

CITY OF SAINT PAUL

HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION

FILE NUMBER: 15-689 Conway Street – Remove or Repair Order

DATE: November 19, 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 John Kaese House, located at 689 Conway Street, is located within the boundaries of the Dayton’s Bluff Heritage Preservation District, is categorized as contributing, and is now threatened with demolition as the City has issued an Order to Abate; and

WHEREAS, the John Kaese House, at 689 Conway Street, is two-story, frame, Queen Anne style, residence constructed in 1888 by builder, L. Metz. Cement-asbestos shingles obscure the clapboard exterior. Once a distinctive design; the gable balcony at the attic and Eastlake style brackets are extant. The two-story, front bay is typical of many Queen Anne style houses in the District. The original, open, one-bay front porch was replaced by a stoop; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Safety and Inspections issued a Remove or Repair Order on October 23, 2015 and the Legislative Hearing Officer will hear the case on November 24, 2015; and

WHEREAS, the HPC reviewed the proposal and allowed for public comment at their meeting held on November 19, 2015. Two people appeared and provided testimony both in support of delaying an order to remove, rehabbing the house, and supporting the HPC resolution. There were also two written testimony letters that were read into the record, both opposing demolition of the historic home; and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, based upon information gathered by staff and presented at their November 19, 2015 meeting, made and adopted the following findings:

1. The property is categorized as contributing to the character of the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District. It was constructed in 1888 during the period of significance for the historic district (1857-1930). At the time the building was classified as contributing, it had already been wrapped in cement-asbestos shingles and the original front porch had been replaced by a small entry stoop.
2. 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.
3. *The category of the building.* The building is classified as contributing to the architectural and historical integrity of the Dayton's Bluff Historic District. The siding and porch alterations have not acquired significance in their own right [See § 74.87(2)] given how they obscure and have altered the original features of the property. The building reads as a residence constructed in the 1880s. The building's historic and architectural integrity is fair.
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;

In the 1880s, and particularly during the peak years 1882-1884, Dayton's Bluff became a densely-built urban neighborhood. The construction of a series of bridges and the extension of streetcar service brought a new and diverse population to the bluff. Factory and railroad workers purchased small lots and erected a great variety of single and multiple-family houses. The newly-arrived settlers included recent immigrants from Sweden, Ireland, and Germany, but German-Americans were the predominant group. They joined a large contingent of well-established German-American business owners...

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 replacement of the open front porch evident. Parking in the rear yard is accessed by the alley.

The southern and northern block faces on Conway Street are contiguous, mostly with contributing structures. There is consistency in scale, rhythm, massing, and setbacks on both faces of the block. An early row-house at the eastern end of the block is the only building that doesn't conform to the massing.

There are no known other historical associations with the subject building such as persons that have contributed in some way to Saint Paul's history and development, an architect, or an association with an important event.

5. *Structural condition of the building.* On November 4, 2015, a Code Compliance Report was issued by the Department of Safety and Inspections. HPC staff has not conducted a site inspection. The original exterior features were obscured by cement-asbestos siding and wrap but decorative details of the front bay and brackets are evident. The overall exterior condition of 689 Conway Street is fair.
6. *The economic viability of the structure.* DSI has not provided a rehabilitation cost estimate, but did state that demolition costs are estimated to start at \$12,000. For 2015, Ramsey County estimates the land value at \$10,500 and the house value at \$78,600. The property is sited on a 40 ft. wide by 125 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 the building 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 would continue to contribute to the historic district.
8. HPC finds that demolition of the building at 689 Conway Street will have a negative impact on the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District. A vacant lot can also have a negative impact on the historic district and the loss of historic fabric is irreversible; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that after hearing the public testimony, the findings and recommendation of staff and discussing the Order to Abate 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 evaluate the historic resource for rehabilitation has not been fully explored; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, the HPC urges the City Council to delay an order to demolish the property and to fully consider options for rehabilitation prior to ordering removal with no option for repair. A timely and complete evaluation of the condition of the property, inside and outside, is necessary 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 S. Trimble
SECONDED BY M. Mazanec

IN FAVOR Unanimous
AGAINST
ABSTAIN