

CITY OF SAINT PAUL  
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

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FILE NAME: Senior Housing - East Seventh Street and Bates Avenue  
DATE OF APPLICATION: May 27, 2014  
APPLICANT: Owen Metz, Dominium  
ARCHITECT: Gary Vogel, BKV Group, Inc.  
OWNER: City of Saint Paul – Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA)  
DATE OF HEARING: June 12, 2014  
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District  
CATEGORY: Vacant Land  
CLASSIFICATION: New Construction/ Second Pre-Application Review  
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Christine Boulware  
DATE: June 6, 2014

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**A. SITE DESCRIPTION:**

The subject site encompasses the southwestern 1.75 acres of a 2.78-acre vacant lot bounded by East Seventh Street, Maple Street, Bates Avenue and residential properties to the south. The site formerly contained the Hospital Linen business in its northeastern portion and several residential buildings and one commercial building in its southwestern portion, all of which have been demolished. The lot slopes downhill from northeast to southwest. The northeastern portion of the lot is proposed to be developed by Mississippi Market as a 15,252 sq. ft. grocery store.

**B. PROPOSED CHANGES:**

The applicant proposes to construct a new, 109-unit, four- and five-story apartment building with a 32,000 sq. ft. footprint. Parking includes 90 interior stalls in the lower floors and a 33-stall surface parking lot to the south. Four stories are above grade at the eastern end of the site while five are exposed at the western end and Bates Avenue elevation.

Revisions made to the plans based on discussion at the May 8, 2014 Pre-Application Review include:

1. A more pronounced entry with the massing modified
2. Entry signage added above the canopy (place holder)
3. Patterned brick in lieu of metal at vertical window connections
4. Columns added to the balconies
5. Foundation masonry simplified to be one color
6. Charcoal base added to break up the overall scale
7. Slate gray used as an accent in lieu of mid-gray
8. Additional detail added at oriel windows
9. Translucent privacy screens, railing separation at top level

**C. BACKGROUND:**

In 2004, the HPC conditionally approved the demolition of the Hospital Linen Site and the buildings were razed in 2005. Also in 2005, the HPC held a pre-application review for a multi-family residential project that was never constructed. In 2008, the remaining commercial and residential buildings at the southwestern portion of the site were demolished in order to meet deadlines for environmental clean-up. The HPC saw an earlier design of this project at the May 8, 2014 business meeting. The draft minutes from that meeting were included in the June 12<sup>th</sup> business meeting packet.

**D. PRE-APPLICATION REVIEW MEETING FORMAT**

Typically, the HPC allows for 20-30 minutes for review of each project. The informal review format is as follows:

- Staff will make a brief presentation (5 minutes) identifying issues that should be addressed by the HPC.
- The applicant will make a brief presentation (5 minutes) describing the historic preservation design considerations pertaining to the project scope.
- The HPC will discuss the project and consider whether the project is consistent with the applicable design review guidelines and the SOI. While committee members may discuss the appropriateness of a design approach in addressing the guidelines or SOI, their role is not to design the project. Given the nature of some large rehabilitation projects, the HPC may suggest that the applicant retain a preservation architect.
- At the end of the review, the HPC Chairperson will summarize the issues that were identified, the position of the committee members, and list all recommendations for revisions. The summary includes majority as well as minority or split opinions. The summary should cite all applicable design guidelines and Standards.

Although the HPC works to provide comments that will result in a project that will be recommended for approval by the HPC, the discussion is preliminary and cannot predict the final recommendation of staff, public comment, and the decision of the full HPC during the Public Hearing Meeting.

It is assumed that one pre-application review will take place prior to a project being submitted for an HPC Public Hearing Meeting. On certain occasions, the HPC may recommend that an additional pre-application review take place. If another pre-application review is scheduled, then neighboring property owners may be notified of the review within at least 350 feet from the project site.

#### **E. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:**

***Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District Design Guidelines (1992)***

**Leg. Code § 74.87. General principles.**

- 1. All work should be of a character and quality that maintains the distinguishing features of the building and the environment. The removal or alteration of distinctive architectural features should be avoided as should alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance. The restoration of altered original features, if documentable, is encouraged.*
- 2. Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure, or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected.*
- 3. 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 (including consideration of proportion, texture and detail), color and overall appearance.*
- 4. New additions or alterations to structures should be constructed in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the form and integrity of the original structure would be unimpaired.*
- 5. The impact of alterations or additions on individual buildings as well as on the surrounding streetscape will be considered; major alterations to buildings which occupy a corner lot or are otherwise prominently sited should be avoided.*
- 6. New construction should be compatible with the historic and architectural character of the district.*

**Sec. 74.90. - New construction and additions.**

**(b) General guidelines:**

- (1) **Site evaluation.** Existing historic buildings and landscape features should be retained and rehabilitated in plans for redevelopment.*
- (2) **General character.** New construction should reinforce the historic architectural and visual character of the area. Specifically, it should refer to the traditional two- and three-story dwelling and commercial building module and typical setbacks already established in the district and in the adjacent area.*
- (3) **Pedestrian circulation and parking.** New construction should be oriented toward streets which are inviting environments for pedestrians. Parking areas should be placed at the rear of buildings wherever possible or screened with landscaping, low walls or appropriately detailed fences.*
- (4) **Views and vistas.** Exceptional views of the city and river valley provided from the public way should not be obstructed by new buildings or structures.*

*(c) **Principal buildings; additions:***

- (1) **Massing and scale.** New construction should conform to the massing, volume, height, facade proportions and scale of surrounding structures and also comply with existing zoning regulations. The gross volume of any new structure should be visually compatible with the buildings and elements within the surrounding area. New dwellings and commercial buildings should be compatible with the height of existing adjacent buildings.*
- (2) **Materials and details.** Materials and details should relate to those of existing nearby buildings. Wood or masonry construction is typical for existing residential buildings in the district, while masonry is typical of commercial buildings. These materials are preferable to vinyl, metal or hardboard siding. Imitative materials such as artificial stone or brick veneer should not be used. Materials will be reviewed to determine their appropriate use in relation to the overall design of the structure. The use of vinyl, metal or hardboard siding will be considered by the commission on a case-by-case basis. These materials may be permissible in new construction of principal buildings if appropriately detailed.*

*(d) **Building elements:***

- (1) **Roofs.** The gable and hip roof or their variants are the primary historic roof forms in the district, with many variations and combinations. In new construction, the skyline or roof profile should relate to the predominant roof shape of nearby buildings. Highly visible secondary structure roofs should be compatible with the roof pitch, color and material of the main structure.*

*The roofing materials used on new buildings should be appropriate to the design of the building and the visibility of the roof.*

*Roof hardware such as skylights, vents and metal pipe chimneys should not be placed on the front roof plane.*

- (2) **Windows and entries.** Vertically oriented, double-hung sash are the predominant historic window type in the district. The proportion, size, rhythm and detailing of windows and entries should be compatible with that of existing nearby buildings. The rhythm of solids to voids created by openings in the facade of the new structure should be visually compatible with surrounding structures.*

- (3) **Porches and decks.** Porches are a standard feature of many historic houses in the district and whether enclosed or unenclosed they are an important part of the streetscape. In new construction, the front entry should be articulated with a design element such as a porch, portico or landing which provides a transitional zone between the semipublic and public exterior zones and the private interior zone. This design element should be appropriately detailed and compatible with the size and scale of the building.*

*Decks should be constructed at the rear of the building and should be integrated into the overall design. Decks should be appropriately detailed and should not be raised in a manner which makes them conspicuous.*

**(f) Site considerations:**

- (1) Setback and siting.** The setback of new buildings in most residential and commercial areas should be compatible with the setback of existing adjacent buildings.
  - (2) Parking.** Residential parking areas should be confined to the rear of existing or new buildings. Parking spaces should be screened from view from the public street by landscaping such as hedges, grade changes or low fences.
  - (3) Fences.** Fences which allow some visual penetration of front yard space are preferable to complete enclosure. Fences of wrought iron or wood which enclose the front yard should be no higher than three and one-half (3½) feet. Cyclone fences should not be used to enclose front yards in the front half of side yards.
  - (4) Retaining walls.** Stone, brick and split face concrete block are preferable to landscape timber for the construction of retaining walls. Masonry retaining walls should be finished with caps or appropriate details.
  - (5) Public improvements.** New street and landscape improvements, lighting, street furniture and signs should be compatible with the character of the historic district. The historic urban pattern of gridplan streets should be retained and enhanced in improvement projects.
  - (6) Signs.** Sign materials and design should complement the materials and design of the building and adjacent buildings. (See also: Storefront Guidelines.)
  - (7) Views and vistas.** New buildings or other structures should not block key views and vistas of the river valley and the downtown skyline.
- (C.F. 92-900, § 2(I)(B), 7-23-92)**

**Storefront Guidelines**

**(g) East Seventh Street: Hope Street to Bates Street.**

**(1) General provisions:** The passerby can travel up or down East Seventh Street without much of a sense of the historic neighborhood on each side of the avenue. The four-lane street is a major artery and divides the Swede Hollow corner of the district from the rest of the bluff. East Seventh is visually dominated by the large institutional mass of the Wilder Residence. A scattering of historic and modern commercial buildings and a few residences constitute the other structures. Excellent views of downtown Saint Paul and the river valley are afforded from various points along the streets. Vacant parcels are found on both sides of the street, and there is a small public park triangle at the north side of the Maple Street intersection.

This portion of East Seventh Street has been a mixture of residential, commercial and institutional uses since the late nineteenth century. In 1892, the corridor between Bates and Hope streets was occupied by several mansions and a number of double houses, as well as a variety of commercial buildings. The street was not lined with a continuous row of stores and shops, such as those still found along Payne Avenue or farther up the street at the Arcade Street intersection. However, existing historic commercial buildings are built out to the sidewalk with no setback from the property line. This creates a uniform alignment of facades that provides a visually strong streetscape. The Stutzman Block—with its wedge shape and corner turret—is the most architecturally significant.

- a. Design.** New construction along East Seventh should serve as an attractive frame for the historic neighborhood behind it. Fewer historic reference points are found here than along adjacent streets. However, the important route of East Seventh through the neighborhood requires very sensitive consideration of land use, siting and building design issues.
- b. Siting and setback.** New construction, particularly commercial, should maintain the uniform setback of older commercial buildings along the street. Where facades must be set back from sidewalks, low walls, landscaping or other elements should define the street edge.
- c. Parking.** Parking areas should be located at the side or at the rear of the buildings and should be screened with landscaping, low walls or appropriately detailed fences. Large paved areas should be divided with landscaping at the interior of the site.
- d. Massing, height and scale.** New construction should conform to the massing, volume, height, facade proportions and scale of buildings within view of the site, and also comply with

existing zoning regulations. The gross volume of any new structure should be visually compatible with the building elements within the surrounding area.

**e. Materials and details.** Although the architectural character of the street is quite eclectic, materials and details should be compatible with those in the district. Wood or masonry construction is typical for existing residential buildings in the district, while masonry is typical of commercial construction. These materials are preferable to vinyl, metal or hardboard siding. Imitative materials such as artificial stone or brick veneer should not be used. The use of vinyl, metal or hardboard siding will be considered by the commission on a case-by-case basis. These materials may be permissible in new construction if appropriately detailed.

**(2) Building elements:**

**a. Roofs.** Flat roofs are more typical of commercial buildings while the gable and hip roof or their variants are the primary historic residential roof forms in the district. In new construction, the skyline or roof profile should relate to these predominant roof shapes.

Roofing materials used on new buildings should be appropriate to the design of the building and the visibility of the roof.

Roof hardware such as skylights, vents and metal pipe chimneys should not be placed on the visible portion of the roof such as the front roof plane.

**b. Windows and entries.** Prominent first floor display windows and distinctive entries facing the street are typical for existing historic commercial buildings. Vertically oriented, double-hung sash is the predominant window type for upper stories in the district. The location, proportion, size, rhythm and detailing of windows and entries should address these traditional district forms.

**c. Signs and lighting.** Signs, graphics and lighting should be designed as part of the facade. Signs on commercial blocks housing several adjacent businesses should be designed to unify the facade, while providing identity for individual businesses. Type style, sign color and sign materials should complement the building exterior.

Lighting should be compatible with the building exterior and signs. Internally lighted signs should not be used where they overpower the facade or setting.

**F. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS:**

1. The site is located within the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District and is currently vacant land.
2. On July 23, 1992, the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District was established under Ordinance No. 17942 (Council File #92-900). 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).
3. **74.90(b)(1) Site evaluation.** The January 12, 2006 HPC resolution states, "the HPC advises that several properties should be strongly reconsidered by the developer, the HRA and PED staff for rehabilitation and preservation rather than demolition" and resolved that, "moving the residential structures elsewhere within the Historic District or to one area of the project site shall be a part of that consideration and will help to preserve the historic context and fabric of the area while allowing for a new development to take place." Rehabilitation and relocation were not the outcome and the historic buildings and landscape features at this site were demolished between 2005 and 2008.
4. **74.87.6 General Principle & 74.90(b)(2) General character.** The proposed construction, to some extent, reinforces the historic architectural and visual character of the area as the design references features in the District but employs some of them in ways that are out of scale or context. The materials and siting of the building generally support the historic character. The massing is not found elsewhere in the district and does not comply with the district's guidelines. The location and design of the parking conforms to the guidelines.

5. **74.90(g)(1) & (g)(1)a Design & Existing Character.** East Seventh Street is an important corridor and a gateway to the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District. There are fewer historic resources in this area of the district than along adjacent streets and avenues. The existing historic commercial buildings along East Seventh Street are built up to the sidewalk with no setbacks from the property line creating a uniform alignment of facades and a visually strong street edge. If the massing were consistent with the district, then new construction generally should follow the historic precedent, but the small setback minimally reduces some of the impact of the large massing.

The Stutzman Block—with its wedge shape and corner turret—is the most architecturally significant of the adjacent buildings and new construction should not overshadow/overwhelm this pivotal property. The guideline states that, new construction along East Seventh should serve as an attractive frame for the historic neighborhood behind it and give very sensitive consideration to land use, siting, and building design issues. The submitted photo simulations are helpful, but appear to be out of scale. More views are needed. Staff suggests views looking east and west along East Seventh Street, views from across East Seventh Street, and from south of the site along both Bates Avenue and Maple Street.

6. **74.90(g)(1)b Siting and setback.** The proposed senior housing has two primary facades: the East Seventh Street and Bates Avenue elevations. The plans reviewed on May 8<sup>th</sup> show a 12'-8" setback along East Seventh Street with balconies projecting 5'-0" with a 7'-8" setback. Because the intersection is not at a right angle, the setback along Bates Avenue starts at 17'-0" at East Seventh Street and tapers off at 7'-9" at the southern edge of the building with balconies projecting 5'-0" into the setback. Setback dimensions are not shown on the most recent submittal, and staff is unable to determine if they have been altered from the previous submission. The setbacks are not consistent with the setbacks of historic commercial buildings along the street. The guideline states, "Where facades must be set back from sidewalks, low walls, landscaping or other elements should define the street edge." The trees are set at the sidewalk edge, and the design places low hedges closer to the building. These features, along with raised planters and solid walls below the balconies at grade, create a greater sense of a wall that defines the sidewalk/street edge.
7. **74.90(g)(1)d Massing, height and scale.** The footprint of the building is 32,000 sq. ft. and the height ranges from 4-5 stories above grade. The massing, volume, height, and scale of the proposed senior housing is much larger than surrounding historic buildings (the Stutzman Block is 2-2 ½ stories) and more in scale with existing and proposed construction (Science Center and parking garage) on the adjacent Metropolitan State campus which is not in the Historic District. The massing and the footprint of the proposed construction do not comply with the guideline, but refining the façade details can help to reduce the appearance of the massing.
8. **74.90(g)(1)e Materials and details.** Materials listed on the plans include: banded brick with textured-concrete masonry at the base; brick in the mid-section on the primary elevations; and fiber-cement siding on the secondary elevations. The mansard roof has medium gray, standing seam metal and shed dormers. The guideline states, "Although the architectural character of the street is quite eclectic, materials and details should be compatible with those in the district."

The use of brick and concrete masonry, if appropriately detailed, is typical of commercial construction and appropriate for construction in the historic district. Wood or masonry construction is preferable to vinyl, metal or hardboard siding; the later materials may be considered by the commission on a case-by-case basis and may be permissible in new construction if appropriately detailed. In response to commission comments, detailed brick spandrels have replaced metal or siding spandrels, which is appropriate to the district.

Metal is employed on historic buildings in the neighborhood in pressed cornices, turrets, bay and oriel window panels, decorative pediments, finials and small projecting hoods/roofs. The use of metal at the mansard level and dormers, if appropriately finished and detailed, would comply with the guidelines. The dormers' shed roofs are a design change that responds to commission comments. In addition, the designers have added a panel detail to the spandrels of the oriel windows which helps to define the bays from the surrounding surfaces and conforms to historic precedents.

The use of hardboard siding on the primary elevations in the recesses and the balconies is not suitable, but if properly detailed, may be fine for use on the secondary elevations.

Venting on primary elevations should be through the roof. Where wall penetrations are necessary venting should be in recesses, painted to match the surrounding materials and as small and flush as possible.

9. **74.90(g)(2)a Roofs.** The proposed building has a flat roof which is typical of commercial buildings in the district. It also employs a mansard detail at the top floor which serves to visually reduce the overall massing of the building. Although we do not see mansards in Dayton's Bluff commercial construction, it is present in residential and historically mixed-use buildings like the Schorenstein Grocery at Bates and Wilson. The materials of the mansard are vertical metal panels. The use of metal on a roof has some precedent. Many historic commercial buildings, including the Stutzman across the street, have pressed metal cornices. The color of the metal panels on the roof are shown as a medium gray, but should have a darker finish in order to minimize the color contrast with the dormers, and not draw the eye to the taller height of the building.

The addition of shed roofs with cornices to the dormers has added a new line of emphasis below the primary roof line, thus slightly reducing the massing further. The projecting dormers appear to have horizontal siding. A roofing treatment (such as shingles or metal roofing) on the sides would make them more compatible with historic treatments of the roof/dormer relationship. Plans are preliminary and features such as skylights, vents and metal pipe chimneys were not detailed and should not be placed on the visible portion of the roof such as the front roof plane.

10. **74.90(g)(2)b Windows and entries.** This design employs a flat-roofed entry porch with signage to emphasize the primary entry at the northeast corner. The entry is shown as painted metal and glass, which would not disagree with the guidelines.

Large windows are found at the east entrance, under the porch, and in the banded masonry. These windows are a mix of horizontally and vertically oriented, storefront windows. The rest of the floors have vertically-oriented, double-hung, and some are fixed windows in Chicago-style groupings. The majority of the windows relate to traditional fenestration location, proportion, size, rhythm in the historic district. Window style and design at the eastern portion of the façade should be designed to recall more historic storefront proportions.

11. **74.90(d)(3) Porches and decks.** Porches have replaced an earlier design element of cantilevered balconies on the primary elevations of the building. This is a response to commission comments. The details of the porch have not been finalized.

The proposed balconies have columns at the corners and paired columns in the center with wire mesh panels and prefinished aluminum balustrades. The privacy walls between shared-porch units are translucent and run full-height from the wall to the balustrades. There is some contextual precedent for these details, but further revision is necessary to comply with the guidelines. The objective of the condition may be met with single columns in the middle and at the corners and a more traditional balustrade design.

12. **74.90(g)(2)c Signs and lighting.** Signage is shown as individual letters atop the canopy above the entrance. The guideline states that signage, graphics and lighting should be

designed as part of the facade; type style, sign color and sign materials should complement the building exterior. Lighting should be compatible with the building exterior and signs. Internally lighted signs should not be used where they overpower the facade or setting. The signage appears to meet the intent of the guideline, but a final detailed signage package will still require review and approval.

13. **74.90(b)(3) Pedestrian circulation & 74.90(g)(1)c Parking.** The construction is oriented toward streets. Parking is proposed in the lower levels and at the rear of the building; which complies with the guideline. There are two islands shown in the middle of the parking lot on the plans. These plans are preliminary and do not illustrate screening or other details. The guideline states, "Parking areas... should be screened with landscaping, low walls or appropriately detailed fences. Large paved areas should be divided with landscaping at the interior of the site."
14. **74.90(f)(3) Fences.** Fences were not shown on the plans. If proposed, the guidelines assert that they should "allow some visual penetration of front yard space. Fences of wrought iron or wood which enclose the front yard should be no higher than three and one-half (3½) feet. Cyclone fences should not be used to enclose front yards in the front half of side yards."
15. **74.90(f)(4) Retaining walls.** Concrete landscape planters are identified on the plans but are not detailed. If appropriately placed, these may help to reinforce the streetwall. The guideline states, "Stone, brick and split face concrete block are preferable... for the construction of retaining walls. Masonry retaining walls should be finished with caps or appropriate details." The solid masonry wall in the plaza area is not an appropriate feature; the design should be coordinated with the Mississippi Market development to create a cohesive and compatible plan and design.
16. **74.90(f)(5) Public improvements.** District guidelines say, "New street and landscape improvements, lighting, street furniture and signs should be compatible with the character of the historic district". The plan retains the historic urban pattern of this block. Reconstruction plans for the streetscape elements will be introduced with more developed plans and should also enhance and reinforce the historic character.
17. **74.90(f)(7) & (b)(4) Views and vistas.** The applicants have submitted some photo simulations illustrating how this new building will fit into the context of the neighborhood, but the scale appears to be inaccurate. The proposed construction result in the loss of some views and vistas of the river valley and the downtown skyline. More views simulating how the project would relate to neighboring buildings behind it and across streets from it would help the HPC in understanding the project in its context.

**G. ATTACHMENTS:**

1. HPC Design Review Application
2. Applicant Memo
3. Site Plans, Floor Plans, and Elevations
4. Street View Images
5. HPC Draft Minutes – May 8, 2014