation of the Lowertown Historic District. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation recommend against "*Introducing a new building, streetscape or landscape feature that is out of scale or otherwise inappropriate to the setting's historic character.*" There should be a master plan or comprehensive approach to sidewalk design for the whole of the Historic District as opposed to responding to individual requests for buildings or blocks.
5. The Lowertown Design Review Guidelines state "*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.*" Historic images show a uniform and solid concrete sidewalk and possibly a granite or sandstone curb. Currently, there are no historic elements at the location that would require "preserving."
6. The installation of plaques and a concrete pattern (possibly in one-color contrasting with rest of sidewalk) in a small area at the main entrance would not have a negative impact on the overall character of the Historic District's right-of-way.
7. Public Works will also need to review and approve this proposal to determine if it complies with applicable accessibility requirements.

**E. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Based on the findings, staff recommends approval of the application provided the following conditions are met:

1. Only one color in the standard gray concrete shall be installed. A slight tint that closely matches the concrete on the rest of the block may be acceptable and shall be used throughout the installation.
2. The scoring pattern shall be simplified with consultation from Public Works staff, the applicant and HPC staff. This may also include revision of the ratio of troweled versus broom finish surfaces for ADA requirements.
3. Bronze inlay details, pattern and color at the main entrance shall be submitted to HPC staff for final review and approval.
4. If other details require revision in order to meet Public Works' standards, those changes shall be submitted to HPC for review and approval.
5. Revised drawings reflecting the above changes shall be submitted to HPC and Public Works staff for final review and approval.
6. The HPC stamped approved drawings shall remain on site for the duration of the project.