

To: Dave Bennett, Public Works Director; Collaborative Design Group (CDG)

From: Heritage Preservation Commission

CC: Jake Reilly, Community Development Director

Date: April 5, 2023

RE: Northfield Transit Hub Concept Plans

The Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) does not have authority over the proposed project if the new pavilion and transit hub does not connect to the Northfield Depot. The HPC was asked to comment on the proposed plans due to the historic nature and the adjacency to the local heritage preservation site the Northfield Depot (Depot). The Depot is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office is not required to review. The following comments are based off the plans presented by John Hickey, CDG at the March 1, 2023 HPC meeting. These comments are based on the Secretary of the Interior Standards and the Northfield Downtown Design Guidelines. While the Depot and proposed transit hub are not within the downtown historic district, many of the guidelines are still applicable.

1917 Original Plans

The 1917 plans for the Northfield Depot included a Phase II for a pavilion and an additional building. The proposed Transit Hub and pavilion concept plans are inspired from, but do not accurately replicate the 1917 original plans. Therefore, Reconstruction is not the appropriate treatment method and the proposed plans more closely align with New Construction adjacent to a historic site.

General Guidelines

The Transit Hub should “be distinct from the old and must not attempt to replicate historic buildings elsewhere on site (Depot) and to avoid creating a false sense of historic development.” As described in the Northfield Downtown Design Guidelines, “The desired effect of new construction in a district is to complement existing structures. It is important that new construction not be allowed to dominate or overpower its more historic neighbors. Its basic design elements (size, mass, material, color) must be compatible with surrounding structures.”

Connection to Northfield Depot

While the pavilion is shown connected to the Depot in the original 1917 plans, the proposed Transit Hub plans do not connect to the Depot. The HPC prefers the separation between the new pavilion and the historic Depot to avoid damaging the Depot during the construction and to avoid a false sense of historic development. The separation will help distinguish the newly constructed pavilion and Transit Hub from the Depot.

Massing, Size, and Scale

The massing, size, and scale of the pavilion and Transit Hub should not dominate or overpower the Depot. The Transit Hub is proposed to be the same height as the Depot and is smaller in size than the Depot. The pavilion is proposed to be shorter than the Depot and Transit Hub. As proposed, the massing of the pavilion and Transit Hub are appropriate and compatible to the Depot.

Materials and Color

As described in the Downtown Design Guidelines, “An infill facade should be composed of materials similar to adjacent facades. The new building should not stand out from the others.” As proposed, the Transit Hub would be composed of masonry and brick and the pavilion would be composed of metal. These materials are used extensively throughout the Northfield Historic District and are used for the Depot. The proposed colors of the brick, masonry and trim aim to complement the adjacent Depot. The proposed materials and colors are compatible and appropriate.

Architectural Details

In general, simplistic architectural details are preferred over more detailed and ornate newly constructed buildings. The Transit Hub and pavilion should be compatible to but not replicative of the Depot. The proposed Transit Hub features a similar style to the Depot with wide roof eaves. The prominent bay windows of the Transit Hub are appropriate for the building’s use and orientation towards the east for transit options. A more simplistic round column for the pavilion would be more compatible and preferred. In addition, the pavilion column brackets and the brackets on the Transit Hub eaves should be simplified in design to avoid replicating that of the Depot.

The HPC is appreciative of the opportunity to provide comments and look forward to seeing the plans develop further. Please reach out with any questions.