

**Community Planning & Economic Development
Planning Division**
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City of Minneapolis
*Department of Community Planning
& Economic Development - CPED*

MEMORANDUM

TO: Heritage Preservation Commission
FROM: John Smoley
DATE: August 31, 2010
RE: Conceptual Review, American Swedish Institute interior, site, and building changes



Figure 1. 2600 Park Avenue under construction, 1907, photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society



Figure 2. 2600 Park Avenue, 2010, photo courtesy of Applicant

CLASSIFICATION:	
Individual Landmark	Swan Turnblad Residence
Period of Significance	1903-1929
Criteria of significance	Architecture; significant persons; cultural history
Date of local designation	July 26, 1974
Applicable Design Guidelines	<i>Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties</i>

PROPERTY INFORMATION	
Current name	American Swedish Institute
Historic Name	Swan Turnblad Residence
Current Address	2600 Park Avenue
Historic Address	2600 Park Avenue
Original Construction Date	1903-1910
Original Contractor	Numerous
Original Architect	Boehme and Cordella
Historic Use	Single Family Residence
Current Use	Institutional
Proposed Use	Institutional

Background:

The subject property is a residence turned house museum constructed between 1903 and 1910 for Swan J. Turnblad. A Swedish-American immigrant, Turnblad moved to Minnesota when he was a young boy. He made his fortune by acquiring a floundering Swedish-American newspaper called the *Svenska Amerikanska Posten* and transforming it into one of the most widely circulated Swedish-American newspapers in the United States. As a tribute to his success, Turnblad commissioned Minneapolis architects Boehme and Cordella to design a stylish Chateau estate on Park Avenue. The 33-room house cost nearly \$1,500,000 to construct and took seven years to complete. The three-story mansion, built of Bedford limestone, is designed in the Chateausque (French Chateau) style. Other notable features of the property include a massive porte-cochere with a solarium above, a two-story carriage house, and a decorative stone and iron fence that surround the property.

In 1929, just nineteen years after the house was completed, Turnblad donated the house to the Swedish American Institute. The Institute has used the mansion and carriage house as a house museum ever since, preserving the mansion and sensitively altering it when institutional needs changed. In 1974 the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission designated the mansion as its first Landmark. In 1983 the Institute added a sizeable, half-story (ground floor-basement) addition on the western side of the residence, connecting the carriage house to the mansion. In 2006 the Institute's restoration of the solarium on the southern side of the property won a Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Award. With success comes visitors. Those visitors have strained the fabric of the historic mansion, and the Institute seeks to alter the property to ease the strain on the historic residence and improve access to both the mansion and site.

Summary of Applicant's Proposal:

On behalf of the American Swedish Institute, Michael Bjornberg of HGA, Inc. seeks a conceptual review for plans to conduct the following work at 2600 Park Avenue, the Swan Turnblad Residence, a Landmark:

1. Install a three-story, five-stop elevator addition on the western side of the mansion, to include the following tasks:
 - a. Remove, and store in the attic onsite, downspouts and wood windows;
 - b. Remove exterior stone walls and detailing;
2. Install a two-story cultural center addition on the southern side of the mansion, to include the following tasks;
 - a. Enclose the outdoor space between the carriage house and mansion;
 - b. Remove and reinstall a stone horse's head sculpture on the carriage house;
 - c. Remove and relocate a previously relocated exterior posten window to the inside of the mansion;
3. Make interior changes to the mansion to restore the mansion back to a house museum, to include the following tasks;
 - a. Relocate the main entrance;
 - b. Remove the museum retail store;
 - c. Remove the café;
 - d. Reconfigure walls on the lower level to:
 - i. Create new education spaces;
 - ii. Create secure collection storage areas;
 - iii. Alter circulation patterns;
 - e. Restore the lower level gallery ceiling;
 - f. Remove the existing, non-original object conveying system;
 - g. Replace the two-stop elevator;
4. Make site changes;
 - a. Preserve the 26th Street East and Park Avenue curb cuts;
 - b. Remove iron gates and widen the southern wall opening to accommodate the cultural center addition using salvaged stone to cap and restore cut wall ends;
 - c. Remove a portion of the southern wall to provide access to the veranda using salvaged stone to cap and restore cut wall ends;
 - d. Remove a non-original steel fence to connect the gardens;
 - e. Raise the elevation of the courtyard between the mansion and proposed cultural center addition to match the existing Park Avenue garden and to create a seamless and accessible transition between the new and old spaces;
 - f. Add a 3' high stacked blue stone retaining wall along Park Avenue to contain this raised courtyard area with a 6' fence atop this, creating a fence raised 9' above the sidewalk;
 - g. Install a transformer with a fenced enclosure;
 - h. Install bicycle racks;
 - i. Install a stairway and handrail;
 - j. Install a new driveway;
 - k. Install a pedestrian curb ramp;
 - l. Relocate an existing bike rack;
 - m. Make repairs to existing lot conditions;
 - n. Construct a loading dock;
 - o. Install signs;
 - p. Install brick pavers and other pedestrian paths;

- q. Install stone stair and stoop;
- r. Install a bench;
- s. Install a firepit;
- t. Install lights;
- u. Install a flagpole;
- v. Install a drain;
- w. Install a water feature;
- x. Install a custom wood enclosure; and
- y. Demolish or relocate the building at 2620 Park Avenue.

Staff Analysis

As with many Landmarks, the Heritage Preservation Commission has not adopted local guidelines for the Swan Turnblad Residence. In such instances, staff relies upon *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* to recommend appropriate treatments. The Applicant is conducting a rehabilitation of the subject property. There are ten standards for rehabilitation:

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

A complete analysis of every proposed change is neither possible nor appropriate at this time, as a) the Applicant has asked for a review of the proposed concept, not details, from the Heritage Preservation Commission and b) staff has not received a complete Certificate of Appropriateness application. Conceptually, staff can understand the need for improved accessible entrances; additional public spaces; reconfigurations of secondary interior spaces; and expanded parking and site amenities (to include the demolition of one residence). Based upon the information provided, the application appears to comply with nine of ten of the rehabilitation standards. Staff does, however, have conceptual concerns related to standard #9.

Rehabilitation standard #9 of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* states that new additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment. Staff's compatibility analysis follows this format, and includes supplementary guidance published by the National Park Service (attached, as discussed in last section).

Destruction of Spatial Relationships

The two additions are proposed to be placed on the eastern and southern sides of the mansion: the two least-visible sides of the mansion. But the size of the additions and lack of screening vegetation around the cultural center's southern, eastern, and western sides make both additions highly visible from the public right of way (see pages 129-136). The cultural center addition attaches to the historic mansion, which includes a carriage house, through a 1983 addition on the first level of the historic mansion. The elevator addition's footprint occurs on this same 1983 addition. While these locations have obviously been deemed appropriate sites for past additions, the 1983 addition was one-story in size and heavily screened by vegetation on the northern and western sides and by the carriage house and mansion on the eastern, western, and southern sides of the property, making it very difficult to see from the public right of way (see pages 69-73). The elevator additions proposed 49 foot height and the cultural center's proposed 44 foot height will make the elevator addition highly visible from all

but the eastern side of the property and the cultural center addition highly visible from all but the northern side of the lot (see pages 68-78 and 88-98).

Destruction of Historic Materials and Features

The proposal minimizes destruction of historic materials and features. Some historic materials, such as a carved stone horse's head, will be moved from this newly created interior space to bring them back to the outside of the building (see pages 70-74, 84-90, 99, and 111). One previously relocated exterior posten window will be relocated to an unspecified location inside of the mansion. Where it does convert exterior to interior spaces, the addition touches the mansion very lightly, maintaining the existing wall cladding and using thermal seals in mortar joints to attach proposed glass walls to historic masonry walls. The biggest loss of historic materials will occur where the elevator addition enters the historic mansion on three levels, but the Applicant will minimize loss of historic materials by a) demolishing only a six-foot wide wall section and b) removing and storing affected windows, downspouts, and stone blocks for future use (see page 99). These treatments will make reversing the proposed changes much easier than other possible addition connections, should the Institute seek to reverse these changes in the future.

Differentiating the New Work From the Old

The proposal very clearly differentiates the new work from the old. There is arguably no greater transition in architectural practice than the movement away from Victorian styles to Modern designs. The historic mansion is designed in the highly decorative Chateausque (French Chateau) style. The proposed additions are designed in the minimalist Swedish Modern style. Rather than subordinating itself to the historic construction with a complementary design, the bold design of the large additions appear to rival the mansion.

Compatibility with Historic Materials

The additions appear to use materials complementary to the mansion. Slate walls on the additions complement the historic slate roof of the mansion (see pages 56, 74, 78, 88-98). Stucco, which clads the remainder of the additions walls, complements the stone walls of the mansion (see pages 56, 74, 78, 88-98) without creating a false sense of history by utilizing matching stone.

Compatibility with Historic Features

While the shed and gabled roofs both utilize 45 degree angles, their similarities end there. The mansion's slate roof is a complex arrangement of hips, gables, towers, and tall chimneys decorated with sculptured stone, toothed cornices, and thin parapets, some with castellations (see pages 56, 68-74, and 99). The cultural center and elevator addition rely upon unadorned flat roofs, though the cultural center also utilizes shed roof forms in dormer-style projections and a large section designed to prominently display planted vegetation (see pages 71-73 and 78). The cultural center also includes a rooftop deck and fence: features with no parallel on the

historic mansion (see pages 94 and 124-125). Walls on the additions are unadorned, whereas walls on the historic mansion bear highly decorative features, to include gargoyles, lion-faced gutter ends, decorative copper downspouts, detailed carvings, and other elaborate features (see pages 55-56, 83-87, 78, and 99). Fenestration on the additions appears fixed and ranges from single-story, aluminum frame, glass curtain walls to multi-story aluminum frame windows on unadorned walls (see pages 74, 77-78, and 94-98). Fenestration on the historic mansion consists of recessed, multi-light, wood framed windows in a variety of shapes and sizes, often bearing hoods and projecting stone sills (see pages 68, 85-87, and 99). The proposed cultural center addition utilizes unadorned shed roofed projections whose massive single windows often extend nearly to the ground (see pages 74, 77-78, and 94-98). The historic mansion utilizes multi-light gabled dormers decorated with parapets (see pages 68, 85-87, and 99).

Compatibility with Historic Size

The historic mansion and carriage house appear subordinate to the proposed additions, especially when considered in conjunction with past additions. The footprint of the additions are greater than the footprint of the historic mansion, carriage house, and 1983 addition and nearly one and one-half times the size of the footprint of the historic mansion and carriage house. The cultural center addition appears to possess more floor area than the historic mansion, carriage house, and 1983 addition combined (see pages 72, 114-115, 118-119, 122-123, and 131).

In terms of height, the additions do not appear to rival the historic construction so distinctly. The cultural center addition is two stories high. The historic mansion is two and one half stories, and the historic carriage house is one and one-half stories. The historic mansion's main roof is fifty-seven feet high. The cultural center's main roof is forty-six feet high and the elevator addition's main roof is forty-nine feet high (see pages 88 and 94). Yet even these heights would make new construction visible from all four public streets surrounding the building. Currently, new construction (the 1983 addition and existing elevators inside the building) is not highly visible from any of the four streets surrounding the mansion due to vegetation, walls, and screening from the historic construction (see pages 56, 132, and 138).

Compatibility with Historic Scale

The scale of existing and proposed construction is quite similar, in terms of height. The cultural center utilizes sixteen-foot high floors and the historic mansion utilizes roughly fourteen foot high floors (see pages 88-90, 79-82, 94, and 98).

Compatibility with Historic Proportion

In terms of proportion, the distinction is greater. The use of smaller fenestration on the mansion and carriage house give the historic construction a cozier feel than the additions' high glass curtain walls that expose entire floors or, in the case of the elevator addition, a portion of several floors. Tall fixed windows, some of which project above the main roof line in monitor-

style projections, create the impression of far larger spaces in the proposed construction than inside the historic mansion and carriage house.

Compatibility with Historic Massing

The new construction appears to employ distinctly different massing than the historic construction. The historic mansion uses complex forms to mask the simple mass of the structure. The cultural center addition uses simple forms to mask the complex massing of the structure, which includes a long, narrow, glass walkway with a funnel-like end and an offset, addition-like, single-story wing on the proposed cultural center's northeastern corner (see pages 69-73).

Published Examples

While determinations of compatibility between additions and historic buildings requires a decent degree of subjectivity, published preservation guidance (attached) from the National Park Service highlights staff's concerns. It also highlights the need to explore options for modifying interior, secondary areas before constructing additions.

ITS #10 (*Exterior Stair/Elevator Tower Additions*) notes that stairway and elevator additions are appropriate when constructing elevators and stairways inside historic buildings would result in the destruction of significant historical fabric.

The Swan Turnblad Residence already has at least two nonhistoric elevators, one of which accesses all floors of the mansion. While the elevator is small in size, it was successfully installed inside the mansion years ago, and the owner is contemplating, but not requesting, removal of this elevator presently, according to the project narrative (see page 12), though plans alternately depict the removal and retention of elevator cabs (see pages 114-116).

The National Park Service's Preservation Brief 18 (*Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings: Identifying and Preserving Character-Defining Elements*, attached) notes that secondary spaces are generally more utilitarian in appearance and size than primary spaces, are less important to the building, and are generally more suited to greater change than primary spaces, which often include character defining interior features. Plans previously submitted by the Applicant indicate secondary, not primary, spaces surrounding the main elevator on all floors of the historic mansion. While installation of a bigger elevator in these spaces would cut down on available space inside the mansion, these secondary spaces are being used for more administrative functions which could be transferred to the new addition, and transfer of these functions to new spaces is one of the primary reasons for constructing the new addition (see pages 5-6). Furthermore, it is not clear that the installation of the elevator in this space would result in greater loss or enclosure of historic building materials than proposed with the current exterior elevator addition (see pages 70-74, 84-90, 99, 111, 170-171). It's worthwhile to note that the current, all-floor elevator has not noticeably modified the exterior of the historic mansion (see pages 87, 99, and 132). The development of newer, smaller technology since the current elevator's installation may enable a bigger elevator to be installed in a similar space

and with less impact upon the exterior of the property than the proposed elevator addition. Of course, structural, programmatic, and other concerns may render this alternative infeasible, but staff feels the option of altering interior spaces to meet accessibility standards should be explored in greater depth at this stage.