

**CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS  
CPED PLANNING DIVISION  
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

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FILE NAME: 822 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast

CATEGORY/DISTRICT: Historic Resource

CLASSIFICATION: Demolition of an Historic Resource

APPLICANT: Minneapolis Problem Properties Unit, Tom Deegan (612)673-3310

DATE OF APPLICATION: April 21, 2008

PUBLICATION DATE: June 3, 2008

DATE OF HEARING: June 10, 2008

APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION: June 20, 2008

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Brian Schaffer (612) 673-2670

REQUEST: Demolition of an Historic Resource

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**A. BACKGROUND**

822 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast is a small house in Northeast Minneapolis that has fallen into disrepair and has been placed on the city's Vacant Building Registry. It has been condemned and the Problem Properties Unit (PPU) of the Regulatory Services Department is seeking to demolish the structure.

Section 599.460 of the Minneapolis City Ordinance authorizes staff to review all demolition permits within the city. If staff determines that the property is an historic resource, the demolition permit shall not be issued without review and approval by the Heritage Preservation Commission. If the commission determines that the property is an historic resource, the commission shall deny the demolition permit and direct the planning director to commence a designation study of the property or shall approve the demolition permit.

Staff has been working closely with the Problem Properties Unit (PPU) to evaluate the historical integrity of condemned properties that PPU is considering for demolition. The subject property was evaluated by Preservation & Design staff in the summer of 2007 and encouraged the PPU to not pursue demolition since the property was located in a potential historic district.

**B. DESCRIPTION:**

The single family home located at 822 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast, was constructed in approximately 1890. The structure was built in a vernacular style with a front facing gable and wing layout and has a greek revival influence as seen in the cornice return. The subject structure appears to have been built with an open front porch, there is not available building permit evidence to show when the porch was enclosed. In 1937 asbestos siding was added to the structure. Except for the siding and enclosed front porch the structure exhibits good historical integrity.

## C. CONSIDERATIONS FOR POTENTIAL HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, Title 23, Heritage Preservation, Chapter 599 Heritage Preservation Regulations states that before approving the demolition of a property determined to be an historic resource, the commission shall make findings that the demolition is necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property, or that there are no reasonable alternatives to the demolition. In determining whether reasonable alternatives exist, the commission shall consider, but not be limited to, the significance of the property, the integrity of the property and the economic value or usefulness of the existing structure, including its current use, costs of renovation and feasible alternative uses. The commission may delay a final decision for a reasonable period of time to allow parties interested in preserving the historic resource a reasonable opportunity to act to protect it.

### *Significance of the Property as part of a Potential Historic District*

A 1998 Context Study of Northeast and Old Saint Anthony identified the block of housing along 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast between Quincy and Jackson Street Northeast as a possible concentration of worker housing. A 2004 Historic Resource Inventory of Northeast Minneapolis identified 803-828 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast as historical resources:

This group of single dwellings appears to be a concentration of late-nineteenth century dwellings constructed in Northeast Minneapolis. Northeast Minneapolis has a rich social and ethnic history and concentrations of vernacular dwellings could represent a significant pattern of residential development. A comprehensive study of worker housing development in Northeast Minneapolis should be undertaken to identify significant property types and integrity requirements needed for individual properties and districts to qualify for local designation and/or National Register listing. This property needs to be evaluated within a broader context of worker housing development.

The development of the area was heavily influenced by the expansion of the railroad operations to the north and easy access to the Central Avenue street car line. In the 1880s, the introduction of streetcar service up Central Avenue as far as 26<sup>th</sup> Street gave encouragement to settle what had been considered a very rural area<sup>1</sup>. By 1893 the street car line expanded up to 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and Central Avenue, as far north as 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, became a principal arterial in Minneapolis.

Northeast Minneapolis builders continued to develop its generally single family character between 1890 and 1900, but with substantial duplexes constructed west of Central. Realtors such as Portius Deming sold a block or more of small lots to developers who erected inexpensive identical houses, while other lots were developed with commodious and stylish homes.<sup>2</sup> It is likely that the concentrations of worker housing such as the subject area were developed in a similar manner.

In January of 2007 Preservation & Design staff reviewed and approved a demolition permit for 820 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, which is adjacent to the subject site at 822 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. The property at 820 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE was severely damaged by a fire. The photographs of the block of 26<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Northeast and Old St. Anthony Historic Context Study, 1998: Landscape Research p 7

<sup>2</sup> Northeast and Old St. Anthony Historic Context Study, 1998: Landscape Research p 12

Avenue NE illustrate how the consistent bulk and massing of the structures contribute to the historic fabric of this locality. The missing structure at 820 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue reinforces how the removal of one of these properties alters that fabric.

### **Individual Significance of Property**

A Survey Inventory Form from the 2004 Historical Resources Inventory of Northeast Minneapolis indicates that the subject properties and the other properties identified in the concentration of worker housing meet local designation criteria number 1: “The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history.”

After searching through the city’s historic building permits staff was unable to find the original building permit record to determine who the original builder, architect or owner was. Review of the Minneapolis City Directories and the Dual City Blue Book resulted in no new information regarding the original inhabitants of the subject property or the surrounding properties.

The 2004 Survey form states the following in the notes about significance “the individual properties exhibit poor historic integrity. However, this group of dwellings displays a repetitive scale and massing typical of late-nineteenth century vernacular worker housing.” The Survey form does not state if the subject property is individually eligible for local designation.

The applicant, the Problem Properties Unit, has not provided any information regarding the history of the property.

### **Physical Integrity of Property**

In July 2007 a code compliance inspection was completed for the structure. A code compliance inspection is required of any condemned property prior to any future permits being issued. The violations of the code compliance are listed in Attachment 2. The highlights include fire damage to the roof that required repair and cracks in the foundation. The Problem Properties Unit has also included interior and exterior photographs of the property.

### **Economic Value of the Existing Structure:**

The Problem Properties Unit has provided an appraisal of the property that states the rehabbed market value of the structure would be \$106,500. The applicant does not include an estimated value of the work that would be required to bring the structure into compliance with the housing code. However, the applicant does state that the current assessed value of the property is \$73,000.

The Problem Properties Unit has not provided any information illustrating activity at the property or any of the owners’ attempts to rehabilitate the structure.

### **Usefulness of the Existing Structure:**

The Problem Properties Unit did not include an assessment of the usefulness of the structure or the estimated value of the required work to bring the structure into compliance with the various

code violations. The City of Minneapolis Assessor information shows that the subject structure has 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, and 1,065 square feet of finished space.

**D. PROPOSED CHANGES:**

The applicant is applying for approval to demolish 822 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast. The applicant is not proposing to construct a new home in its place.

**E. APPLICABLE ORDINANCES:**

*Chapter 599. Heritage Preservation Regulation*

**ARTICLE V DESIGNATION**

**599.210. Designation criteria.** The following criteria shall be considered in determining whether a property is worthy of designation as a landmark or historic district because of its historical, cultural, architectural, archaeological or engineering significance:

- (1) The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history.
- (2) The property is associated with the lives of significant persons or groups.
- (3) The property contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city identity.
- (4) The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction.
- (5) The property exemplifies a landscape design or development pattern distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design or detail.
- (6) The property exemplifies works of master builders, engineers, designers, artists, craftsmen or architects.
- (7) The property has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**599.230. Commission decision on nomination.** The commission shall review all complete nomination applications. If the commission determines that a nominated property appears to meet at least one of the criteria for designation contained in section 599.210, the commission may direct the planning director to commence a designation study of the property. (2001-Or-029, § 1, 3-2-01)

**599.240. Interim protection.** (a) Purpose. Interim protection is established to protect a nominated property from destruction or inappropriate alteration during the designation process.

(b) *Effective date.* Interim protection shall be in effect from the date of the commission's decision to commence a designation study of a nominated property until the city council makes a decision regarding the designation of the property, or for twelve (12) months, whichever comes first. Interim protection may be extended for such additional periods as the commission may deem appropriate and necessary to protect the designation process, not exceeding a total additional period of eighteen (18) months. The commission shall hold a public hearing on a proposed extension of interim protection as provided in section 599.170.

(c) *Scope of restrictions.* During the interim protection period, no alteration or minor alteration of a nominated property shall be allowed except where authorized by a certificate of appropriateness or a certificate of no change, as provided in this chapter. (2001-Or-029, § 1, 3-2-01)

## A. ARTICLE VIII. HISTORIC RESOURCES

**599.440. Purpose.** This article is established to protect historic resources from destruction by providing the planning director with authority to identify historic resources and to review and approve or deny all proposed demolitions of property.

**599.450. Identification of historic resources** The planning director shall identify properties that are believed to meet at least one of the criteria for designation contained in section 599.210, but that have not been designated. In determining whether a property is an historic resource, the planning director may refer to building permits and other property information regularly maintained by the director of inspections, property inventories prepared by or directed to be prepared by the planning director, observations of the property by the planning director or any other source of information reasonably believed to be relevant to such determination.

**599.460. Review of demolition permits.** The planning director shall review all applications for a demolition permit to determine whether the affected property is an historic resource. If the planning director determines that the property is not an historic resource, the demolition permit shall be approved. If the planning director determines that the property is an historic resource, the demolition permit shall not be issued without review and approval by the commission following a public hearing as provided in section 599.170.

**599.470. Application for demolition of historic resource.** An application for demolition of an historic resource shall be filed on a form approved by the planning director and shall be accompanied by all required supporting information, as specified in section 599.160.

**599.480. Commission decision.** (a) *In general.* If the commission determines that the property is not an historic resource, the commission shall approve the demolition permit. If the commission determines that the property is an historic resource, the commission shall deny the demolition permit and direct the planning director to commence a designation study of the property, as provided in section 599.230, or shall approve the demolition permit as provided in this section.

(b) *Destruction of historic resource.* Before approving the demolition of a property determined to be an historic resource, the commission shall make findings that the demolition is necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property, or that there are no reasonable alternatives to the demolition. In determining whether reasonable alternatives exist, the commission shall consider, but not be limited to, the significance of the property, the integrity of the property and the economic value or usefulness of the existing structure, including its current use, costs of renovation and feasible alternative uses. The commission may delay a final decision for a reasonable period of time to allow parties interested in preserving the historic resource a reasonable opportunity to act to protect it.

(c) *Mitigation plan.* The commission may require a mitigation plan as a condition of any approval for demolition of an historic resource. Such plan may include the documentation of the property by measured drawings, photographic recording, historical research or other means appropriate to the significance of the property. Such plan also may include the salvage and preservation of specified building materials, architectural details, ornaments, fixtures and similar items for use in restoration elsewhere.

### *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (1990)*

#### **Building Site**

##### **Recommended:**

-Identifying, retaining, and preserving buildings and their features as well as features of the site that are important in defining its overall historic character. Site features can include driveways, walkways, lighting, fencing, signs, benches, fountains, wells, terraces, canal systems, plants and trees, berms, and drainage or irrigation ditches; and archeological features that are important in defining the history of the site.

-Retaining the historic relationship between buildings, landscape features, and open space.

-Providing continued protection of masonry, wood, and architectural metals which comprise building and site features through appropriate surface treatments such as cleaning, rust removal, limited paint removal, and re-application of protective coating systems; and continued protection and maintenance of landscape features, including plant material.

##### **Not Recommended:**

-Removing or radically changing buildings and their features or site features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the building site so that, as a result, the character is diminished.

-Removing or relocating historic buildings or landscape features, thus destroying the historic relationship between buildings, landscape features, and open space.

-Removing a historic building in a complex, a building feature, or a site feature which is important in defining the historic character of the site.

## **F. FINDINGS:**

1. 822 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE was identified as part of a concentration of worker housing between 803 and 828 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE in a 1998 context study of Northeast Minneapolis.
2. The property is eligible for local designation as part of an historic district. The property is not individually eligible for local designation.
3. To date, there has been no specific accounting of the numbers of properties or concentrations of worker housing that are extant in Northeast Minneapolis. A comprehensive study of worker housing development in Northeast Minneapolis has not occurred.
4. The applicant has provided an appraised value of the property once it is rehabbed, \$106,500, and the current assessed value of the property, \$73,000. The applicant has also provided the results of a code compliance inspection, but the applicant has not provided an estimated cost of renovation nor has the applicant provided an analysis of the usefulness of the structure.

## **G. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt staff findings and **deny** the demolition application of the property at 822 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Application and Applicant Statement
2. Code Compliance Inspection
3. Photographs
4. 1912 Sanborn Map of Area
5. 2004 HPC Field Inventory Form