

Report to the Urban Design Commission

re: 102 N. Hamilton Street
from: Katherine H. Rankin, Preservation Planner
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The building at 102 N. Hamilton Street was identified as a potential Landmark in the Downtown Historic Preservation Plan in 1998. It was built in 1929-1930 by the local Jackson Realty Company as a store for the Montgomery Ward Co. Law, Law and Potter, the architects, designed it in the Art Deco style, a style that was very popular for downtown buildings in the period and a style for which the firm was particularly adept. Except for later windows, the exterior of the building is relatively intact.

The Children's Museum plan calls for restoring most of the windows to their original appearance, with the top level of windows to be restored at a later date as funds allow. The major changes to the building will be to the ca. 1990 addition on the rear and to the roof of the structure. While these alterations will be playful in color and shape, they will not detract from the character of the main structure. Roof alterations include a fence and the addition of several small, one-story structures on the roof. The fence will be designed to be as transparent as possible while still provided a safe and visually secure border to the rooftop gardens. The fence will also be reversible if at some point a new owner wishes to remove it to restore the original appearance of the building. Although the rooftop buildings will be somewhat visible from the ground, they are set back from the main corner of the building and only bits of the tops will be visible from the ground.

The only element of the design that, in my opinion, will detract from the historic character of the building is the projecting prow of the roof deck over the front corner of the building. Because of its location at the crown of the most important view of the building, it will add a modern and intrusive element that will clash with the original Art Deco style of the structure. I recommend eliminating this small part of the deck and bringing the fence line back to line up with the front of the building.