

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

FILE NAME: 698 Fourth Street East
OWNER: State Of Mn Trust Exempt c/o Ramsey County
DATE OF HEARING: October 20, 2011
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Dayton's Bluff Historic District
CATEGORY: contributing
CLASSIFICATION: Potential Demolition
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Christine Boulware
DATE: October 12, 2011

A. SITE DESCRIPTION:

The residence at 698 Fourth Street East is a one-and-one-half story, Queen Anne style cottage constructed prior to 1884. Ramsey County records identify the construction date as 1879. The roof is gabled with asphalt shingles, the original wood lap-siding is concealed by stucco, and the foundation is limestone. The fascia and soffits have been wrapped in aluminum. This residence has a "simple", roughly symmetrical façade with Greek Revival proportions and some Craftsman-influenced details including the divided window sash on the front porch. The property is classified as contributing to the character of the Dayton's Bluff Historic District and is located in the Fourth Street Preservation Project area.

B. PROPOSED CHANGES:

This property became a Vacant Category 3 building on May 14, 2008. The property went tax forfeit on August 4, 2011. Records indicate that the owner is State Of Mn Trust Exempt c/o Ramsey County and on July 14, 2011 an Order to Abate Nuisance Building was issued. The Legislative Hearing Officer has continued the Legislative Hearing from September 27 to November 8 in order for the HPC to review a proposal to remove or rehabilitate the structure. The Legislative Hearing Officer will consider the HPC's decision and will make a recommendation to the City Council on December 7.

C. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:

Sec. 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.*

Dayton's Bluff Historic District Guidelines – Demolition (Chapter 74):

- (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.

Chapter 73.06(i)(2): Demolition

When reviewing proposals for demolition of structures within the district, the Heritage Preservation Commission refers to Section 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:

1. The Preservation Program for the Dayton's Bluff Historic District states, "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." Leg. Code §74.90(j)
2. *The category of the building.* The building is classified as contributing to the architectural and historical character of the Dayton's Bluff Historic District.
3. *The importance of the building to the district.* The house was constructed during the Period of Significance for the Dayton's Bluff Historic District and most likely constructed during the early part of a strong building boom from 1880 to 1900. The Dayton's Bluff Handbook states the following about late nineteenth-century vernacular properties;

At least 430 houses were built in the decade of the 1880s, and about 60 were added during the 1890s. Several hundred vernacular houses built for railroad

and factory workers and their families made up much of the total. Pattern books and millwork catalogues were the source of many of these simple designs. Among the most interesting of the many types of housing created on Dayton's Bluff was the small one- or two-story "worker's cottage." Their construction was often financed by mortgages offered by organizations such as the Workingmen's Building Society.

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 the early construction of a one-story rear addition. There is not an alley on this block nor is there a curb cut or driveway to access the rear yard for parking. Although there is a grade change from the street to the rear yard, off street parking may be possible.

These two block faces on Fourth Street appear to be contiguous, meaning there is only one vacant lot and the remaining houses have some architectural continuity, with no inappropriate in-fill.

Staff has not researched other historical associations with this property, such as persons that have contributed in some way to St. Paul's history and development or an architect or association with an important event.

4. *Structural condition of the building.* On June 29, 2011 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. A more comprehensive report would be necessary for staff to review for compliance with the rehabilitation guidelines. Staff is not aware of any other structural evaluations that have been completed. Staff has requested that DBNHS gain access to the property to evaluate the condition and give a cost estimate for repairs based on the existing Code Compliance report.
5. *The economic viability of the structure.* According to Code Enforcement, the rehabilitation costs for the structure are estimated from \$50,000 to \$75,000 and demolition costs are estimated to exceed \$10,000. Ramsey County estimates the land value at \$16,500 (\$16,500) and the house value at \$2,700 (\$15,200) for 2011-2012 (2010).
6. Rehabilitation of the property that would retain and restore *distinctive architectural features* and restore *altered original features* through photo or physical documentation, would comply with the guideline.
7. The principle states, *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.* A proposal for rehabilitation should first take into account the need to repair existing features and removal and replacement as a last option.
8. The August 3, 2011 letter from the State Historic Preservation Office states, "In our view, demolition of original, contributing homes within an historic district will have an adverse effect on the integrity of the district, and should be avoided if possible. From the photo you have sent, the building exterior appears to be intact. We request that you consider the rehabilitation alternative before considering demolition."

9. The demolition of this property would have a negative impact on the program for preservation in Dayton's Bluff Historic District and on the Fourth Street Preservation Project.

F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the findings, staff recommends denial of any potential demolition permit application, whether applied from by either a public or private entity.

Staff recommends that DSI Code Enforcement division shall contract with an organization, such as Historic St. Paul, or a historic architect and structural engineer with expertise in historic preservation, to complete a historic structure investigation and appraisal that will include a recommendation on the feasibility to restore the property in a manner that complies with the preservation program for the district. The City's authority to abate nuisance conditions under Chapter 45.08(c) of the Legislative Code allows for the costs of "...investigation, inspection...or appraisals..." to be paid by the property owner. The results and report recommendations will be considered by the HPC and the HPC recommendation shall be included with the Legislative Hearing Officer's recommendation to the City Council.