

**CITY OF SAINT PAUL
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

FILE NAME: 212 Maple Street
OWNER: Tara Long
AGENCY: DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND INSPECTIONS – CODE ENFORCEMENT
DATE OF HEARING: June 28, 2012
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Dayton’s Bluff Historic District
CATEGORY: Non-Contributing
CLASSIFICATION: Demolition
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Christine Boulware
DATE: June 22, 2012

A. SITE DESCRIPTION:

The one-story, wood-frame, worker’s cottage at 210-212 Maple Street was constructed prior to the issuance of building permits in the City of Saint Paul. Ramsey County Property Records identify the construction date as 1879. The house has a gabled roof with asphalt shingles, a brick wainscoting on the enclosed front porch, cement-asbestos shingles over clapboard, vinyl and glass block windows and a new contour block foundation that was installed c. 1920. The property retains little integrity and is categorized as non-contributing to the character of the Dayton’s Bluff Historic District.

B. PROPOSED CHANGES/BACKGROUND:

According to Code Enforcement files, the property has been a vacant building since April 13, 2010. Records indicate that the owner is Tara Long and on May 31, 2012 an Order to Abate Nuisance Building was issued. The HPC will review a pending demolition permit application by the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) or the property owner or owner’s representative. The Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) has issued a Remove or Repair order given the structure’s nuisance conditions. Given the building is located within the Dayton’s Bluff Historic District, the HPC is required to review and approve or disapprove the issuance of city permits for demolition pursuant to Leg. Code § 73.06(a)(4) generally and Leg. Code § 74.90(j) specifically.

C. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:

Dayton’s Bluff Historic District Guidelines

Leg. Code § 74.87. General principles.

- (1) All work should be of a character and quality that maintains the distinguishing features of the building and the environment. The removal or alteration of distinctive architectural features should be avoided as should alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance. The restoration of altered original features, if documentable, is encouraged.*
- (2) Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure, or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected.*
- (3) Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. In the event of replacement, new materials should match the original in composition, design (including consideration of proportion, texture and detail), color and overall appearance.*
- (4) New additions or alterations to structures should be constructed in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the form and integrity of the original structure would be unimpaired.*
- (5) The impact of alterations or additions on individual buildings as well as on the surrounding streetscape will be considered; major alterations to buildings which occupy a corner lot or are otherwise prominently sited should be avoided.*

(6) *New construction should be compatible with the historic and architectural character of the district.*

§ 74.90. – New construction and additions.

- (j) *Demolition. Demolition permits will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be determined by the category of building (pivotal, contributing and noncontributing) and its importance to the district, the structural condition of the building and the economic viability of the structure.*

§ 73.06(i)(2): Demolition

When reviewing proposals for demolition of structures within the district, the Heritage Preservation Commission refers to § 73.06 (i)(2) of the Saint Paul Legislative Code which states the following:

In the case of the proposed demolition of a building, prior to approval of said demolition, the commission shall make written findings on the following: the architectural and historical merit of the building, the effect of the demolition on surrounding buildings, the effect of any proposed new construction on the remainder of the building (in case of partial demolition) and on surrounding buildings, and the economic value or usefulness of the building as it now exists or if altered or modified in comparison with the value or usefulness of any proposed structures designated to replace the present building or buildings.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

District/Neighborhood

Recommended:

-Identifying, retaining, and preserving buildings, and streetscape, and landscape features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the district or neighborhood. Such features can include streets, alleys, paving, walkways, street lights, signs, benches, parks and gardens, and trees.

-Retaining the historic relationship between buildings, and streetscape and landscape features such as a town square comprised of row houses and stores surrounding a communal park or open space.

-Protecting and maintaining the historic masonry, wood, and architectural metals which comprise building and streetscape features, through appropriate surface treatments such as cleaning, rust removal, limited paint removal, and reapplication of protective coating systems; and protecting and maintaining landscape features, including plant material.

-Repairing features of the building, streetscape, or landscape by reinforcing the historic materials. Repair will also generally include the replacement in kind - or with a compatible substitute material - of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of features when there are surviving prototypes such as porch balustrades, paving materials, or streetlight standards.

-Replacing in kind an entire feature of the building, streetscape, or landscape that is too deteriorated to repair - when the overall form and detailing are still evident - using the physical evidence to guide the new work. This could include a storefront, a walkway, or a garden. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible, then a compatible substitute material may be considered.

Alterations/Additions for the New Use

-Designing required new parking so that it is as unobtrusive as possible, i.e., on side streets or at the rear of buildings. "Shared" parking should also be planned so that several business' can utilize one parking area as opposed to introducing random, multiple lots.

-Designing and constructing new additions to historic buildings when required by the new use. New work should be compatible with the historic character of the district or neighborhood in terms of size, scale, design, material, color, and texture.

-Removing nonsignificant buildings, additions, or streetscape and landscape features which detract from the historic character of the district or the neighborhood.

Not Recommended:

-Removing or radically changing those features of the district or neighborhood which are important in defining the overall historic character so that, as a result, the character is diminished.

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

-Failing to undertake adequate measures to assure the preservation of building, streetscape, and landscape features.

-Removing a feature of the building, streetscape, or landscape that is unrepairable and not replacing it; or replacing it with a new feature that does not convey the same visual appearance.

Design for Missing Historic Features

-Introducing a new building, streetscape or landscape feature that is out of scale or otherwise inappropriate to the setting's historic character, e.g., replacing picket fencing with chain link fencing.

Alterations/Additions for the New Use

-Placing parking facilities directly adjacent to historic buildings which cause the removal of historic plantings, relocation of paths and walkways, or blocking of alleys.

-Introducing new construction into historic districts that is visually incompatible or that destroys historic relationships within the district or neighborhood.

-Removing a historic building, building feature, or landscape or streetscape feature that is important in defining the overall historic character of the district or the neighborhood.

D. FINDINGS: The following findings are based upon HPC records and research including a site inspection of the property on June 22, 2012 by HPC staff and a Code Enforcement Officer from DSI.

1. Leg. Code § 74.90.(j) - The Preservation Program for the Dayton's Bluff Historic District states that consideration of demolitions will be determined by the category of building (pivotal, contributing and noncontributing), its importance to the district, the structural condition of the building and the economic viability of the structure.
2. *The category of the building.* The building is classified as contributing to the Dayton's Bluff Historic District. Much of the exterior architectural detail is intact and in good condition. Staff considers the building's historic and architectural integrity as poor.

3. *The importance of the building to the district.* The house was constructed pre-1884 and during the period of significance for the Dayton's Bluff Historic District. The Dayton's Bluff Handbook states the following about late nineteenth-century vernacular properties;

The construction of houses began on Dayton's Bluff in the 1850s, but no pre-Civil War buildings are known to survive. About thirty houses remain from the period 1869-1880. Most are examples of the Italianate Style, which first enjoyed popularity in the eastern United States in the 1840s. Other pre-1880s houses on Dayton's Bluff were of a gable-roofed, one and one-half or two-story type. Many of these vernacular houses were quite simple in plan and overall design, but their builders concentrated decorative efforts at the porch and window trim. Few pre-1880s buildings still stand in St. Paul, and this collection on Dayton's Bluff is of special significance to the history of the city as well as the District.

The number of houses still extant in the Dayton's Bluff Historic District during this time period is unknown, as several have been removed since the adoption of the District in 1992.

The Sanborn Insurance map for this site indicates the footprint of the house has not changed much since 1925. A two-stall garage was constructed in the side yard, where 208 Maple once stood at some point after the period of significance. There is not an alley on this block and due to the triangular shape of the lot, parking in the side yard is accessed by a curb cut and concrete driveway at Maple Street. 214 Maple Street is the property to the north of the subject building. It is an early, two-story, simple side-hall cottage with original fenestration and a plastered limestone foundation. This residence shares the driveway to access the two-stall garage in its rear yard.

This block of Maple Street has had several changes over the past several decades. The western side of the street has no historical integrity and includes a rambler and a multi-tenant building with a large parking area. The east side of the street has only lost one building at 198 Maple. The residences on the east side of the street have varying degrees of integrity.

Staff has not researched other historical associations, such as persons that have contributed in some way to Saint Paul's history and development or an architect or association with an important event, with this property. The 1989 Dayton's Bluff Inventory Form did not identify an original owner or builder.

4. *Structural condition of the building.* On May 18, 2012, an inspection was conducted by DSI and a Building Deficiency Inspection Report was compiled. The list of deficiencies is not necessarily all the deficiencies present at the time and would not substitute for a team inspection and Code Compliance Report. During the June 22, 2012 site inspection, HPC staff observed interior conditions which include the buckling of the floor in the front portion of the house and vandalism. There were no original or early architectural or decorative features observed on the interior. The exterior features of the house have either been removed or covered. Only two, small original windows remain. Other windows have new vinyl inserts or glass block. The front porch has been enclosed. Original trim and detailing have been removed and the original lap siding may still exist underneath the current siding. HPC staff considers the overall condition of the subject building as poor.
5. *The economic viability of the structure.* According to Code Enforcement, demolition costs are estimated to be \$10,000 to \$12,000. The cost of rehabilitation was not supplied. Ramsey County estimates the land value at \$20,000 and the house value at \$33,200. The property is sited on a triangular shaped lot that is .2 acres.

6. In general, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation recommend against removing buildings that are important in defining the overall historic character and destroying historic relationships between buildings and open space. Given the alterations to the building and its lack of integrity, HPC staff finds that the building does not reinforce the District's architectural and historic character.
7. HPC staff finds that the proposed demolition of the building at 212 Maple Street will not have a negative impact on the Dayton's Bluff Historic District. However, a vacant lot will have a negative impact on the historic district and the loss of historic fabric is irreversible. Removal of 212 Maple may be beneficial to the house at 214 Maple; if the lots were to be combined, the house at 214 would then have a yard and a private driveway. Future construction at the site shall comply with the new construction guidelines for the Dayton's Bluff Historic District, specifically Leg. Code § 74.90.

E. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the findings, staff recommends approval of a pending demolition permit application.