

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development
Demolition of a Historic Resource
BZH-28034

Date: January 21, 2014

Address: 1315 4th Street Southeast

Project Name: Demolition of a commercial building at 1315 4th Street Southeast

Applicant: Doran Development, LLC

Contact Person and Phone: Anne Behrendt, Doran Development LLC (952-288-2005)

CPED Staff and Phone: Janelle Widmeier, Senior City Planner (612-673-3156)

Date Application Deemed Complete: December 30, 2013

End of 60-Day Decision Period: February 28, 2014

Ward: 3 **Neighborhood Organization:** Marcy Holmes Neighborhood Association

BACKGROUND

The applicant seeks to demolish the commercial building located at the property of 1315 4th Street Southeast. In September 2013, the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) informed the applicant that the demolition of the structure requires a Demolition of Historic Resource application because it may meet at least one of the local designation criteria as it is located in the potential Dinkytown Historic District, is the work of a master architect, and embodies distinctive characteristics of an architectural style.

A small area planning process is currently underway for Dinkytown, a 4-block commercial area which includes the subject site. One focus of the draft *Dinkytown USA Business District Plan* is heritage preservation, which includes the following information (the entire draft plan can be found at <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/projects/dinkytownplan>):

Located at the intersection of 4th Street SE and 14th Avenue Southeast, near the oldest part of the University of Minnesota campus, Dinkytown has served as a social and commercial district for university students and faculty since the early twentieth century. The potential commercial historic district is generally bounded by 13th Avenue SE on the west, 15th Ave SE on the east, 5th St SE on the north, and the railroad corridor on the south. It also includes the building located at the northeast corner of University Ave SE and 15th Ave SE known as the Dinkydome.

This commercial node was constructed in three distinct phases. The first phase, centered on the intersection and along each side of 14th Ave SE, occurred from 1900 to the 1920s. The second phase included buildings constructed in the late 1940s to 1955, mid-block along the north side of 4th St SE, east and west of the intersection. The last phase of construction occurred in the early 1970s to build out the edges of the potential historic

district. Since that time, there has been fairly little-recently constructed infill development.

Although there have been alterations over time, such as storefront changes to early twentieth century buildings, the potential commercial district retains a good degree of integrity. It also represents a more intact commercial node associated with the University compared to Stadium Village, located on the University's eastern edge.

The Dinkytown commercial district is an important historic resource that is directly linked to the growth of the University of Minnesota and the residential population of the surrounding neighborhood. The commercial district began to develop in 1875 when the Minneapolis Street Railway Company constructed its first station and storage center on the corner of 14th Avenue SE and 4th Street SE. Since then the commercial district has progressed into a crossroads of commerce, culture, and community due to its proximity to downtown and the U of M.

Dinkytown's first major commercial buildings—two three-story buildings on 14th Avenue SE between 4th and 5th Streets—were constructed in 1880. The 14th Avenue corridor, between University Avenue and 5th Street, was at the center of the commercial development that progressed through the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Many of the remaining structures located along 14th Avenue were built between the early 1900s and late 1920s.

Much of the rapid construction that occurred in Dinkytown during this time can be attributed to the streetcar, which had several lines serving the area. The original station and storage area was located where the Loring Pasta Bar sits today. This station became the point of entry for students commuting from across the region to the University. The lines running through Dinkytown connected Minneapolis and St. Paul as well as surrounding cities. Anyone heading east-west by streetcar would pass through the neighborhood, which connected this commercial district and the surrounding neighborhood and university to the cities beyond. With all the traffic moving through the area, Dinkytown grew in importance, becoming known as the “second downtown Minneapolis,” furthering interest in the commercial development potential of the neighborhood.

The services provided within the Dinkytown area are much different than what would have been found even sixty years ago. Until the late twentieth century, the businesses were primarily student- and neighborhood-centric; almost any daily necessity could readily be found in the commercial district. Study of the Minneapolis city directories from 1900 through 1960, reveals that there was a diverse range of businesses, from bakeries, groceries, cleaners, hardware stores, and a butcher shop, to clothing stores, gift shops, camera shops, jewelry stores, and cafes. With such a large and diverse number of businesses, it is apparent that this four-block commercial district was important to the surrounding neighborhood, university, and region.

Typically within historic urban areas, each neighborhood has a commercial center that attended to the needs and services of the local population, however, Dinkytown is even more important because it supported not just area residents, but students, workers,

university faculty and staff, and locals alike. This local service- and goods-based commercial activity is not as apparent today; according to contemporary news accounts, the business activity in the area began to decline in the 1970s. This was blamed, at the time, on the addition of national chains and the gradual closing of businesses providing everyday services, a national as well as a regional trend. Local businesses tend to be subject to changing demographics and commercial trends.

In Dinkytown, the s[a]me concern over the viability of local businesses has been present for the past 40 years. An article from 1989 in the Star Tribune echoes these concerns: according to one Dinkytown business owner, “It’s more of a plastic area than it once was. You have more corporate stores taking over. Dinkytown is basically turning into a big corporate entity...I don’t have a good feeling for what’s going to happen in five or ten years down the road.” These concerns are not far removed from many of those expressed during the public engagement process of the small area plan. The following recommendations provide the framework for meeting these concerns and preserving the local business flavor, as well as the historic building stock, of Dinkytown.

Dinkytown has the reputation of being a “Bohemian” place, especially from the late 1950s through the 1970s. The Bohemian culture of Dinkytown can be attributed to its proximity to the University of Minnesota and the events of that time period. One business that exemplified this unique cultural bent was the Ten O’clock Scholar, which operated at the corner of 14th Avenue SE and 5th Street SE (since replaced by a small strip mall and surface parking lot). The Ten O’clock Scholar was a coffee shop that featured live music, making it reminiscent of coffee shops in New York City that were frequented by the beatniks. During Bob Dylan’s time in Dinkytown, the coffee shop was a popular spot for him to play live as he tried to gain experience and start out his music career. The neighborhood was known in the late 1950s through the 1960s as a funky hangout for the fringe subculture. In a 1996 article from the University of Minnesota alumni magazine, a University professor was quoted as saying, “Dinkytown made you believe we could have a little patch of Greenwich Village in the Twin Cities.”

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, this strong Bohemian culture was paired with the political unrest typical of college and university campuses across the U.S., riled by the Vietnam War. Dinkytown became a lightning rod for protests and marches. The 1968 DFL political caucuses held within the neighborhood swelled to ten times the normal attendance levels as the young residents of the area became more politically outspoken and active. As students mobilized and united in support of political, social, and environmental causes, one particular incident—directly related to the built and small-business character of Dinkytown, issues that are still relevant today—lives in infamy. The proposed construction of a free-standing Red Barn fast-food restaurant in the spring of 1970 sparked an epic protest that demonstrated to the surrounding area, city, and state that the young people of Dinkytown were tired of outside forces controlling their neighborhood, their daily lives, and their futures.

After the Red Barn corporation proposed building a restaurant at 1307-1311 4th Street SE, the newly vacated buildings were quickly occupied by students. Eventually the protestors were flushed out by police and the buildings subsequently torn down overnight. After this the students rallied and formed a “People’s Park” on the site—complete with flowers and playground equipment—that they occupied until Red Barn finally withdrew its proposal.

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The students had successfully blocked development from occurring in Dinkytown, making the point that with community-wide support and grassroots action, the character of Dinkytown could be preserved. The Red Barn never came to the site, though two new single story buildings were eventually constructed for other uses.

The Architecture-History Property Inventory completed as part of the draft small area plan identifies the period of significance of the potential Dinkytown Historic District as 1899 through 1971. According to the draft plan, the potential district appears to be a candidate for local designation under *Criterion 1* for its association with significant events or periods and under *Criterion 3* for containing distinctive elements of the City’s identity, and/or for the National Register under *Criterion A: Community Planning and Development* in an area of commerce. The 2011 Historic Resources Inventory for the Central Core Area, which included the Marcy Holmes neighborhood, does not identify the property as being individually eligible for local or national designation. According to the Inventory, the potential district appears to be eligible for local designation under *Criterion 1: History* and *Criterion 4: Architecture* and for the National Register under *Criterion A: Commerce* and *Criterion C: Architecture*.

The draft small area plan currently recommends pursuing National Register of Historic Places designation and establishing a local conservation district, but it does not recommend establishing a local historic district. (These recommendations are subject to change as the public process for adopting the plan as City policy has yet to begin.)

DESCRIPTION

A 2-story commercial building is located at the property of 1315 4th Street Southeast. No other structures exist on the site. (An older building, constructed before 1908, was demolished prior to the construction of the current building.) The site is a 10,928 square foot lot (approximately 66 feet wide by 165 feet deep). City building permit records indicate that the existing building on this site was originally constructed as a one-story office building in 1955. A second story addition was added in 1961. The second story is wider than the first story, which created a driveway under the building in order to maintain vehicle access to the rear parking area on the property (the site does not have access to a public alley). The primary exterior materials are a mix of concrete block and wood siding. The original owner of the building was C.B. Christiansen, a realty company, which occupied office space in the structure. A bank branch was also located in the building for decades, though it is now tenanted by other retail and office uses.

Most relevant alterations and building permits are noted in the following table.

Type	Date	Notes
Construction	1955	One-story office building – 42x32x10
Addition	1961	Second-story addition to office building – 32x66x10
Renovation	1976	Repairs to canopy due to truck damage
Renovation	1978	Interior remodeling and night deposit addition
Renovation	2012	New exterior cladding of existing restaurant

PROPOSED CHANGES

The applicant is proposing to demolish the building at 1315 4th Street Southeast in order to construct a hotel development located at the properties of 1315-1319 4th Street Southeast. A proposed site plan and

massing diagrams are attached for reference. If the demolition of the structure is approved, the applicant is encouraged to utilize deconstruction services and recycling of materials.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CPED notified the neighborhood association and the surrounding property owners. Any correspondence, if received, will be forwarded to the Heritage Preservation Commission.

NECESSITY OF DEMOLITION

The Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, Title 23, Heritage Preservation, Chapter 599 Heritage Preservation Regulations states that before approving the demolition of a property determined to be an historic resource, the commission shall make findings that the demolition is necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property, or that there are no reasonable alternatives to the demolition. In determining whether reasonable alternatives exist, the commission shall consider, but not be limited to the significance of the property, the integrity of the property and the economic value or usefulness of the existing structure, including its current use, costs of renovation and feasible alternative uses. The commission may delay a final decision for up to 180 days to allow parties interested in preserving the historic resource a reasonable opportunity to act to protect it.

SIGNIFICANCE

In CPED's review, the subject property does not appear eligible for local designation.

Criterion #1: The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history.

The property is located in Dinkytown, which appears to be eligible for local and national designation. As mentioned above, this commercial district has progressed into a crossroads of commerce, culture, and community since the late 1800's due to its proximity to downtown and the University of Minnesota. Since the building was constructed in 1955, it has contained a variety of commercial uses that have contributed to the history of the district. Two of the earlier businesses included C.B. Christiansen Realtors and Marquette Bank. It does not appear that there were any significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history that were specific to this one property.

Criterion #2: The property is associated with the lives of significant persons or groups.

The property does not appear to be significant under this criterion. The original one-story part of the building was built by the Central Construction Company, designed by the architects McClure and Kerr, and owned by C.B. Christiansen Realtors. The second story of the building was built by B.O.E. Inc. and designed by Kerr-Johnson Inc. At that time, it was still under the ownership of C.B. Christiansen Realtors. Other than the architects (see criterion #6 below), no records were found for the others indicating significance.

Criterion #3: The property contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city or neighborhood identity.

See criterion #1 above.

Criterion #4: The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction.

The building's style is a form of midcentury modern commercial architecture. It features a number of characteristics of this style, including a lack of ornament, emphasis on rectangular forms and horizontal and vertical lines, and use of modern materials and systems (e.g. concrete block). The simple style of postwar buildings like this one represents a departure from more elegant architecture of earlier decades, towards more of a focus on accessibility and customer service. The convenience of the side entrance adjacent to the driveway may reflect this trend as well. The side entrance door in the drive-through area appears to be original, which may have provided a more convenient access for customers arriving by vehicle. However, this is not an early example of a building designed to accommodate the automobile. For example, drive-through windows have been in use since the 1930's. The property does not embody any distinctive characteristics of an engineering type or style, or method of construction.

Criterion #5: The property exemplifies a landscape design or development pattern distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design or detail.

The property does not exemplify a landscape design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design or detail. No landscaping exists on the site.

Criterion #6: The property exemplifies works of master builders, engineers, designers, artists, craftsmen or architects.

Although associated with notable architects, the property does not exemplify works of master builders, engineers, designers, artists, craftsmen or architects. Frank Kerr was involved in the design of both construction phases of the building. His architectural career spanned from 1946 into the 1990's and included both residential and commercial design. When the original part of the building was constructed in 1955, he was a partner with Harlan McClure. That partnership lasted from 1952 to 1955. Kerr-Johnson Inc. (partnership between Kerr and Harley Johnson) is the architect of record for the building permit that was issued in 1961 for the second floor addition. However, that partnership formally ended in 1962. He designed other buildings that better exemplify his work and midcentury modern architecture, such as the Grace Lutheran Church located in St. Paul.¹ As with Kerr, this building does not exemplify Harlan McClure's or Harley Johnson's work.

Criterion #7: The property has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Research of the property did not yield information important to prehistory or history, and therefore, should not be evaluated for archeological significance.

¹ Lathrop, Alan. Minnesota Architects: A Biographical Dictionary. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

INTEGRITY

The National Register traditionally recognizes a property's integrity through seven aspects or qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The subject property retains the integrity required to be a contributing resource in the potential Dinkytown Historic District.

Location: The building remains in its original location, indicating the building maintains integrity of location.

Design: Since the second floor was constructed in 1961, the size and proportion of the building has not changed. Most of the original exterior materials appear to remain. Fenestration patterns appear to have been retained on the front of the building. Bands of window openings on the rear façade may have been walled in. If this is the case, the alteration appears to be reversible. The driveway under the building remains open. The original design has been altered somewhat by a replacement storefront window and the addition of an ATM on the front of the building.

Setting: The property is located in a mixed use area. Since this building was constructed, the setting has been mixed use. However, the surrounding environment has changed and continues to change. Most of the existing buildings in the potential historic district were constructed during the period of significance and are similar in size and height. The side of the block adjacent to 5th Street was originally more low-density residential. Most of the parcels on that side of the block are within a new 5-story mixed use development site currently under construction. The block opposite the site across 13th Avenue has also transitioned from low to high density.

Materials: The majority of the building's original exterior materials remain, including concrete masonry units, wood paneling and glass.

Workmanship: Integrity of workmanship is evident in modern methods of construction and plain finishes.

Feeling: The building retains the look and feel of a modern commercial building.

Association: The building does not have any features that convey a direct link between an important historic event or person.

UNSAFE OR DANGEROUS CONDITION

The applicant has stated that the structure is sound; however, the driveway underneath the building is an unsafe area that results in numerous problems, such as public urination. Also, the building is not fully accessible.

REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO DEMOLITION

The applicant has stated that the existing building is not the highest and best use for this site as it takes up only a small portion of the site. Also, the building cannot support additional stories. Therefore incorporating it into the proposed development would not be feasible. Given that the building can continue to be used for commercial purposes, reasonable alternatives to demolition exist.

ECONOMIC VALUE OR USEFULNESS OF THE EXISTING STRUCTURE

The applicant has stated that the existing building is not the highest and best use for this site as it takes up only a small portion of the site. Also, the building cannot support additional stories. Therefore incorporating it into the proposed development would not be feasible. The lack of a stormwater management system and grading for proper drainage on the site is also noted by the applicant as costs that would need to be incurred in reusing the building, which would far exceed the existing value of the property (the Hennepin County Tax Records identify an existing building value of \$80,500 and land value of \$544,500). Also, the building is not fully accessible. Although these circumstances affect the property's value, the applicant has not demonstrated that the building in question has no economic value or usefulness.

FINDINGS

1. The subject property was identified as part of a collection of properties identified as part of the potential Dinkytown Historic District in the 2011 Historic Resources Inventory for the Central Core area, which included the Marcy Holmes neighborhood, but this district has neither been nominated for designation nor placed under interim protection.
2. The property is eligible for local designation as part of a potential historic district. The property is not individually eligible for local designation.
3. The demolition is not necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition.
4. Reasonable alternatives to demolition exist.
5. The building retains its integrity.
6. The applicant has not demonstrated that the building in question has no economic value or usefulness.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt the above findings and **approve** the demolition of historic resource application for the property located at 1315 4th Street Southeast.

Attachments:

- Applicant's statement and responses to findings
- Correspondence
- Vicinity map
- Aerial view
- Land survey
- Photos
- Proposed site plan and massing studies