

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

FILE NAME: 700 Fourth Street East – Edward McNamnee House

DATE OF APPLICATION: September 17, 2015

APPLICANT: Saint Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA)

OWNER: HRA

DATE OF PUBLIC HEARING: October 22, 2015

HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District

CATEGORY: Contributing

CLASSIFICATION: Demolition Permit

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Christine Boulware

DATE: October 6, 2015

A. SITE DESCRIPTION: The Edward McNamnee House, at 700 East Fourth Street, is a two-story, Classicized Queen style frame house with Greek Revival massing constructed in 1879. The home sits on a rectangular, plastered limestone foundation, with a hip roofed front porch supported by Doric columns that have been stuccoed. This porch appears to date from a later renovation, as it covers the glass transom over the front door (visible from the interior). Fenestration consists of individual and paired one-over-one, three-over-one, and two-over-two double-hung windows throughout. A one-story projecting bay window ornaments the west elevation. The permit index card lists permits for repairs, alterations and plaster (the exterior was stuccoed) in 1931. The soffits and porch architrave are wrapped in aluminum. The front-facing, gabled roof contains no dormers. A leaded transom above the front picture window was one of the few visibly original features of the home from the exterior, but was removed without review and approval. The house is categorized as contributing to the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District. The garage is categorized as non-contributing, as it was constructed after 1930.

B. PROPERTY HISTORY AND CONTEXT: According to a WPA mortgage file, Edward McNamnee, the first owner of the home, purchased the lot the home was to be built on through a mortgage with Maria Dayton in 1877, then took out a \$1,300 mortgage with the People's Building Society in late 1878, completing the home in 1879. A search of the *Saint Paul Daily Globe*, a prominent newspaper of the time, did not list the property or its occupants between 1877 and 1922. The only other records of mention for the property were a series of three permits issued between May 23 and May 25, 1931 totaling \$610. This amount may reflect the conversion of the home into a duplex, which was its most current use before becoming vacant.

C. PROPOSED CHANGES: The applicant proposes to raze the residence; there are no current plans for new construction. The lot would be graded and seeded.

D. TIMELINE:

- July 23, 1992 - the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District was designated by the City Council for Heritage Preservation and established under Ordinance No. 17942 (Council File #92-900)
- April 12, 2007 – HPC staff reviewed and approved the construction of new wood and concrete steps at the property. The work was completed.
- August 24, 2007 - the property became a Category 2 vacant building
- January 15, 2009 - Code Compliance Report completed

- April 30, 2009 - the HRA purchased the property for \$22,900 with ISP funds
- August 2009 - the HRA offered the property for \$10,000 as part of the Fourth Street Preservation Project and did not receive any proposals
- October 15, 2013 - in response to the Inspiring Communities RFP, a proposal for \$470,222 total development cost (including land cost), with a projected sale of \$165,000 for a subsidy request of \$305,222 was submitted and not accepted.
- November 3, 2014 - in response to the Inspiring Communities RFP, a proposal for \$450,854 total development cost (including land cost), with a projected sale of \$160,000 for a subsidy request of \$290,854 was submitted and not accepted.
- September 15, 2015 - the HRA applied to the HPC for demolition of the property.

E. 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 businesses' 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 non-significant 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.

F. FINDINGS:

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 demolition within designated heritage preservation sites **§73.04.(4)**.
2. **The category of the building.** The Edward McNamnee House at 700 Fourth Street East is categorized as contributing to the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District.
3. **Leg. Code § 74.90.(j)** - The Preservation Program for the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District states that consideration of demolitions will be determined by the category of building (pivotal, contributing and non-contributing), its importance to the district, the structural condition of the building and the economic viability of the structure.
4. **The importance of the building to the district.** The building's integrity has been compromised; however, it is categorized as contributing to the district's architectural and historical character. The building is important to the district and in a rehabilitated state would enhance the character of the district.

The Edward McNamnee House was constructed in 1879, pre-dating building permits in the city, with alterations and additions in 1925 and 1931, both during and just after the Period of Significance for the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District (1857-1930).

The Dayton's Bluff Historic District Handbook states the following:

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.

Staff have not evaluated how many of the pre-1880s houses are still extant in the district since the Handbook was published in 1992.

The residential context of this structure is good, as it is on the block of Fourth Street which retains all but one (689) of its historic properties, all built during the Period of Significance, on both the north and south block faces. 700 Fourth Street East is immediately adjacent to the Fourth Street Preservation Project properties that were rehabilitated by the City between 2009 and 2015: 326 Maria, 685-687, 688, 693, 694-696, 695, and 698 Fourth Street East. There are a variety of forms, massing, styles and setbacks given the range of dates of construction and historic uses. 700 Fourth Street was originally intended to be included in the Fourth Street

Preservation Project, but was not included in the final RFP for the properties on the south side of the block.

Staff did not find any historical associations, other than Edward McNamnee, 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 other individuals.

The 1903-25 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for this site indicates the footprint of the building, as well as the other residences on the block, have changed very little since 1925. Removal of this building would be the second principle structure change on the block since 1925 (689 Fourth Street suffered a fire in 2008 and the HPC approved its demolition on May 27, 2010 File #10-026). The map shows that the building was used as a single-family dwelling through 1925. There were no other buildings constructed on this block after the Period of Significance. There is no alley and the grade drops steeply to the west and north and is retained by plastered limestone walls along the driveway and sidewalk.

HPC staff considers the architectural integrity to be fair-to-poor; the stucco materials and aluminum wrap would need to be removed for staff to accurately assess the presence of historic fabric and detailing.

- 5. *Structural condition of the building.*** The current structural condition of the building is considered poor but the recent report did not note any imminent structural danger. The building has been classified as vacant since August of 2007 and the lack of maintenance and mothballing/stabilization is evident.

A Code Compliance Report was issued on January 15, 2009, just prior to the HRA purchasing the property. Some of the items noted in the report include: scraping, cleaning and repointing the interior and exterior of the foundation, installation of a guardrail on the west side of the front entry steps, repair/replacement of deteriorated window sash and broken glass, complete storms and screens at all door and window openings, prepare and paint interior and exterior as necessary, reconstruct framing members that are over-spanned, over-spaced, or not being carried properly.

HPC staff conducted a site visit on October 1, 2015. Many of the original/early architectural or decorative features of the interior have been removed or altered there is mold evident at the rear entry to the basement. The first floors of the two rear additions do not retain any historic integrity. Some original and early, double-hung windows are intact, along with the c. 1880s front door and transom (visible on the interior), interior staircase and balustrade to the second floor, interior casings and mouldings, historic door and window hardware. The exterior features of the house have been covered with stucco or wrapped in aluminum. Staff observed general deferred maintenance. Staff cannot assess the condition of the original exterior materials given that they are not visible.

On September 14, 2015, structural engineering firm, Mattson Macdonald Young, submitted a report to the HRA that summarized the observed conditions of the property. The report notes the structural elements of the building framing and foundation to be in poor condition; the retaining wall at the front has cracked and tipped; there is a crack in the sidewalk and a tree growing next to the house to the south of the bay; there is some water damage and the eastern section of the south foundation wall shows signs of the damage and rot; the enclosed porch at the rear of the east elevation has bulging stucco along the base and spalling of the parge-coating on the foundation; there may be damage to the roof allowing water to enter the building; framing in the basement has shifted and a beam no longer sets on a column. The report summarized that 700 Fourth Street East is in generally poor condition based on visually observed conditions. The report summarized that repairs are possible, but would likely be relatively costly.

6. **The economic viability of the structure.** The two cost estimates received in 2013 and 2014 were high given the estimated sale price. The financing gap was between \$290,000 and \$305,000. HPC staff did meet with PED staff to see if there were possible cost savings for one of the proposals, but did not fully evaluate the proposals to determine any cost savings. The stucco and side retaining walls create additional expenses at this site than a wood sided house on a flat lot.

The HRA estimates the demolition costs to be \$13,000. The cost ranges provide from the 2013 and 2014 proposals are \$470,222 and \$450,854. Staff did not review the proposals and cannot comment on if scopes-of-work would have complied with the guidelines in Chapter 74 of the Legislative Code. The HRA purchased the property on April 30, 2009 for \$22,900 with ISP funds. In 2014, Ramsey County estimated the 2015 land value at \$13,700 and the building value at \$37,900. In 2015, Ramsey County estimated the 2016 land value at \$10,800 and the building value at \$59,900. The 1580 square foot property is sited on the south side of Fourth Street between Maria and Bates and the parcel size is 40 ft. wide by 120 ft. deep (.11 acres).

The HRA investment on this block of Fourth Street has been great and the seven other properties have been provided subsidies above the \$150,000 cap.

The property is currently zoned RTI. The previous use was a duplex, but the property has been vacant for over one year and would need to be rehabilitated as a single family home.

7. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation recommend against removing buildings that are important in defining the overall historic character of the district or the neighborhood. Given the contributing categorization, even with fair-to-poor architectural integrity, and good context, HPC staff finds that the building reinforces the District's architectural and historic character. The Standards also recommend against destroying historic relationships between buildings and open space. The demolition of the building would have a significant impact on the relationship of residential buildings along both sides of Fourth Street and the substantial investment of the Fourth Street Preservation Project.

The Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District Design Guidelines, General Principle (1) states *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...* The proposal to demolish this property does not comply with the guidelines as loss of the property would result in the loss of historic character.

8. This property is in the anticipated Area of Potential Effect for the Gold Line BRT and will be evaluated for National Register Eligibility. Proceeding evaluation, determined effects will be evaluated for impacts with potential mitigation.
9. HPC staff finds that the proposed demolition of the Edward McNammee House at 700 Fourth Street East will adversely affect the Program for the Preservation and architectural control of the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District (Leg. Code §73.06 (e)) for reasons outlined in the findings which include: contributing classification, poor condition, and the need to carefully review and understand cost estimates that would comply with the Dayton's Bluff Design Review Guidelines (Leg. Code § 74.87-74.90) and close the financial gap. A vacant lot would have a negative impact on the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District and the loss of historic fabric is irreversible.

- G. **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:** Based on the findings, staff recommends denial of the demolition permit application.

H. ATTACHMENTS

1. HPC Design Review Application
2. Applicant Submittals:
 - A. *Structural Report and Photographs*

B. *Exterior Photographs*

3. January 22, 2009 Code Compliance Report
4. 2015 Photographs
5. Aerial Photographs
6. 1903-25 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map