

DATE: November 1, 2006

TO: Salt Lake City Planning Commission

FROM: Janice Lew, Principal Planner

RE: STAFF REPORT FOR THE NOVEMBER 8, 2006 MEETING

CASE NUMBER: Zoning Map Amendment – 400-06-20

APPLICANT/STATUS: Vectra Management Group, Property owner

REQUESTED ACTION: The applicant requests the Planning Commission transmit a favorable recommendation to the City Council to place the Walker Bank Building on the Salt Lake City Register of Cultural Resources as a Landmark Site. The City Council is the approval body for zoning map amendments.

PROJECT LOCATION: 175 South Main Street – 16-06-105-023

PROJECT/PROPERTY SIZE: .32 Acres

COUNCIL DISTRICT: District 4, Council Member Nancy Saxton

SURROUNDING ZONING

DISTRICTS: North – Central Business District (D-1)
South – Central Business District (D-1)
East – Central Business District (D-1)
West – Central Business District (D-1)

SURROUNDING LAND

USES: North – Mixed use
South – Office
East – Parking structure
West – Office

PROPOSED USE(S): The subject site currently accommodates office uses.

APPLICABLE LAND USE REGULATIONS:

The proposed Landmark Site designation and zoning map amendment are subject to Salt Lake City Code, Chapter 21A.50 – Amendments and Special Approvals.

MASTER PLAN SPECIFICATIONS:

The adopted land use policy document that guides development in this area is the Downtown Plan (1995). A description of the pertinent information in this document is provided below under the Analysis and Findings section of this staff report.

SUBJECT PROPERTY HISTORY:

Upon its completion in 1912, the Walker Bank Building was the tallest building in Salt Lake City and is historically significant for its association with the growth and progress of downtown Salt Lake City in the early twentieth century. The building is physical evidence of the important contributions made by the Walker brothers to the banking and mercantile history of Utah. The Walker Bank Building is also 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 ground-floor level with large windows and elaborate terminating cornice, and retains much of its original detailing and character.

The three-story recessed tower of the Walker Bank has historically been used for the purpose of signage, going through three configurations prior to the current one. The most well known of the sign configurations came in the early 1950's. A ninety foot (90') radio tower was erected on top of the recessed tower in 1947 for use by the KDYL radio and television station, the first television station in Utah. After a few years the station moved the television transmitters, but the tower remained and letters to spell out "Walker" were hung on each of the four sides. "Bank" was attached to the perimeter of the building's three-story tower. It was this configuration that was identified as a weather beacon because it changed color to reflect weather conditions. When the building was sold in 1983 and its use as a bank ended, the radio tower and sign were removed.

The building was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is currently undergoing rehabilitation for federal tax credits. The majority of the proposed work is to 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 entry. In addition, cleaning will be done on the exterior granite and terra cotta on the first three stories.

ACCESS:

The building is accessible from Main Street.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The applicant is pursuing listing on the Salt Lake City Register of Cultural Resources as a Landmark Site concurrently with a request for additional signage. The applicant proposes to rebuild the Walker Bank signage in its historic configuration, and install a new sixty-four foot (64') frame tower on which to attach individual neon letters spelling out "Walker" on each of the four sides. As outlined in Section 21A.46.070(J)(8) of the Zoning Ordinance, the height of the sign of a roof sign cannot exceed twenty percent (20%) of the height of the building or ten feet (10'), whichever is less. Landmark Site designation provides the means to exceed the general sign standards of the ordinance

through review and approval by the Board of Adjustment with a positive recommendation from the Historic Landmark Commission. At their October 16, 2006 meeting, the Board of Adjustment approved a special exception to rebuild the Walker Bank signage.

COMMENTS, ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

1. COMMENTS

The comments received from pertinent City Departments/Divisions are attached to this staff report as Exhibit 2. The following is a summary of the comments and concerns received:

- a) Public Utilities Division: The division did not respond to the request for comments.
- b) Division of Transportation: The division indicated that there are no impacts to the public transportation corridors from this request.
- c) Salt Lake City Engineering: City Engineering has no comments on this request.
- d) Fire: The Fire Department did not respond to the request for comments.
- e) Building Services: Building Services did not respond to the request for comments.
- f) Community Council: Planning Staff held an Open House for the Community Council and interested parties on August 21, 2006. Planning Staff did not receive any public input regarding the request.

2. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

The applicant is requesting consideration by the City to place the Walker Bank Building on the Salt Lake City Register of Cultural Resources as a Landmark Site. Adding a site to the Register is a zoning map amendment under the purview of the City Council. The Zoning Ordinance requires a recommendation by the Historic Landmark Commission, and thus a request must meet the standards listed in Section 21A.34.020(C)(2) Criteria for Selection of An H Historic Preservation Overlay District or Landmark Site. A request is then submitted to the Planning Commission for consideration and recommendation to the City Council.

Historic Landmark Commission Review

On October 4, 2006, the Historic Landmark Commission reviewed the request to include the Walker Bank Building on the Salt Lake City Register of Cultural Resources as a Landmark Site, and voted to forward a positive recommendation to the Planning Commission. The Commission reviewed the following criteria.

Section 21A.34.020(C)(2) Criteria for the Selection of an H Historic Preservation Overlay District or Landmark Site specifies the criteria under which Landmark Sites shall be evaluated. The ordinance cites three criteria for selection of a Landmark Site: historical or architectural significance, physical integrity and the age of the site. The

reference to this section of the Zoning Ordinance is reinforced in the definition of a Landmark Site in Section 21A.34.020(B)(4):

A landmark site is any site included on the Salt Lake City Register of Cultural Resources that meets the criteria outlined in subsection C2 of this section. Such sites are of exceptional importance to the city, state, region or nation and impart high artistic, historic or cultural values. A landmark site clearly conveys a sense of time and place and enables the public to interpret the historic character of the site.

The specific language for the selection of a Landmark Site outlined in Section 21A.34.020(C)(2) is as follows:

The historic landmark commission shall evaluate each parcel of property within a proposed H historic preservation overlay district or the parcel of property associated with a landmark site. Individual parcels within a proposed district, the district as a whole, and landmark sites shall be evaluated according to the following:

- a. Significance in a local, regional, state or national history, architecture, engineering or culture, associated with at least one of the following;
 - i. Events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of history, or
 - ii. Lives of persons significant in the history of the city, region, state of Utah, or nation or
 - iii. The distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or the work of a notable architect or master craftsman, or
 - iv. Information important in the understanding of the prehistory or history of Salt Lake City.
- b. Physical integrity in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association as defined by the National Park Service for the National Register of Historic Places;
- c. The age of the site. Sites must be at least fifty years old, or have achieved significance within the past fifty years if the properties are of exceptional importance.

Zoning Map Amendment for Landmark Site Designation

The City Council has final decision authority with respect to text or zoning map amendments. Chapter 21A.50 of the Salt Lake City Code, entitled “Amendments and Special Approvals” addresses changes to the text of the zoning code and associated maps. Section 21A.50.050 outlines standards the City Council should consider when making a decision regarding a rezone. The standards for general amendments are as follows:

- A. Whether the proposed amendment is consistent with the purposes, goals, objectives, and policies of the adopted general plan of Salt Lake City.

Discussion: The Downtown Plan recognizes the benefits of preserving historically significant buildings and districts while accommodating new development and renovation that is sensitive to Downtown’s existing character. The proposed zoning

map amendment supports the specific physical qualities and historical development patterns that establish Downtown Salt Lake's unique urban character.

Finding: The proposed zoning map amendment is supported by policy elements of the Downtown Plan.

B. Whether the proposed amendment is harmonious with the overall character of existing development in the immediate vicinity of the subject property.

Discussion: Located on Main Street, in the core of downtown Salt Lake City, the building occupies the northeast corner of Main Street and 200 Street. Constructed for the Walker Brothers Bank in 1911-1912, the building is significant because of its association with early twentieth century development of Salt Lake City's downtown business district. As Salt Lake City became a transportation hub, commerce became important and business grew along the Main Street corridor. The building is associated with the Walker brothers, prominent businessmen whose merchandising and banking activities contributed to Salt Lake City's transformation from an agrarian landscape to an urbanized American city. Downtown is a showplace for Utah's architectural heritage including sites of exceptional importance to the city. Designation of a property on the Salt Lake City Register of Cultural Resources places the property under the purview of the Historic Landmark Commission. Property owners are required to adhere to the supplemental regulations of the H Historic Preservation Overlay District in addition to underlying zoning district regulations.

Finding: The Walker Bank Building is harmonious with the overall character of existing development in the immediate vicinity of the subject property. Listing on the Salt Lake City Register of Cultural Resources would be a step toward ensuring its preservation.

C. The extent to which the proposed amendment will adversely affect adjacent properties.

Discussion: Historic preservation is an integral element of creating livable, vibrant and unique neighborhoods within the city. The zoning ordinance lists several objectives that the city seeks to achieve regarding the H Historic Preservation Overlay District. These objectives include:

- Provide the means to protect and preserve areas of the city and individual structures and sites having historic, architectural or cultural significance.
- Abate the destruction and demolition of historic structures.
- Protect and enhance the attraction of the city's historic landmarks and districts for tourists and visitors.
- Foster economic development consistent with historic preservation.

Thus, the overlay district is intended to contribute to the welfare and prosperity of the people of Salt Lake City.

Finding: The proposed zoning map amendment will have a positive impact on surrounding properties.

D. Whether the proposed amendment is consistent with the provisions of any applicable overlay zoning district which may impose additional standards.

Discussion: Listing the Walker Bank Building on the Salt Lake City Register of Cultural Resources requires the Historic Landmark Commission to evaluate the historical or architectural significance, physical integrity and the age of the site. On October 4, 2006, the Historic Landmark Commission found that the subject site met these criteria and recommended listing the building. Landmark Site designation is intended to impose supplemental standards in addition to the underlying zoning district regulations.

Finding: The proposed zoning map amendment meets this standard.

E. The adequacy of public facilities and services intended to serve the subject property, including but not limited to roadways, parks and recreational facilities, police and fire protection, schools, storm water drainage systems, water supplies and wastewater and refuse collection.

Discussion: The existing building is provided with all municipal utility services.

Finding: Existing or proposed utility services will be adequate for the development and designed in a manner that will not have an adverse impact on adjacent land uses or resources.

RECOMMENDATION:

Based upon the comments, analysis and findings in this report and a positive recommendation submitted by the Historic Landmark Commission, Planning Staff concludes that the Walker Bank Building exhibits sufficient historic and architectural significance, and physical integrity to merit listing on the Salt Lake City Register of Cultural Resources. Furthermore, the site clearly conveys a sense of time and place and enables the public to interpret the historic character of the site. As such the site is of exceptional importance to the city, state, region and nation and imparts high artistic, historic and cultural values. Therefore, Planning Staff recommends that the Planning Commission forward a favorable recommendation to the City Council to designate the property located at 175 South Main Street as a Landmark Site on the Salt Lake City Register of Cultural Resources and amend the Zoning Map accordingly.

Janice Lew
Principal Planner
November 1, 2006