

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT



Planning and Zoning
Division
Department of Community
Development

Petition 470-07-36 Walker Bank Building
Major Alterations to a Landmark Site for an ATM
Facility and Master Sign Plan
175 South Main Street
February 6, 2008

Applicant:

Casey McDonough

Staff:

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Tax ID:

16-06-105-023

Current Zone:

D-1 (Central Business District)

Council District:

District Four, Luke Garrott

Acreage:

.32 acres

Current Use:

office

**Applicable City Code Land
Use Regulations:**

- Section 21A.34.020

Attachments:

- A. Application
- B. Documentation
- C. Photographs

REQUEST

The applicant, Casey McDonough of CRSA, requests approval to modify a storefront to accommodate a night deposit box and ATM facility and approval of a master sign plan for the Walker Bank Building landmark site located at 175 South Main Street.

PUBLIC NOTICE

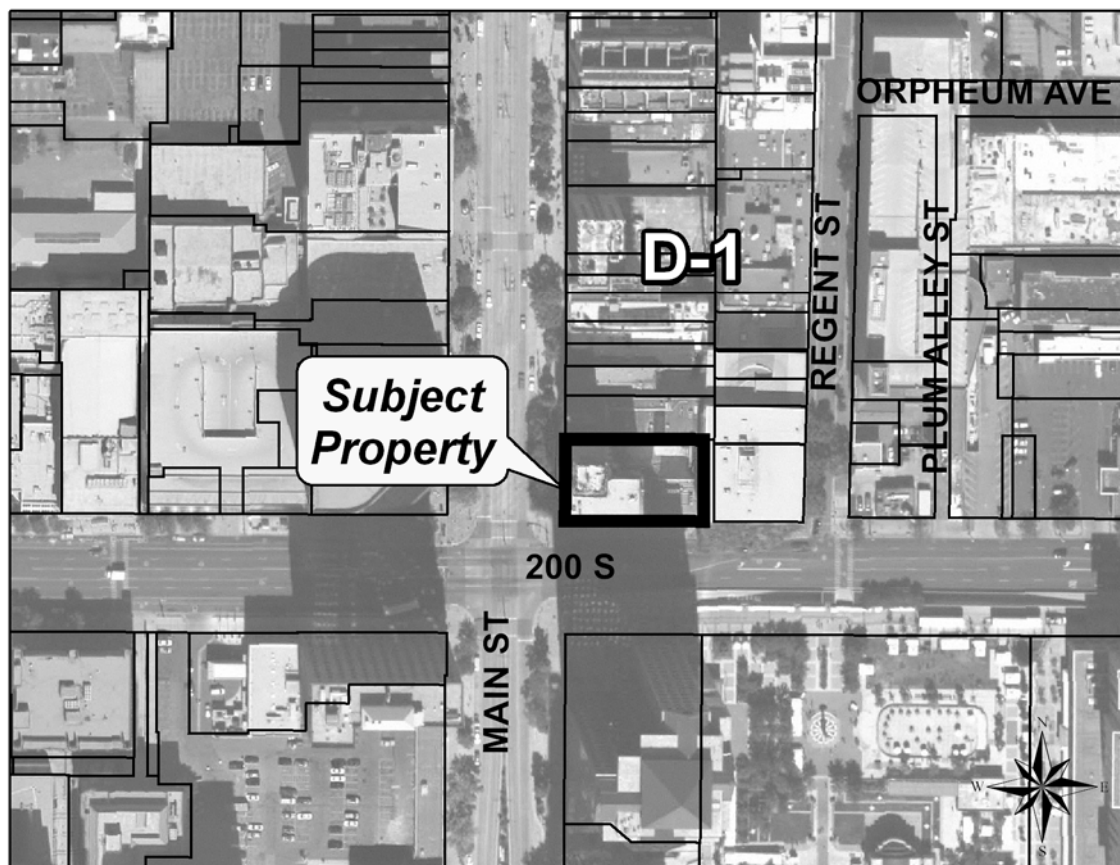
Public notice was mailed on January 22, 2008 to all property owners within eight-five feet (85') of the subject property which satisfies the fourteen (14) day notification requirement of the Zoning Ordinance. Notice was also sent to interested parties on the Historic Landmark Commission's e-mail listserve and posted on the Planning Division's Web site. Community Council review is not required by the City Code for permitted uses relating to a landmark site.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Based upon the comments, analysis and findings of fact noted in this staff report, Planning Staff recommends the Historic Landmark Commission approve the application requesting approval to modify the storefront to accommodate a night deposit box and ATM facility. Furthermore, staff finds that the proposed master sign plan does not comply with the City's historic preservation standards as stated below and is inconsistent with the architectural character of the historic building. Therefore, staff recommends the following:

1. The Historic Landmark Commission continues consideration of the request for further review of the master sign plan and refers the applicant to meet with the Architectural Committee to address the following; locations for tenant signage, sign types, letter size, window signs and Illumination. The master sign plan would come back to the full Commission for final approval.

VICINITY MAP



BACKGROUND

On April 3, 2007, the City Council passed an ordinance designating the Walker Bank Building as a landmark site to be included in the Salt Lake City Register of Cultural Resources. The applicant's purpose in proposing the zoning map amendment was a request for additional signage that would restore the historic weather beacon to the top of the building. Work to rebuild the sign in its historic configuration, and install a new frame tower on which to attach individual neon letters spelling out "Walker" on each of the four sides is underway. The building is also undergoing rehabilitation work for federal tax credits. The majority of the work is to the interior areas of the building. Exterior work includes removal of the wrap-around canopy from the 1956 remodel and construction of a small canopy over the main entrance.

As discussed in the attached nomination form, the Walker Bank Building is architecturally significant as an example of a Chicago School skyscraper. The steel frame building is organized using the basic tripartite formula, with a stack of office floors above a street level made up of public spaces such as stores, offices, or banking rooms visible through large windows and an elaborate cornice. Although the street level has experienced the typical alterations made to historic commercial buildings over the years, the building retains much of its original detailing and character. Originally, the ground level had multiple bays and was asymmetrical in design. The finely detailed main entrance was centrally located. A side door flanked by single-story fluted Doric columns to the north of the main entrance provided access to the bank. A 1931 remodel added a metal storefront to this part of the front façade. The south corner of the building housed a drug

store with its entrance located in the bay furthest to the south. The name of the building and the name of the bank were engraved into the granite above their respective entrances. Only the main entrance at the center of the building remains. According to the nomination form, the last changes to the building were undertaken c. 1956. This remodel included alterations to the main entrance, removing the two-story classical features and adding a metal canopy that wrapped around both street facades. The original window configuration also has been altered. The windows were replaced with large plate-glass windows while maintaining the original bay openings.

PROPOSAL

Major Alterations

Far West Bank, the tenant of the south corner of the building, would like to install an ATM facility and is proposing to construct a new vestibule in the bay to the south of the main entrance. The proposed all-glass entry would match the new entrance located in the bay to the north of the main entrance. This entrance was permitted prior to the landmark site designation. The ATM and night deposit box would be placed within a new wall set back and parallel to the storefront.

Master Sign Plan

Completed in 1912, the Walker Bank Building has been historically occupied with small commercial businesses and banking uses on the street level. The nomination to the National Register of Historic Places includes documentation that shows historically, there was a variety of signage on the building. Additionally, the applicant has included photographs of historic signage on this building as well as current signage on other downtown buildings. The applicant asserts that the proposed signs follow historic placement antecedents for this building and use materials similar to those that are used today. It is important to note that the downtown signage examples provided by the applicant are not located on properties regulated by Section 21A.34.020 of the Zoning Ordinance. In other words, the signage is not on a building located within a locally-designated historic district or individually listed as a landmark site.

The Commission's recommendation to the Board of Adjustment to approve a special exception to reconstruct the historic roof sign required that the property owner provide a comprehensive signage plan before receiving approval of any further application for signage on the building. The applicant proposes a sign package included as Attachment B of this staff report that includes the following:

1. Location

- A sign consisting of eight-foot neon letters on the perimeter of the three-story recessed tower located on top of the building. "Walker" and "Center" are spelled out on alternating sides of the tower. The neon lights of the letters change to indicate the weather conditions: blue for clear skies, flashing blue for cloudy skies, red for rain, and flashing red for snow.
- A "business sign" high and wide on both sides of the southwest corner of the building identifying the Far West Bank tenant location.
- Two other signs are proposed as part of the submittal packet for the two northern bays of the principal façade.

2. Sign type

- White vinyl faced, internally illuminated letters would be mounted on a raceway attached to the building. Such signs are considered "flat signs."

STAFF ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The Historic Landmark Commission should make findings in this case based upon Section 21A.34.020(G): *Standards for Certificate of Appropriateness for Alteration of a Landmark Site or Contributing Structure*, of the City Zoning Ordinance.

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be used for a purpose that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment;

Analysis: No changes are proposed in the use of the building for office/commercial purposes.

Finding: The project is consistent with this standard.

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;

Analysis: The street-level part of a building is quite often the most important architectural feature of many historic commercial buildings. Its functional and architectural elements are important in defining the overall historic character of a property. In this case, the street level of the building has experienced the typical alterations made to similar structures over time. In the process, this part of the building has been modernized while changing or removing distinguishing architectural features. Rather than restoring the building to its original appearance, the applicant has decided to keep the later alterations and is proposing changes to the principal façade that would reflect the existing modern design elements.

Finding: The application meets this standard, as the applicant is not proposing to remove significant or unique historic materials that characterize the property or alter historic features beyond those changed previously. The original or significant building materials no longer exist. The contemporary design retains the commercial quality of the building while accommodating current tenant needs.

3. All sites, structures and objects shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create a false sense of history or architecture are not allowed;

Analysis: The proposed work has been designed to be compatible with the existing contemporary architectural features comprising the street-level part of the building. Thus, the alterations will be easily distinguishable from the historic building.

Finding: The proposed alterations comply with this standard to the extent that their application would not create a false sense of history. The proposed design, detailing and choice of materials are clearly a contemporary design solution that is similar in character to the rest of the principal façade on the street level.

4. Alterations or additions that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved;

Analysis: Although the proposed project would change earlier alterations, this approach has been approved by the Historic Landmark Commission in the past, in cases where the design of an alteration is compatible with the historic character of the original building.

Finding: The character-defining elements of the historic building will be retained. The proposed project meets this standard.

5. Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved;

Analysis: Added to an earlier building, the existing window and entrance treatment make a modern statement. They are not character-defining features of this early twentieth century property, but a simplified design that does not draw attention away from the historic building and its unique detailing.

Finding: The application complies with this standard in that alterations to insignificant features would not affect the distinctive finishes or construction techniques that characterize this historic property.

6. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced wherever feasible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, texture and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historic, physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other structures or objects;

Analysis: No repair or replacement of original materials is proposed as part of this project. Much of the historic fabric of the street level façade has been removed during earlier remodeling. The Historic Landmark Commission and staff have not made it a practice to require property owners to return a property to an earlier appearance if a material or feature was removed or obscured. In this case, the applicant is proposing a new entrance with a contemporary design which is compatible with the existing architectural features of the street-level façade in terms of scale, design, materials and texture.

Finding: Since this is a request to alter previous remodeling work, the character-defining elements of the historic building as seen from the street will not be negatively affected. The proposed project complies with this standard.

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;

Analysis: No chemical or physical treatments are proposed as part of this request.

Finding: This standard is not an issue for the project.

8. Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant cultural, historical, architectural or archaeological material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property, neighborhood or environment;

Analysis: The new entrance has been designed to be compatible with the character of the existing street-level facade and would not remove historically significant features. If original or significant features no longer exist, it may be acceptable to undertake a contemporary design which is compatible with the rest of the building in scale, design, materials, color and texture. The design guidelines offer the following guidance for the treatment of architectural features.

Standards for Architectural Details

6.2 If replacement is necessary, design the new element using accurate information about original features. The design should be substantiated by physical or pictorial evidence. One of the best sources for historic photographs is Salt Lake County Records Management, which maintains early tax photographs for thousands of buildings. In historic districts, intact structures of similar age may offer clues about the appearance of specific architectural details or features.

6.3 Develop a new design for the replacement feature that is a simplified interpretation when the original element is missing and cannot be documented. The new element should relate to comparable features in general size, shape, scale and finish. Such a replacement should be identifiable

Finding: The application for a new entrance within an existing bay does not destroy significant cultural, historical, architectural or archaeological material. Thus, the proposed contemporary design meets this standard.

9. Additions or alterations to structures and objects shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be

unimpaired. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible in massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment;

Analysis: The character-defining features of the street-level façade of this building have undergone several changes over time. Because the principal facade was modernized at a later date, these alterations are easily distinguished from the historic character of the building. The new work is designed to be compatible with the contemporary features of the building and does not compete with its historic character.

Finding: The proposed new entrance is consistent with this standard as it will be located within an existing bay and respects the historic character of the overall building. Removing the proposed entrance in the future would not compromise the form and integrity of the existing structure, but may enhance its character if restored to its original appearance.

10. Certain building materials are prohibited including the following:

- a. Vinyl or aluminum cladding when applied directly to an original or historic material, and*
- b. Any other imitation siding material designed to look like wood siding but fabricated from an imitation material or materials;*

Analysis: No prohibited building materials are proposed.

Finding: This standard does not apply to this project.

11. Any new sign and any change in the appearance of any existing sign located on a landmark site or within the H historic preservation overlay district, which is visible from any public way or open space shall be consistent with the historic character of the landmark site or H historic preservation overlay district and shall comply with the standards outlined in Part IV, Chapter 21A.46, Signs;

In 1984, the Historic Landmark Commission adopted a signage policy that provides three (3) criteria for determining whether a sign is consistent with the historic character of a building or historic district. The standards are addressed below with an analysis and finding for each standard.

- 1. A sign is an integral part of the building façade in both design and function and should complement the building in terms of location, size, illumination, style and color. The Historic Landmark Commission considers the entire principal façade as the “sign” (i.e. in context). Signs should relate to the architecture of the building and not have a negative impact on neighboring properties and the streetscape.**

Analysis: Downtown commercial buildings were typically designed with areas intended for signage, such as a sign band or cornice on the front façade above an entrance. These areas should be considered first when locating new signage on an historic building. It is also important that a sign does not obscure details of the building, particularly historic features. In this way, the entire façade functions as a whole, within which the signage should fit. Lighting should also be considered as an integral component of the sign design and overall façade composition. The Commission and staff have typically approved either non-illuminated or indirectly illuminated signage proposals. Using a holistic approach, the character of the building should be enhanced. Since the internally-illuminated new tenant signage proposal fails to fit within the rhythm of the storefront bays and will cover historic architectural features, staff finds the proposed master sign plan out-of-character with the historic detailing of the building in terms of illumination, location, and style.

Finding: The proposed contemporary design proposal fails to complement the historic building in terms of location, size, illumination, and style. Thus, the proposed master sign plan is inconsistent with this policy and would have a negative impact on the historic character of the building.

2. In commercial areas of historic districts (such as South Temple), the Historic Landmark Commission encourages the use of low-key, sophisticated signage such as brass lettering, painted signs in an historical character etc. The Historic Landmark Commission encourages the spot-lighting of buildings rather than plastic and animated signs are discouraged. Indirect lighting is preferred.

Analysis: The applicant is proposing a sign which is internally-illuminated with a plastic face. This type of signage has been determined to be unsympathetic to the character of historic buildings and most areas of the historic districts as it appears too modern.

Finding: The proposed type of signage is contrary to this policy.

3. The Historic Landmark Commission considers the request for a sign in the context of the owner's comprehensive (total) signage plan for the building. For office/commercial uses, only one building identification sign will be approved by the Historic Landmark Commission. Tenants should be identified in an interior building directory.

Analysis: A signage master plan for a building is desirable in order to provide for consistent review of any future signage proposals, and to assist potential tenants in determining restrictions and expectations of the Historic Landmark Commission. The Commission has generally limited the signage allowed at city landmark sites such as Trolley Square, the New Grand Hotel and the Union Pacific Depot, and has emphasized that the architecture of the historic buildings should not be overshadowed by signage. Since the proposed plan does not meet the City's signage criteria as discussed above, staff recommends that the applicant work with the Architectural Committee to develop a master sign plan for this building that addresses the following:

- acceptable locations for tenant signage,
- acceptable sign types,
- letter size,
- window signs and
- illumination.

Finding: The proposed master sign plan is not in keeping with the Historic Landmark Commission Policy Document.

12. Additional design standards adopted by the historic landmark commission and city council.

Analysis: The Historic Landmark Commission's *Design Guidelines for Residential Historic Districts in Salt Lake City* is applicable in this case.

Finding: The request is inconsistent with Standard 11 as noted above and not supported by the Historic Landmark Commission Policy Document relating to signage.

Attachment A Application

Attachment B Documentation

Attachments C Photographs