

**Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Meeting  
November 19, 2013, Room 317 City Hall**

**Date of Z&P Meeting: December 9, 2013**

## ITEM SUMMARY

- Description**      Item #8, BZH #27974  
425 Portland Ave  
Ryan Companies, US, Inc. has applied for a demolition of a historic resource to demolish the Star Tribune building at 425 Portland Ave.
- Action**            Not withstanding staff recommendation the Heritage Preservation Commission **denied** the demolition of the property at 425 Portland Ave., established interim protection; and directed the Planning Director to prepare or cause to be prepared a designation study.
- Roll Call Vote**    **Aye:**      Faucher, Haecker, Hartnett, Hunter Weir, Lackovic, L. Mack, R. Mack, Vork  
**Nay:**      Larsen  
**Absent:**    Stade

## TRANSCRIPTION

Staff Smoley presented the staff report.

**Chair Larsen:** Commissioner Hunter-Weir.

**Commissioner Hunter-Weir:** One of the conditions is salvaging the six medallions on the building, can you tell us a little bit more about that and whether that is an agreeable condition to the purchasers, if you know.

**Staff Smoley:** The applicants have not indicated that they disagree with that condition, however, I would defer to them to answer that question.

**Chair Larsen:** Commissioner Mack.

**Commissioner R. Mack:** I have two quick questions. In your review, what did you consider a period of significance for the building if you're going to be doing a designation study?

**Staff Smoley:** Commissioner Mack, members of the commission, Chair Larsen, that's a great question. That would be something that would be addressed at the designation study level. Having said that for each of the significant criterion that staff examined, we did try to keep in mind a general idea of what such a period of significance would be for the purpose of evaluating the properties integrity. When you consider the significant achievements of the Cowles family and the Star Tribune itself, and the relative appearance of the building today, which dates back to its appearance in the nineteen sixties, over fifty years ago, I think it's fairly safe to say, that using a typical fifty year mark, to guide determinations of significance, that going back to the 1960's, up through the 1960's, 1940's through the 1960's when Larson and McLaren were making their additions and when the Star Tribune company was really coming into its own

and the family was as well, that that would be considered a reasonable period of significance to make some determinations.

**Commissioner R. Mack:** My other question, I know we have clever lawyers right here in the room and they can always find some way around it, but is there any possibility that there's any kind of governmental action being it federal, state, or local, that would necessitate the compliance with historic preservation law. Like anything federal, the 106 process, anything state or local, Minnesota environmental law.

**Staff Smoley:** Commissioner Mack, Chair Larsen, members of the commission, I would defer to the applicant regarding some of their larger plans. At this point, staff reviewed an application for a wrecking permit and requested a demolition of historic resource application. As far as larger reviews go, I'm not aware of them on this particular site itself. But the applicant would be the best person to address that.

**Chair Larsen:** This is a follow up to Commissioner Mack's first point about the period of significance. You're tying it more to the final looks of the (tape unclear) of the building.

**Staff Smoley:** Chair Larsen, members of the commission, correct, the original 1919 building is a very interesting commercial style building but I think it's safe to say that the fairly extreme makeover that took place on the building both in terms of its design and in terms of its footprint, have really eliminated the buildings ability to communicate its historical significance associated with the Nonpartisan League, Oscar Newstrom, the original architect, so I think it's safe to say that any period of significance would likely be in the later say 40's to the 60's during the time when the period really obtained the look that it has now.

**Chair Larsen:** Thank you. Commissioner Hunter-Weir.

**Commissioner Hunter-Weir:** You mentioned and I read that the commission can defer/delay a decision for 180 days for people with an interest in the property, who are those people, how is that defined? Do you know? I assume there is a legal definition of who those folks might be.

**Staff Smoley:** Commissioner Hunter-Weir, Chair Larsen, members of the commission, there is not. This does allow the widest segment of the population possible to consider serving in this capacity.

**Chair Larsen:** Commissioner Mack.

**Commissioner L. Mack:** Mr. Smoley, could you kind of brief us on the survey work that's been done on this building. It seems to have kind of fallen between some cracks and it seems there was a 2011 survey, anyway, if you could bring us up to date on what kind of survey has been done.

**Chair Larsen:** Do you mean like Mead and Hunt type of survey?

**Commissioner L. Mack:** Yes has it been identified as a potential resource and was it included in any of the environmental reviews for this project?

**Staff Smoley:** Certainly Chair Larsen, Commissioner Mack, members of the commission, like many of our potential historic landmarks here in Minneapolis, it has been subject to a reconnaissance review or reconnaissance level survey. And those surveys are designed to identify properties worthy of further evaluation. We have covered the community over the course of the past decade plus, covered all the properties within the community, but we have identified numerous potential historic landmarks and districts, we have not however, conducted as many designations of properties or intensive level surveys.

So this was identified in the 2011 Mead and Hunt reconnaissance survey of the central core area as being worthy of further study. It's just adjacent to the Metrodome but was not evaluated as part of the 2013 Vikings Stadium environmental impact statement because it's just outside of the area of potential effect. There was an August 2013 environmental site assessment of the area conducted by Ryan Companies but that focuses more on environmental concerns not historic concerns. So it's understandable why that wouldn't have necessarily concluded that the property was or was not historic. There was an October 2013 Alternative Urban Areawide Review just completed by the Ryan Companies and it was for the proposed development of this block and adjacent blocks but it did not evaluate the proposed demolition of the Star Tribune building. The study did note that the subject property could be stadium related infrastructure within the meaning of the Minnesota Vikings Stadium Act, since this block and one other were identified as possible locations for a public plaza. But the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority actually purchased the block immediately east of this block for a plaza after the expiration of that review objection period. The question of the subject property eligibility for historic designation still remains up in the air. And this is arguable the most in-depth evaluation of that that's been conducted to date.

**Commissioner L Mack:** Thank you

**Chair Larsen:** Commissioner Robert Mack.

**Commissioner R Mack:** Was there any identification or study about the building in conjunction with the original LRT line?

**Staff Smoley:** Commissioner Mack, Chair Larsen, members of the commission, I'd have to take a closer look at those records.

**Chair Larsen:** Other questions at this time?

**Staff Smoley:** Having said that though, the LRT line is there, any impacts that the LRT line might have had were not considered significant enough to have stopped the project. The LRT line travels immediately adjacent to this building. So it wouldn't ruin it's eligibility for potential designation.

**Chair Larsen:** Other questions at this time? Seeing none, I'm sure we'll have some later and we will open up the public hearing. I'm sure the applicant is here?

**Bob Parr (50 S 10th St):** -Director of Development for Ryan Companies. Normally Rick Collins, the Vice President of our company would be here, whose name is synonymous with this project, but he had a long standing commitment, he is presenting at the University of St Thomas this evening and is unable to be here. I thought what I would do this evening is first just take a minute to provide a general quick overview of the project and the schedule. The proposed project totally consists of the five blocks that are currently owned by the Star Tribune media company. It is composed of a seventeen story building with a residential front on two blocks, a 1625 car ramp, seven stories, on what was the former McClellan building block, a six story residential strip along 5<sup>th</sup> Ave and the urban park. We view the proposed project as a once in a lifetime project for downtown Minneapolis. Multiple events occurred to allow us to take and bring this forward. Certainly the approval of the stadium, the requirements, and there are requirements for a parking facility, the identification of a large corporate office user, with a substantial requirement for space, the opportunity to procure the five block parcel, particularly being adjacent to transit and strong support from the City. We created a project vision sufficient to compel and attract the focus of Wells Fargo. And support from the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority as well as elected leaders and the staff of the City of Minneapolis. We have met many and presented this project to many of the business community organizations. We convened a joint meeting with the Downtown Neighborhood

Association, the Elliot Park Neighborhood Association, the Mill District Neighborhood Association and the Downtown East Council. There was solid support for our proposal as evidenced by letters of support that were written by the Elliot Park Neighborhood Association and the Downtown East Council to the board members, the City Council and to the Mayor's office. We secured conceptual approval of the project from the Minneapolis City Council on July 19<sup>th</sup> with a unanimous 13-0 vote. We have completed the environmental review via an alternative urban areawide review, we have completed the travel demand management plan and last Tuesday, we received final approval from the Minneapolis Planning Commission for the project. The City, the MSFA and Ryan are nearing completion on the terms of the agreement between the parties for the park, the parking ramp, and all of the skyways associated with the project. The same applies to our development agreement with Wells Fargo; I'm hopeful that it will be in executable form by the end of this week. The project time table includes some very critical milestones for us in order to keep everyone committed to the project. We will be seeking final City Council approval on the December 13<sup>th</sup> session and we anticipate closing with the Star Tribune on the five blocks of land on December 27<sup>th</sup>. The park is an integral component of the overall project. It will be owned by the City or a public entity. The City has established a Park Implementation Committee, much like they did for the Stadium Implementation Committee and what will happen is Ryan will provide the basic foundation for the park. They'll do the environmental radiation. We will put seed irrigation systems in, trees, street lights, sidewalks, so you will have a basic operating park area. Then what will happen is that the Park Implementation Committee will then determine what additional features they would like in the park, the overall programming for the park, and it's maintenance. We view that this supports the strategic direction of the Downtown Business Council, the strategic direction of the 2025 plan, and its goal of additional green space in the downtown area. It would be a significant enhancement to help meet another goal, and that is doubling downtown residency. It will provide a platform for street level retail. We are looking at street level retail here, here, potentially here and then of course skyway level retail. One point I missed talking about the project was the skyway itself. This project now will have a direct connection to the City skyway system via the Haaf ramp which will cross 5<sup>th</sup>, go to both buildings, Portland, Park, our project basically now ends at the end of the ramp, but as we continue to try to finalize our deal with the MSFA, there will be a continuing skyway that will go directly to the stadium. It certainly provides a clear view and connection with the stadium from east to west. It creates the interest and commitment of our major stakeholder, Wells Fargo, into making this long term commitment and locating over five to six thousand employees in these two buildings. In fact, the intent is Wells Fargo will own the office tower component of the project. Through the addition of the park, we believe that it really will enhance the City of Minneapolis as it relates to the creation of parks in the Central Business District. We did a quick review, of comparison to some significant parks around the country. Obviously, nothing compares to Central Park in New York City, in scale, this is the yard, it's a beginning but it's a very important beginning. Ryan realizes the importance of historic renovation. And I think our track record here in the City substantiates that. For those that may not know, our first historic process was the renovation of the Grain Belt brew house into the headquarters for RSP Architects. We converted the F & M Bank Building into the Westin Minneapolis Hotel. We converted the Foshay office tower into the W Foshay Hotel, and probably our most widely known project, the former Sears building at Lake and Chicago, now into the Midtown Exchange. These have been immensely successful projects and we're proud to be associated with the historic status of those buildings. And we believe that supports a strong level of credibility and understanding from Ryan's standpoint on adaptive reuse of historic buildings. When we started the project and that was basically at the first of this year, the Star Tribune had no historic designation, at either the national, state, or city level. This was even acknowledged by SHPO in their AUAR comments. Yes, it was listed in the broad report list as well as a thousand other buildings but we had to have a starting place, and we have started, that there is no designation. To have any building historic or not to be considered for redevelopment, there are several key indicators that must be assessed. Location and neighborhood, the character of the building, what use can be considered, what are the market interests in that building? Can it be brought to the market at a competitive rate, whether a purchase or leased? And

finally can it be financed? In our opinion based on our experience, the Star Tribune building does not meet those criteria in any manner. As John indicated, the building basically has had seven additions to it over the years. And none of it, in our view, is coordinated and has left many actual functional issues as far as layout and so forth are concerned. Putting aside all of the environmental challenges or anything else. These are exterior walls. The way that stairways, elevators were incorporated in the building over time, there's nine different elevators, there's multiple corridors and exit stairs. What we tried to do and I believe this is in your report; you've got a four page letter of our assessment of all of the physical challenges that will be preventive for us to be able to consider any redevelopment of that building. However, I would like you to draw attention to the letter sent by Jay Cowles, of the Cowles family and longtime chair of the Cowles Media Company. This letter has also been provided to you in your package. In it Mr. Cowles, expresses his family's support for demolition of the 425 facility, in order to allow for the creation of the park. He believes that as a newspaper the Star Tribunes history has been well documented and we agree with him. In conclusion, the full park plan is a vital component of the overall project. Without it as shown, Ryan's project will not go forward. Ryan asserts that the 425 Portland Ave building cannot be readily redeveloped into any other commercial use in an economically viable manner. Its historic significance as mentioned, the newspaper functions which operated there and it's long term ownership by the Cowles family, these relationships can be documented and reserved through the mitigation measures recommended by the staff which Ryan supports. Thank you for taking the time to listen to my two cents and I'm certainly open at this point for any of your questions.

**Chair Larsen:** Do you have questions of the applicant? Commissioner Hunter-Weir.

**Commissioner Hunter-Weir:** I think you answered it but I just want to ask it very directly. The six medallions would be saved and used in the park?

**Bob Parr:** That would clearly be our intent to take and do that. Yes

**Chair Larsen:** Mr. Bob Mack:

**Commissioner R Mack:** My questions this evening seem to be coming in pairs. It is my understanding that the park is dependent on the closure of Portland and Park Avenues and that the county has not yet signed off on that.

**Bob Parr:** Our original proposal for the project, show a comprehensive park all the way from Park, closing Park Ave, closing Portland Ave to 5<sup>th</sup>, truly making it a wonderful, wonderful area as far as opportunities for an enhanced park. We have spent considerable time, primarily with Hennepin County through Commissioners Opatz and McLaughlin, trying to deal with their concerns as it relates to what is the impact on traffic by doing that. In our AUAR we highlighted four different traffic options and it became very clear in the July time frame that we were not going to be successful in our ability to be able to take and sell the closing of those streets. We then concentrated just on Portland Avenue, the most important one. That did not happen either, we pulled that from our final AUAR document because we knew that at least at this point, the Park Implementation Committee had commenced. We had openly talked about, are there different things we could do to the street surface to make it more connected to the overall park space. You are absolutely right Commissioner Mack, at this point Portland and Park stay operational and designed as they are.

**Commissioner R Mack:** My other question relates to potential reuse of the building and the wonderful examples that you mention of the Midtown Exchange and the others, took advantage of that formerly 20% tax credit now 40% tax credit for rehabilitation. Did your economic analysis ever factor in the potential of this building being historically designated and then getting that 40% tax credit?

**Bob Parr:** Absolutely, we got 40% on the Midtown Exchange project. Yes we did. You're right it was 20%. The issue with the existing facility is, the actual physical nature of the building and what can be done and how can we use it? Here's a typical foot print of the floors of the Star Tribune. So when you look at it in comparison as it relates to what would a hotel layout look like? What would a typical commercial office floor plan look like as it relates to today's environment? What would a typical residential floor look like? None of these plans can effectively be put in this particular layout. We have varying column spaces throughout the building. We have varying floor levels throughout the building. Those are just to name two, but there is no effective way that we can go to a residential developer, a hotel developer or even ourselves, we've done both as well as office. And in our assessment, this is not space that could be potentially readapted to be able to sell in any financial feasible, viable alternative to take in the door for anybody.

**Chair Larsen:** Commissioner Hartnett.

**Commissioner Hartnett:** I appreciate your very compelling arguments that you've made, if you could help to educate me a little bit more on why this park would not be viable without demolishing this building.

**Bob Parr:** A variety of reasons. One is that clearly we want to be able to with the City with the MSFA with the Vikings; we want to have a clear vision so when you are in the stadium you're looking across and you can see the Minneapolis skyline, all the key elements there. But equally as compelling as Wells Fargo looks at the overall project, imagine the environment that this creates for their employees, as well as the fact that, just the openness of the downtown east LRT block as it is called keeps this a major event. The other thing that it will do, it gives us the opportunity to look at a full range of events that can happen to the park. It also gives us the ability, another objective of the Downtown 2025 plan, is to have a better connection with the University of Minnesota. Looking at what's happening on Washington Avenue and this, I think everyone has recognized that 35W represents kind of a wall between the City and the University. We view that this is another link in the chain of continuing to help expand that and even potential use for U of M intermural types of activities as well.

**Chair Larsen:** Commissioner Vork.

**Commissioner Vork:** As it relates to your assessment of the viability or lack thereof at an attempt to reuse, did you presumably consider demolishing some of the additions and getting back to a smaller building?

**Bob Parr:** That certainly was reviewed, but at the end of the day, if we look at the advantages of what we're trying to do and have with the park, a partial component of a building just does not meet the overall criteria that we were looking for and that would be pretty ineffective in our view. I do have, Chairmen Larsen, committee members, a letter that we would like to have go on record as far as our positioning. There is one more member of our team that would like to take and have two minutes to speak if you have no further questions for me.

**Chair Larsen:** Any more questions at this time? Commissioner Lackovic has a question for you.

**Commissioner Lackovic:** I was just wondering if you comment a little bit on the studies that have been done. It seems to me that all of the other blocks, surrounding blocks, have had intensive review, both for environmental impact statements, area wide review, and yet this block seems to have been missed.

**Bob Parr:** This was included.

**Commissioner Lackovic:** But not the demolition of the building as the staff report says, is that statement correct?

**Bob Parr:** To me, it's what study are we talking about. As far as the AUAR is concerned it did go through an initial draft, it was distributed as required by law. We did get feedback comments, one of them was from SHPO and they requested that we do an archeological study, which our consultant did. (Tape unclear) they did say there is no designation for this building, but yet simply said, anything that you can do they would support as it relates to maintaining the building and potentially going for some type of historic designation. We did do the archeological study and provided it to them at their request but as I said for all the reasons on the park, and how important it is as a component to the project, we did not do anything as far as doing any additional assessments from a historic standpoint in assessing the building.

**Chair Larsen:** Thank you.

**Tom Johnson: (Gray Plant Moody 500 IDS Center):** I've been assisting Ryan Company on certain aspects of the development project. I'm going to focus my comments on finding number four of the staff report, which I think is on page ten. That finding states that reasonable alternatives to demolition exist but the applicant wishes to use the entire block as a park, a major public amenity for the neighborhood and the city at large. The only alternative use however that's suggested in the report itself, the staff report, is that the status quo could be maintained, but that's not going to happen, that's not realistic. The building functionally no longer suitable for its printing and publishing business, Star Tribune Company is looking to sell the property and lease space elsewhere. The status quo is not going to continue. Certainly we are whole heartily supportive of the reason that was cited for demolition of the building, which is we are going to create a major public amenity here. What I want to do very briefly is to make sure you are aware of the other reasons why no alternative exist to the demolition as well. I would start with the fact that the proposed park is really integral to the Downtown East development project and Mr. Parr spoke to that. What we mean specifically is that without the park, there is no major tenant who's willing to make the required investment. Without the required investment that Wells Fargo would make the project doesn't go forward, it's that integral, it's a game stopper. There's not much more that can be said for that but that is a reason why there is no alternative to demolition. Secondly, the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority considers the proposed park to be part of the infrastructure for the stadium project. Now, this means that the proposed park is serving a dual function. It is a shared design element for the Downtown East development and for the stadium project. This by the way doesn't relate to the block that the Sports Facilities Authority recently purchased, which is the block that the light rail station is on. That's part of their stadium project too for sure but the stadium infrastructure includes this east west alternative that incorporates this park. Now nailing that orientation for the park down for the Sports Facilities Authority, is still pending the resolution and finalization of all of the agreements that are out there that have to be executed yet, all of which are headed....(tape ended)...those are in place, and the McClellan block over here becomes a parking ramp, that dictates the orientation for the Sports Facilities Authorities purposes of this east west park plaza that they consider part of their stadium infrastructure. Thirdly, I'd like to talk a little bit about the fact that the permit application and the information that's contained in it, sets out the basis for no reasonable alternative determination based on applying the HPC ordinance. When you look at that ordinance, the factors, not exclusive, but the factors that are listed, the building integrity, the usefulness of the existing structure, the cost of renovation, the feasible alternative uses for the building, all of that was analyzed within the application and in particular in a letter that is dated October 23<sup>rd</sup> that Collins sent to Mr. Smoley. And in here there's a detailed analysis, and I'm not going to go through it but I'm just calling your attention to it because I think it has information in it that needs to be, and should have been really, included within the staff report so that you can see how this building and it's demolition meets the criteria that you're supposed to look at, not a through list just a partial list, but the criteria that

are specifically listed in the ordinance. This letter goes through the functionality of the existing building and talks about the fact that it's only 50 percent occupied and that it's no longer fit for its custom built purpose, looks at the comparison of the existing floor plates to the current development standards, Mr. Parr, spoke about that, including all possible uses, there are serious issues with this building, whether you try to use the entire building or just a part of it, in no small part because of the interior structure and the way in which the structural grid would impede any current design, whether an office space, hotel space, or residential space. So I call your attention to this letter, it documents very thoroughly the issues presented in trying to reuse this building, with the conclusion being reached as Mr. Parr spoke of, that there isn't a feasible reuse for the building given the way in which it evolved over the years and its current structure. Finally, let me just say that the HPC ordinance provides for mitigation that's appropriate to the significance of the property. Here, Mr. Smoley determined significance was based on the use of the property and the people associated with the property. Not, the architectural aspects of the property. That makes the mitigation recommendation inappropriate, because that mitigation recommendation that speaks to capturing the history of the Star Tribune and its predecessor papers, goes to how the building was used and who was using it. That can be captured independent of the fact that the building is demolished and as Mr. Parr has indicated, Ryan Companies is willing to do that. Unless there are questions, we wanted to make sure that it is in the record fully, that there are adequate reasons to say you can't save this building; so there isn't an alternative to demolition. Plus other reasons that say look there is no alternative to demolishing it because it's integral to both the stadium project and the east downtown development project.

**Chair Larsen:** Questions? Commissioner Hunter-Weir.

**Commissioner Hunter-Weir:** It sounds to me as though this entire project is dependent on Wells Fargo. Because the idea is if Wells Fargo bails, everything or nothing moves forward. To a certain extent the timeline is based on Wells Fargo agreeing very quickly. Is that right? Am I understanding that? I just want to clarify.

**Tom Johnson:** I'll let Mr. Parr answer that.

**Bob Parr:** There is no question Commissioner Hunter-Weir and committee members that the importance of obtaining Wells Fargo's approval to the tenant in this project is fundamental. Is that one of our base objectives for making the project happen? Without question. There is another fundamental objective as well, and that is the ramp itself. The ramp, we're buying the land, we will build the ramp for the MSFA. The MSFA will be the owner, Ryan will be the operator but what that does is, simply said, is Ryan is making a financial guarantee to the City that the difference between any shortfall on the GEO Bonds that they will be issued to make the park, Ryan is making up the difference. So there are those two fundamentals from a business standpoint, but I will tell you equally as important, if we are unable to deliver the two blocks of park, Wells Fargo does have a contingency and in my view, they will walk from the project.

**Chair Larsen:** Commissioner Haecker.

**Commissioner Haecker:** What's the construction type of the five buildings? Masonry, load bearing, type one or two. The existing Star Tribune buildings that you want to demolish. Steel frame, cast concrete?

**Bob Parr:** I don't know if I know right off the top. It certainly looks more cast concrete as far as the structural columns are concerned. To me it could be a mix between the two.

**Chair Larsen:** Other questions at this time. Ok, seeing none. Are there members of the audience that interested in speaking for or against this application? Raise your hand if you are interested in speaking. Please step forward.

**Todd Grover (1807 Saunders St Paul MN):** I am president of the local Docomomo chapter. There hasn't been many opportunities for me to be on this side of the diocese, I use to be a commissioner. Docomomo is an acronym for an international preservation organization called the Documentation, Conservation of Buildings, Sites, and Neighborhoods of the Modern Movement. I am president of the Minnesota chapter, which part of the national chapter, which part of the international chapter of a large organization of preservationist, conservationist, urban planners, looking at how to raise awareness, but also be an advocate, and also understand how to conserve buildings of the modern movement. Typically we look at buildings in the U.S. from World War II up through the mid-70, sometimes that changes, depending on the site, depending on the building, but that's just our general parameters that we work under. I hope most of you, all of you, received the letter that we sent. In essence there are two things that I want to emphasize. One is, this general understanding what these buildings of the modern movement, what is their significance? And I think this is purely evident of what is happening at this building here. We do not understand, and the staff has talked about it, and you've even brought it up here, that there is this lack of understanding of what the significance of this building is. There is a history of the Star Tribune but there's also a history of the significance of this building that relates to the Star Tribune both culturally but also as a built resource. I think that's something that really has been discussed, has been brought forward, that we really are missing that understanding of what this is. That's really one of the main things we're asking for is to deny the demolition to properly understand what the significance is. Being a former member of HPC, I know one of the mandates is to look at the significance of a property whether or not it is a landscape, whether or not it is a cultural property or a building, to make your determination if a building should be torn down knowing all of the parameters, all of the information within that. Really what we've seen is a lack of understanding what this building contributes to the history of the Star Tribune, the history of this neighborhood. We talked a little about what this neighborhood is, we really don't know what the significance of this post-war neighborhood is, we have some idea of how this building was related to the original, but what happened after World War II in this neighborhood, how does this building relate to it? We really don't know that context, and that's really what this designation process would help to talk about. The second thing that I could talk about, is some of the development of this area, and that would be leading on into potentially keeping this building, but I think what we need to do is first understand what the significance of this building is. That's kind of my second part, we can talk more and more detail about alternatives, things working within, but really we don't know what is the significance of this building is as it stands. That's why we as Docomomo part of this academic research of learning and understanding what is entailed in this building. That's one of the baselines that we need to understand before we can make the determination that this building should be torn down for other resources or for other uses and so that's really the emphasis that I want to bring forward to you and I do hope that you do deny this demolition permit and move forward to a designation process to really fully understand what this building represents to us. Thank you.

**Edna Brazaitis (4 Grove St):** I am here sort of for two purposes. One, I want to talk about the significance of why this property is historically significant and secondly, I'm speaking in lieu of my colleague Lisa (tape unclear), to explain why we don't perceive approving this demolition is going down a slippery slope, it's just driving off a cliff. First, Tammy Lindberg who is one of your colleagues, asked me to look into the history of the Cowles and the Star Tribune and I agree with John, that this is worthy of designation just alone on the importance of these people. This isn't a paperback book type of person, these are people that are on the cover of Time Magazine and when you think of the innovation that they did in the publishing industry it was fantastic. A lot of you've heard about the difference between Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire is that she did everything backwards and in high heels. And that's what John

Cowles did when he came to the Twin Cities, because he came here in the midst of The Depression. 1934 was the trucking strike, all of you've heard about that, violence. In 1935 when John invested one million dollars to buy the Star, twenty five percent of people in some Minneapolis neighborhoods were unemployed. The Star wasn't an immediate success, he was losing two hundred thousand dollars a year, but still he really wanted to go forward, with his new ideas, his new innovations, he was willing to bet to on the future of this city. And he believed, as John Smoley said, that the editorial staff should be different than the news staff. He believed that you should not be free from influence of your competitors. He was faced a very hostile environment. And at the end of his life, he said, what was he proudest of. He said bigotry in the form of anti-Semitism and second class treatment of Negroes was pervasive here when he entered the Minneapolis newspaper field. Cowles recalls, he thinks his newspapers have played a constructive role in making Minneapolis a more enlightened community. So what this person and his newspaper did was change the cultural of this city. We wouldn't be what we are today without this newspaper and the Cowles family. Jay Cowles and his family they feel that it is ok to be in a book, but that is not enough for me. I've been working on historic tours and I know if the building isn't there and you show people a picture, and you say this used to be the building, they can't imagine it. This is the last and the best example to illustrate our history to the people in the future, a whole way of dealing with the news in a different way, so it's a very significant building. The second issue is brought by my colleague Lisa and she's talking about the demolition itself. And she's gone through what are the logical ways to justify a demolition. We have all agreed that the building is a historic resource and demolition isn't necessary to correct a unsafe or dangerous condition. And staff believes there are alternatives, the developer doesn't but as Commissioner Vork said, there may be opportunities to pare back the building, leave a larger area for the park. We really don't think we've explored those fully. We really feel strongly that using this idea that it's going to be a park justifies a demolition is extremely dangerous especially for people like me who live in the St. Anthony Falls Historic District because a lot of the land is owned by the Park Board. It would be really easy for the Park Board to say, we want open views, it would be so nice to not have this building here, we could get rid of it and we'll have a larger park, and it will spur whatever. There are people that live in historic buildings that are land leased from the Park Board; the Park Board has historic resources, and some of us live on private land that is surrounded by park. So for you to say this is an ok excuse that it's going to be a park, because nothing in the ordinance says that a park is more important than a historic resource. Kitty corner from this building probably somewhere is the Armory, and Hennepin County wanted to tear down the Armory, and they said we have to do it because we need to build a jail. And they had public safety, economic reasons, all kinds of reasons why they wanted to tear it down, it sounded pretty good but the Minnesota Supreme Court said nope, none of those trump the destruction of a historic resource. So that's kind of the standard that you're looking at. I think Lisa said, finally, there are lots of parks in the area. There's Elliot Park, Central Riverfront Park, and there's really only one remaining newspaper building, and that's it. It's not going to be a real park; I think Arlene will talk about that. It's going to be owned by the City, we understood Hilary, that there's no restrictive covenant on it to protect it always as a park? Is that true? And some other parks that have been City parks for redevelopment have been the Gateway, that's no longer there. This one I would have done as a quiz. This is the park in front of the post office, Pioneer Square, also a redevelopment park that's no longer there. It's very valuable real estate; the City is bonding for sixty five million dollars. I'm glad to hear that you're going to be putting lights and sidewalks on it, at Planning Commission, Committee of the Whole that was in question whether it was just going to be bare grass. A lot of this is a park to come and you're going to be sacrificing a historic resource for it. Thank you very much.

**Chair Larsen:** Thank you, anybody else?

**Arlene Freed (1109 Xerxes Ave S):** I am co-founder of an organization called Park Watch, we've been around about ten years, we are one of the reasons why we no longer have Gurban as superintendent, we are a watch dog group, attending Park Board meetings and following the Park Board. My comment is I

am very aware of the fact that budgets are limited and my concern is about the park. There is going to be also, Edna spoke to parks, existing parks that I will mention, there is going to be park land fairly near there with the old Fuji Ya plan. There will be other parks in the general area; I think Edna pointed that out also. One of my concerns is I don't know that the City usually owns parks, it usually the Park Board that owns parks and what I do know right now is that funds are very limited. The Park Board has what is it fifty something acres of land and it's a problem maintaining the flowers, maintaining the trees, maintaining what you put on land and if you have a new park, you have to landscape, I mean hardscape it, you have to design it, and you have to maintain it. So, where is all the money coming from for that? So you have to start it with the hardscaping and the architectural designing of it, the landscape architectural designing of it and then constant maintenance and I know our Park Board, I don't think is prepared to take on the responsibility of another park. I know our staff is strapped. The planning staff is strapped and I know the people that do the maintenance there are also strapped. So I guess my question is do we need another park? Who is going to own it and who is going to maintain it? And that is a good question and if you are bonding for it all the questions about the taxpayers picking up extra tabs so that is my concern thank you.

**Chair Larsen:** Thank you is there anybody else that wishes to speak for or against the application please step forward at this time. Ok, close the public hearing. Commissioners, who wants to go first?  
Commissioner Bob Mack.

**Commissioner R Mack:** I think that, clearly I am in favor of preservation of the building. And I think there are a variety of reasons other than just I'm biased towards older buildings. In the staff report criterion three mentions Downtown East being focused on the Mills, but I don't think that's totally accurate. The Emerson-Newton Plow Company was in no way related to the Mills and it's between the river and the Star Tribune building. There are a number of warehouse type buildings so to say that because the Star Tribune doesn't relate to the Mills I think is not correct. I think that there are some issues with the mitigation suggestions. I think salvage of remnants and reinstalling them is never considered significant mitigation. Certainly, it wouldn't meet the standards of S H P O or the National Park Service. I think that doing a detailed written history in no way mitigates demolition of a building. You could have done that historic piece about the newspaper years ago, or you could do it years in the future. And in no way in my opinion is that a tradeoff for a loss of this resource. I think that to some extent that the whole discussion of the park is a little bit weak as well, really its separate parks, not one park, so to talk about THE Park, I think is not accurate. You're not going to have kids running back and forth across the street. Finally I think that to talk about there's no reasonable option is a little bit erroneous. Erwin Jacob said for years that, there's no reasonable use of the Grain Belt Brewery, it's not built for anything except a brewery, and you have to tear it down. But Ryan Companies is the one that fixed it up and made it into a success, so I think that argument again falls flat.

**Chair Larsen:** Linda Mack.

**Commissioner L Mack:** I think all these comments are relevant, but our job as a commission is to consider the significance of this building. I am very disappointed that that has not been done up to this point. The staff report says that criterion three, that it's kind of an outlier in this part of the city, but it actually defines this part of the city. I mean newspaper row was long gone by 1939; the Star Tribune was what this part of the city was about. The staff report says it doesn't have any distinctive architectural characteristics yet it's one of the few 1940's buildings, it may be the only, that we have in the downtown area. I guess the Armory would be the closest that was mid 30's. So it does have a very strong architectural identity, kind of modernists stripped down art deco that was characteristic of that time period. I think our job is to ensure that this building gets it due. We probably can't make sure that it survive but we can make sure that it has a decent burial.

**Chair Larsen:** Commissioner Hunter-Weir.

**Commissioner Hunter-Weir:** I'm feeling lots better listening to all of you. I find this one just awful. Partly because I have sort of a passion for art deco signs All Over Town, Talk Diner and a few certain others. The façade of that building really is iconic in this part of town. The rest of the building I haven't paid a whole lot of attention to but that is such a prominent feature in this part of town. I think the think that I'm troubled by is the time table, that we're talking about this now with a December 13<sup>th</sup> or December 27<sup>th</sup> deadline. When in theory, there's 180 days in there for people to get their act together and make a really definitive statement about this. Someone asked me earlier to nominate this building and I didn't feel like I had enough information to do it. Tonight I'm feeling like I don't have enough information to vote in favor of demolition. I feel like I'm just missing such a huge piece of this. I think that this is one of those times where rush to judgment I find very, very disturbing. Saving the medallions would be my absolute bottom line and you know how crazy I am about plaques in place of buildings. It's just not the same thing. I'm just feeling that this is too rushed.

**Chair Larsen:** Anyone else? Commissioner Hartnett

**Commissioner Hartnett:** A few points, first I think that the argument that this can't be redeveloped, I mean I have trouble with that. I see the Pillsbury A Mill which has one wall bowed in two and a half feet and their redeveloping that so if the engineers and architects and developers and planners can figure that out it seems to me that they can figure this out. It seems to me it might be a great school by the way. Another point is it seems to me that Minneapolis does a really nice job of, and strives, and does a good job of balancing the new with the old and the historic, that we embrace new and we have beautiful new structures. But we also have beautiful old and we work hard to embrace those. And I guess honestly for me I don't see the balance here. I see the project meeting Wells Fargo's needs, I see it meeting the Viking's stadiums needs and it could be argued, that frankly I can't afford to take my family to a Vikings game so you're not going to find me there on a Sunday. So I don't know if that meets the needs of the population of Minneapolis. So it meets those needs, but it disregards the need to preserve the historic fabric. It seems to me that a creative way, that this could be a perfect project that we can take an iconic mid-century building and somehow use it in there and whether it becomes a brew pub as part of it or whether it becomes some other resource, I think it could work. It just seems to me that there has not been enough emphasis and enough interest in doing that. That's my little soap box. But I also think that in the end for me I agree with Commissioner Mack and the others, we have not given time to study it. Todd did a terrific job of making that point.

**Chair Larsen:** Commissioner Vork.

**Commissioner Vork:** I'm kind of the same page as far as feeling like there's not been enough information here to make a really strong decision. I do want to say that I'm so impressed with Ryan Companies adaptive reuse of these other buildings and that's maybe part of what in my mind is making me want to sort of hold you to a higher standard. I would like to see reuse of this building options even ruled out if necessary. One of the thoughts I had, and I'm not an architect or a developer, could this be preserved as a ruin somehow, incorporated into the park. You have the façade but maybe you don't have to worry about the interior layout. I don't know if that's feasible, but I would like to see those kinds of options considered and ruled out if they're totally unfeasible. I don't feel like those particular options have been ruled out.

**Chair Larsen:** Commissioner Haecker.

**Commissioner Haecker:** I appreciate all of the effort that the applicants put together. But I think we've been here before. We'd be hypocritical if we didn't do what I'm just about to motion for. We got to apply the same criteria across the board and we'll tie up little small houses that had a significant dog that lived there. There are obviously a few criteria; there are two of them for sure that Dr. Smoley pointed out. There are other ones with the Modern Movement and other things, potentially it's historic, and so we have to direct the City to do a designation study. That's what we're here for. There's other means that the developer could go through to try to get around that but that's what I see our purview here is for. I make a motion to direct the City to perform a designation study and place the property under interim protection.

**Commissioner Faucher:** Second

**Chair Larsen:** Commissioner Faucher on the second, discussion on the motion? I just want to make a comment. I think what's a little disappointing to me is the developers comment that it wasn't listed on the national register or it wasn't as a city landmark, but they should have none that all demolitions come through the HPC and that this was something that they would eventually end up at. So whether or not this could have been done at an earlier time or to allow for more time I do think that that option existed. So it's unfortunate in that sense that they feel to be under this kind of pressure. Commissioner Mack.

**Commissioner Mack:** Do we need to amend the motion to say that the HPC votes to deny the demolition permit and direct the study?

**Chair Larsen:** I think that would be helpful.

**Commissioner Haecker:** I accept that friendly motion.

**Commissioner Faucher:** As do I.

**Chair Larsen:** So the motion is to deny the demolition permit and to direct the staff to place the property under interim protection and conduct a designation study. Ok. Yes Hilary.

**Hilary Dvorak:** Could we make sure that we add in the standard language that we have.

**Chair Larsen:** Cause to prepare or cause to be prepared. If I understand correctly your motion is to deny the demolition request, to place the property under interim protection and to prepare or cause to be prepared a designation study on the property.

**Hilary Dvorak:** That gives the applicant the option of doing the designation study themselves.

**Commissioner Faucher:** Accepted.

**Chair Larsen:** What that does do, they can work like the dickens. So, it doesn't have to take forever. Ok, so, discussion on the motion? Does everyone understand the motion? We'll call the roll.