

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

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FILE NAME: 668-670 Conway Street  
OWNER: Harbour Portfolio VI LP  
AGENCY: Department of Safety and Inspections – Code Enforcement  
DATE OF HEARING: March 12, 2015  
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Dayton’s Bluff Heritage Preservation District  
CATEGORY: Non-Contributing  
CLASSIFICATION: Demolition – VB3, Remove or Repair  
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Christine Boulware  
DATE: March 6, 2015

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**A. SITE DESCRIPTION:**

The Meline Duplex at 668-670 Conway Street is a two-story, frame, over / under flats taking the form of a side-hall constructed in 1912. Asphalt shingles protect the front gabled roof and its right (west) side gabled wall dormer. The wide, boxed eaves close the gable tympanums and overhang the top of the two-story bay window on the right side. Aluminum siding now covers the exterior, and the two-story, full-width, hipped front porch has been infilled with storm windows and siding. Most windows appear to be rectangular, wooded, one-over-one, double-hungs, and one leaded glass transom remains on the first story of the bay window. The piano windows and attic windows have been replaced. The window and house trim is mostly intact; recessed in the aluminum siding. The shaped concrete block (contour block) foundation visually appears sound, but plywood covers the openings and hides any presence of foundation windows. The property is classified as non-contributing to the character of the Dayton’s Bluff Heritage Preservation District.

**B. PROPOSED CHANGES/BACKGROUND:**

This property became a Vacant Category 3 building on May 19, 2010. Records indicate that the owner is Harbour Portfolio VI LP and on December 2, 2014, an Order to Abate was issued. The Legislative Hearing Officer has continued the Legislative Hearing from February 10 to March 10 in order for the HPC to review a pending demolition permit application by the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) or the property owner or owner’s representative. The DSI has issued a Remove or Repair order given the structure’s nuisance conditions. The DSI has recommended removal of the structure to the Legislative Hearing Officer. Given the building is located within the Dayton’s Bluff Heritage Preservation 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, with the exception for structures that are subject of a resolution adopted by the City Council requiring the demolition in accordance with Chapter 45 of the Legislative Code or MN Statutes Chapter 463. The property will go tax forfeit on July 31, 2015.

**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.*

**E. FINDINGS:** The following findings are based upon HPC records and research including a site inspection of the exterior of the property on March 6, 2015 by HPC staff.

1. On July 23, 1992, the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District was established under Ordinance No. 17942 (Council File #92-900). The Heritage Preservation Commission shall protect the architectural character of heritage preservation sites through review and approval or denial of applications for city permits for exterior work within designated heritage preservation sites §73.04.(4).
2. The property is categorized as non-contributing to the character of the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District. It was constructed during the period of significance for the historic district (1857-1930), but has been wrapped in aluminum siding and trim and the original one-story, open front porch is now an enclosed, two-story porch with a small entry stoop.
3. 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.
4. *The category of the building.* The building is classified as non-contributing to the architectural and historical integrity of the Dayton's Bluff Historic District. The aluminum siding and wrap, and the front porch alterations appear to have been installed and constructed after the period of significance for the Dayton's Bluff Historic District. This *change has not acquired significance in its own right* [See § 74.87(2)] given how it obscures and has altered the original features of the property. The building reads as a residence (duplex) constructed in the nineteen-teens. Staff considers the building exterior's historic and architectural integrity as fair to poor.
5. *The importance of the building to the district.* The house was constructed during the period of significance of 1857-1930. The Dayton's Bluff Handbook states the following about early twentieth-century vernacular properties;

*Houses of this type accounted for a good number of the 150 buildings constructed in the District between 1900 and 1920. Vernacular houses built after the turn of the century showed the influence of the Classical and Colonial Revival styles. Their steeply-pitched, hipped roofs, which sometimes have flared ridges and eaves, are among their strongest architectural features. Builders on Dayton's Bluff designed a few of these houses for two or more families.*

The number of houses still extant in the Dayton's Bluff Historic District during this time period is unknown.

The Sanborn Insurance map for this site indicates the footprint of the house has changed very little since 1925, with only the removal of one-story rear porch. There is no alley access on this block and parking in the rear yard is accessed by a curb cut and share driveway on the western portion of the lot.

The southern and northern block faces on Conway Street are contiguous, mostly with contributing structures. There is consistency in scale, rhythm, massing, and setbacks, specifically on the south side of the street.

Staff has not researched other historical associations with the subject building such as persons that have contributed in some way to Saint Paul's history and development or an architect or an association with an important event.

6. *Structural condition of the building.* On November 12, 2014, a Building Deficiency Inspection Report was compiled by the Department of Safety and Inspections. 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 March 6, 2015 site inspection, HPC staff observed exterior conditions. The interior was not accessible by staff. The original exterior features were obscured by aluminum siding and wrap and only once decorative window was visible in the first floor on the west elevation. HPC staff considers the overall exterior condition of 668-670 Conway Street as fair.
7. *The economic viability of the structure.* According to DSI Code Enforcement, the rehabilitation costs start at \$60,000 and demolition costs are estimated to start at \$12,000. For 2015, Ramsey County estimates the land value at \$10,800 and the house value at \$50,300. The property is sited on an 40 ft. wide by 120 ft. deep foot lot (0.11 acres).
8. 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 current condition, HPC staff finds that the building generally reinforces the District's architectural and historic character and with the removal of non-original materials and restoration of siding, trim, the front porch, the property could be re-categorized as contributing to the historic district.
9. HPC staff finds that the proposed demolition of the building at 668-670 Conway Street will have a negative impact on the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District. A vacant lot can have a negative impact on the historic district and the loss of historic fabric is irreversible. If demolished, any future work at the site shall comply with the new construction guidelines for the Dayton's Bluff Historic District, specifically Leg. Code § 74.90.

**F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Based on the findings, the HPC encourages the City Council to delay an order to demolish the structure and fully consider options for rehabilitation prior to ordering removal with no option for repair.