

CITY OF SAINT PAUL

HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION

FILE NUMBER: 668-670 Conway Street – Remove or Repair Order

DATE: March 16, 2015

WHEREAS, the City of Saint Paul has declared as a matter of public policy, in Chapter 73 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code, “that the preservation, protection, perpetuation and use of areas, places, building, structures and other objects having special historical, community or aesthetic interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of the health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people;” and

WHEREAS, Chapter 73 also establishes the purposes of heritage preservation to be to: “safeguard the heritage of the City of Saint Paul by preserving sites and structures which reflect elements of the city’s cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history; protect and enhance the City of Saint Paul’s attraction to residents, tourists and visitors, and serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry; enhance the visual and aesthetic character, diversity and interest of the City of Saint Paul; foster civic pride in the beauty and notable accomplishments of the past; and promote the use and preservation of historic sites and structures for the education and general welfare of the people of the City of Saint Paul;” and

WHEREAS, Chapter 73 also establishes the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) and states that it “shall serve as an advisory body to the mayor and city council on municipal heritage preservation matters” and the HPC “shall review and approve or disapprove the issuance of city permits” for all demolitions within designated heritage preservation sites, except when structures “are the subject of a resolution adopted by the city council requiring the demolition...in accordance with Chapter 45” of the City Legislative Code (73.06 (a)(4)); and

WHEREAS, on July 23, 1992, the Dayton’s Bluff Heritage Preservation District was established under Ordinance No. 17942 (Council File #92-900); and

WHEREAS, the Meline Duplex, located at 668-670 Conway Street is located within the boundaries of the Dayton’s Bluff Heritage Preservation District and is now threatened with demolition as the City has issued an Order to Abate; and

WHEREAS, The Meline Duplex, at 668-670 Conway Street, is a two-story, frame, over / under duplex 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 original two-story, full-width, hipped front porch has been enclosed with storm windows. Most windows appear to be rectangular, wood, one-over-one, double-hung, 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 foundation window openings; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Safety and Inspections issued a Remove or Repair Order on December 2, 2014 and the Legislative Hearing Officer heard the case on February 10, 2015 and continued the matter in order for the HPC to review and make a recommendation regarding the impacts to the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District if demolition is ordered by the City Council. No one appeared on behalf of the property owners or the public on February 10th and it was stated that the property is scheduled to go to tax forfeit in July 2015; and

WHEREAS, the HPC reviewed the proposal and allowed for public comment at their Business Meeting held on March 12, 2015. Two people appeared and one provided testimony; and

WHEREAS, Edward Johnson of 667 Conway Street testified that he was concerned about the loss of the building in the neighborhood and that it's an attractive building that doesn't appear to be in serious condition. Mr. Johnson also stated that he doesn't want a vacant lot and that he was told the interior first level had natural woodwork in good condition and the unit was "nice inside;" and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, based upon information gathered by staff and presented at their March 12, 2015 meeting, made and adopted the following findings:

1. On July 23, 1992, the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District was established under Ordinance No. 17942 (Council File #92-900) allowing the Heritage Preservation Commission authority to 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. Leg. Code § 74.90.(j) – The adopted 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.
3. *The category of the building.* The property is categorized as non-contributing to the architectural and historical integrity of the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District; however, it was constructed during the period of significance for the District (1857-1930). Non-historic alterations, such as aluminum siding and enclosing the two-story porch, are likely reasons for the non-contributing category assigned at the time of designation in 1992. These *change[s]/[have] not acquired significance in [their] own right* [See § 74.87(2)]. The building's exterior still retains historic and architectural integrity as the form and massing reads as a residence (duplex) constructed in the nineteen-teens, wood sashes and trim are still evident, the original two-story front porch structure and roof are intact and the aluminum siding may be covering wood siding and detailing. The inventory form also states that this property is one of the first in the area to have a two-story box porch with the original construction.
4. *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. This is one of the few originally constructed for two families.

The Sanborn Insurance map for this site indicates the footprint of the house has changed very little since 1925, with only the removal of a one-story rear porch.

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.

Additional historical associations with the property 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 have not been fully researched.

5. *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 (DSI staff attempted to gain access for HPC staff with no success). The original exterior features were obscured by aluminum siding and wrap and one decorative window was visible on the first floor west elevation. The overall exterior condition of 668-670 Conway Street is fair to good.
6. *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 a 40 ft. wide by 120 ft. deep foot lot (0.11 acres).
7. 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 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 and the front porch, the property could be re-categorized as **contributing** to the historic district.
8. The HPC 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 resources is irreversible. If demolished, any future work at the site shall comply with the new construction guidelines for the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District, specifically Legislative Code § 74.90; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that after hearing the public testimony, the findings and recommendation by staff and discussing a potential order for removal by the City Council, the Heritage Preservation Commission finds that an order to remove the building by the City Council is premature and an appropriate period of time to fully evaluate the historic resource for rehabilitation has not been fully explored. Specifically, the HPC the potential for tax forfeiture provides some possibility for a nonprofit or public entity to become involved in a rehabilitation plan; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, the HPC urges City officials to delay any order to remove the property at least until after the tax forfeiture date later in 2015 and to undertake a timely and more complete evaluation of the condition of the property, inside and outside, to fully determine the feasibility of rehabilitation and realize the historic resource's full economic potential (Saint Paul's Comprehensive Plan, HP 5.3).

MOVED BY	Commissioner Riehle
SECONDED BY	Commissioner Bezat

IN FAVOR	10
AGAINST	0
ABSTAIN	0