

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

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FILE NAME: 250 Sixth Street East (Cosmopolitan Building)  
DATE OF APPLICATION: March 21, 2014  
APPLICANT: Griffin Jameson – Kaas Wilson Architects  
STATED OWNER: Oly-IDA Cosmopolitan LLC  
DATE OF HEARING: April 24, 2014  
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Lowertown Heritage Preservation District  
CATEGORY: Pivotal  
CLASSIFICATION: Building Permit  
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: John Beaty, Christine Boulware  
DATE: April 17, 2014

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**A. SITE DESCRIPTION:** The Finch, van Slyck and McConville Dry Goods Company Building is an eight-story, steel-frame, masonry commercial building constructed between 1911 and 1923. The 1911 building is U-shaped; a 10-bay continuous facade faces west onto Wacouta Street with a light well opening to the east. Its buff-colored clay brick walls rise from a limestone-clad foundation. The two entrances, at the second and ninth bays, are protected by heavy, limestone pent roofs with a simplified entablatures supported by twinned simple limestone brackets. The bays have tripled windows, except bays one and ten which have doubled windows. Segmental-arched windows top the tripled bays at the seventh floor, and an abstracted capital rests at the springline of the arches. The eighth floor and bays one and ten are slightly recessed and do not have arches or capitals. The south elevation has seven bays, and is treated identically. In 1923, a two-bay addition was added to the north. Its reinforced concrete frame is visible on the north elevation. The quadrupled windowed bays are in the same plane as the tripled bays of the original block, and the eighth floor is identically recessed. A square limestone beltcourse atop corbelled brick serving as a storefront cornice runs across the building. The original windows were replaced in 2008 (HPC File #08-041) and the new windows replicate the original vertically-divided three-over-three divided-lights. The property is categorized as pivotal to the character of the Lowertown Heritage Preservation District.

**B. CHANGES PROPOSED:** The commercial space at the southwest corner of the Cosmopolitan Building is being converted into residential space. The applicant proposes to replace four fixed windows in the recessed storefront with metal panels painted to match the frame. According to the applicant, this storefront was replaced as part of a 1989 renovation. The material painted metal and the proposed panels would serve as an area for plumbing and laundry vents. The window replacement is being forwarded as an alternative to venting through the masonry walls.

A revised proposal was submitted that would add a mullion and small metal composite panel in the upper portion up the upper right transom. The panel would be finished to match the frame. Film is proposed to be added to the back side of the glass in the upper and lower panels on the right to obscure the new mechanical room. This is the proposal that staff will review

**C. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:**

*Historic Lowertown Heritage Preservation District*  
Guidelines for Design Review  
Sec. 74-112. - Preservation program.

## **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.
- c. 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.
- d. In general it is expected that buildings will be restored to their original appearance. However, alterations to buildings are sometimes worthy of preservation because they reflect a significant period of history of the buildings 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.

### **B. 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 visible elevations. Enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit stock window sash or new stock door sizes should not be done. Infilling of window openings may be permissible on minor facades if standard sizes approximate the size and proportions of the opening. Generally, a minor 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 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. Heating and air conditioning units should not be installed in the window frames when the sash and frames may be damaged. Window installations should be considered only when all other viable heating and cooling systems would result in significant damage to historic materials. Window installations may be acceptable in minor facades.
- 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.
- d. Awnings and canopies: Awnings and canopies should not be used when they conceal richly detailed entries and windows. Aluminum or plastic awnings should not be used. Large and historically inappropriate lettering should not be used on awnings.

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)

#### **D. 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. The property at 250 Sixth Street East (366 Wacouta Street) is categorized as pivotal to the character of the Lowertown Heritage Preservation District.
3. According to the applicant, this recessed entry system was replaced during a 1989 renovation. Staff conducted a site visit and noted that while the divisions and proportions of the entry recall that of original entrances on the building, the material, size, and profile of the framing does not match the remaining original window and door systems. The symmetrical vestibule inside the entry, if original or early, has been altered.
4. The commercial unit accessed at this location is being converted to residential space and the build-out of the unit will expand into the existing vestibule and lobby.
5. **Sec. 74-112.II.(a)** The installation of mechanical venting, metal panels, and films that obscure some of the glass at an entrance on a primary elevation is not advised and will alter the character of the building and the environment. This proposal does not comply with this guideline. However, the proposed work will not result in the removal of historic architectural features and the original design intent will still be apparent.
6. **Sec. 74-112.II.B. (a)** The [e]xisting window and door openings will be retained. The guideline states, that the [i]nfilling of window openings may be permissible on minor facades if standard sizes approximate the size and proportions of the opening. The entry, although recessed, is on a primary facade facing Wacouta Street and has higher quality materials usually associated with street facades. The proposal does not comply with this guideline.
7. **Sec. 74-112.II.B. (b)** The installation of a metal panel and obscuring film in the entry does not comply with the guideline that states, Window panes should be two-way glass.
8. **Sec. 74-112.II.B. (f)** 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. The addition of a matte panel will distract from the transparent architectural character of the storefront, and alterations to the lobby will be visible through the storefront. This proposal does not

comply with this guideline.

9. The proposal, as submitted, will adversely affect the program for the preservation and architectural control of the Historic Lowertown Heritage Preservation District (Leg. Code §73.06 (e)). The applicant has indicated that there is not a vertical route to run the exhaust; mechanical venting cannot exhaust into or through the parking garage below due to building codes, and the option to create vent penetrations through the brick facades along Wacouta and Fifth Streets would remove and damage historic materials and have high visibility. This proposal avoids damaging historic fabric and conflicting with some guidelines that other alternatives cannot. According to staff analysis of the information provided by the applicant, the proposal will have a negative visual impact on the building, but it will not result in the loss of historic fabric, the original design intent will still be visible, and is the most reversible option.

**E. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

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

1. The metal panel shall be as small as possible to meet the needs of venting the unit while preserving transparency of the entry.
2. The metal panel shall be installed in the opening at the same plane as the glass and shall be painted to match the color of the entry frame.
3. The vent(s) shall be as low profile as allowed by code and painted the same color as the panels.
4. Any revisions to the approved plans must be submitted to the HPC and/or staff for review.
5. The HPC stamped approved plans must be kept on site during the construction project.

As this entry will no longer serve as an entrance for a commercial purpose, staff recommends the owner consider removal of the projecting, metal-framed, canvas marquee/awning.

**F. ATTACHMENTS:**

1. HPC Application
2. Information provided by applicant
3. Photos of the property