

HPC File #16-002

275 Bates Avenue, Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District, by the Saint Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority, for a demolition permit to raze the Louis Hansen bakery and residence

HPC staff presented the staff report and based on the findings, staff recommended denial of the demolition permit application.

Chair Dana requested that everyone present be careful not to make inferences or be inflammatory in the way comments are made or questions are asked. There are people who are involved in this work and these properties who could be personally offended by inferences about personal behavior.

Joe Musolf, HRA staff and applicant, spoke regarding 275 Bates, they believe a decision to allow demolition is warranted considering the structural condition of the building and the lacking economic viability of the building. The structural condition review that was included in their application cited numerous structural deficiencies. The structural engineer concluded that the building is in poor structural condition and repairs would likely be very costly. They have worked diligently to find an economically viable rehabilitation proposal for the building. They have offered the property via request for proposals three times; 2009, 2013, and 2014. They received one proposal in 2013 to demolish the building in conjunction with renovation of the adjacent property at 279. This proposer requested a subsidy of approximately \$540,000 which HRA staff decided was not economically viable. In the spring of 2015 they requested assistance from HPC staff to identify any other interested developers and three new developers were contacted, but no proposals emerged.

In response to Commissioner Lightner's inquiry into why all five of these properties are before the HPC right now, Mr. Musolf explained that over the last four years the HRA's efforts in the District have been focused on accomplishing 16 rehabs that have either been completed or are currently underway. They have been working to try and find an economically viable rehab plan for these 5 properties, and the timing is such that they have reached a conclusion that it is not possible.

Mr. Musolf explained the HRAs actions in regards to community outreach. Their actions have all been carried out under the authority granted to them by the HRA under work plans like the Inspiring Communities Program and Neighborhood Stabilization Program and Invest Saint Paul. In all of these work plans acquisition, rehabilitation, demolition, and redevelopment have always been part of their published plan. They have sought input on these plans at many places along the way including district councils and neighborhoods. Those plans have always been vetted in public hearings. He cannot site a specific community meeting where the question was posed should the HRA demolish 275 Bates or invest the \$540,000 that was proposed.

Mr. Musolf explained the types of outreach the HRA does for RFP's. He said the RFP that was cited in 2009 was called the Fourth Street Preservation Project RFP. That RFP was done in

conjunction with a group of local residents and HRA Commissioner Lantry. He said he was pleased with the publicity they generated including information that was featured in the Saint Paul paper. The RFP target audience was people that might be interested taking these projects on that might already be living in the neighborhood or know someone who might be interested. It wasn't necessarily looking for developers. The RFP's in 2013 and 2014 were done in their Inspiring Communities Program. The notification of these RFP's reached an excess of 2500 people. They publicize these in three different manners; the first is a list HRA maintains of interested parties that have initiated contact with the HRA, the second is through the City's ENS system which includes all District Councils and Ward offices, and the third was to use the City's Contract and Analysis Services/Purchasing Procurement office's system. The last one is not mandated by HRA policy, but they took advantage of their notification system because it would reach even more people. The HRA has an auditable track of reaching around 2500 people.

Upon questions from the Commissioners, Ms. Boulware stated that the property next door that is being rehabilitated was reviewed administratively. A proposal for that property was accepted through the last Inspiring Communities round. Staff worked with their contractor to create an application that complied with the guidelines and very little of the historic fabric would be lost and there would be rehabilitation of many of the features.

Commissioner Trimble said what bothered him about that proposal was tearing it down so that the house being rehabbed can have a bigger yard.

Tom Dimond, 2119 Skyway Dr., testified this is a very interesting and unique building. He explained the effort that the neighborhood has done when they try and market buildings. They get volunteers to remove asbestos and asphalt siding so people can get a sense of what is available. It's a relatively low cost process. The City should take steps to market these buildings and get people interested in investing in properties. It's very frustrating, these buildings are wonderful resources, and if redone they will be gems for the neighborhood. The rehabilitation can be done for relatively low costs. It doesn't have to be anything like the costs that are being argued by the HRA. He doesn't understand why the City can't connect with the neighborhood on this idea of rehabilitation. A proposal to demo this number of buildings in a historic district has never happened before.

Upon questions from the Commissioners, Mr. Dimond said he was aware that the City was doing the rehabilitation and they were going to fund the rehabilitation. He stated that the outreach efforts for the RFP's did not reach him.

Sage Holben, 705 Fourth Street East, testified that out of respect for Dayton's Bluff Community Council, and the Community they serve, she requests that the decision of demolition of this property be laid over until the District Council and community has time to meet and get input and come to a decision on this property. This is to maintain the integrity of the architecture in the area, the economics, and the neighborhood.

Kirstin Scanlan Madore, 326 Maria, Saint Paul, testified to the hard work, time, and energy that has been put into her home. One thing she is very concerned about with all of these houses, but this one in particular is that if it's torn down they will lose a possibly beautiful historic home forever. She is not supportive of the idea of tearing historic homes down in order to build more parking spaces or have more green space. The style of the neighborhood and the density of the housing is one of the amazing and significant things about the neighborhood. Taking out houses here and there doesn't fit with the style of the neighborhood. She asks that they deny this demolition because they need to keep the old homes in the City.

Jean Comstock, 729 Sixth Street East, Saint Paul, testified, encouraging the Commission to deny this application of demolition. It feels like the neighborhood has not had time to discuss this application. She remembers the Fourth Street Preservation Project and that was very well done. That is a whole lot different than tearing down this number of buildings without proper notice.

HPC staff read written testimony into the record requesting that the items pertaining to the demolition of HRA owned properties in the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District be withdrawn from the October 8, 2015, Heritage Preservation Commission agenda pending a community meeting to consider the impacts and/or opportunities that the properties in question represent to the Dayton's Bluff community. The letter includes sixteen names of people in support of this request: Lou Ann Norquist, Barry Madore, Benjamin Mason, Jennifer Mason, Karin DuPaul, Erica Schneekloth, Aron Thomas, Casie Radford, Carla Riehle, Carrie Obry, Sage Holben, Cliff Carey, Carol Carey, Bob Parker, David Durant, and Tammy Durant.

The public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Riehle moved denial of the request for demolition. Commissioner Trimble seconded the motion.

The motion to deny passed by a vote of 8-0.