

Porter, Fatimat Q.

Subject: FW: 2118 Blaisdell Avenue

From: Sean Ryan [<mailto:seanrichardryan@gmail.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, May 11, 2016 11:20 PM

To: Schaffer, Brian C.

Subject: 2118 Blaisdell Avenue

Hello Mr. Schaffer,

Upon reading the report for the Snyder Mansion in Whittier I noticed a few items that had not noted and may need to be on record.

-The original carriage house/ garage also housed the home's heating plant, connected by a tunnel. That service space is retained and original below the 1962 addition. In fact, some of the walls above ground may have also been incorporated, though hidden by the current configuration. Egress to the below ground space for coal and other service deliveries was through an alley staircase bulkhead and manhole both of which are still intact. The raised portion facing alley is the foundation of this structure. Retained in the coal room are some original windows, doors and moldings from the main residence that could be repurposed.

-The report notes buff brick and limestone as defining features, but it's my understanding that much of the trim on the house is actually a glazed terra cotta (some of which has unfortunately disintegrated, such as at the sunroom\loggia windows).

-It should also be noted that the ceiling lanterns in the main stair hall are original fixtures to the Snyders occupancy.

-A doorway on the east wall of stair hall into the drawing/living room just past the main door was added and closed at some point. Evidence of it's existence remains in the patching of the trimwork and wall finishes. I'm not sure if it was an element that existed during the period of significance or not.

Kind regards,

Sean Ryan
203 Montrose Pl
St Paul, MN 55104
612-702-2078

Porter, Fatimat Q.

Subject: Synder Mansion

From: no-reply@minneapolismn.gov
Sent: 5/16/2016 6:57:00 PM
To: Minneapolis 311@minneapolismn.gov
Cc:
Subject: Contact Us from public website

City of Minneapolis

Name * Christine Johnson
Email * itistina747@yahoo.com
Phone (612) 237-4052
Phone Type
Address 2425 Aldrich Ave. S.
City Minneapolis
State MN
Zip

Question/Comment * Please do the right thing and protect the Snyder mansion. It is time to take our historic properties seriously. Most of our great nation's cities are way ahead of us. Do not fail us now. Support our best buildings and enrich our future.

Previous <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/meetings/hpc/WCMSP-179617>

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May 17, 2016

Heritage Preservation Commission
Public Service Center
250 S. 4th St., Room 300
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Re: Proposed Designation of 2118 Blaisdell Avenue

Dear Members of the Heritage Preservation Commission:

We submit this letter on behalf of NuWay House, the owner of 2118 Blaisdell Avenue, to state their strong objection to the proposed exterior and interior designation of their property. The property does not meet the criteria for designation unless those criteria are interpreted and applied as a low bar for significance and integrity. Further, this appears to be the first time that designation of interior features of a private building has been recommended over the owner’s objection. Moreover, the nomination of this property for designation is before the Commission under most unusual circumstances. At the time the building was nominated for study, NuWay was planning to use the building for housing for people in recovery from chemical dependency. The request for nomination was brought to commissioners by a neighbor who opposed NuWay’s proposed use of the building. Although the information provided to the Commission asserted that historically-significant interior features were going to be “cut up” for NuWay’s planned use, that was never the case; neither were exterior features under threat of demolition. The Commission should not recommend designation of a building that is under no threat of destruction, that is not exemplary, and for which nomination was based on erroneous information.

The Property is Not a “Distinctive Element” of Neighborhood Identity

The designation study concludes that the “Snyder Mansion” is significant for its association with distinctive elements of the Whittier neighborhood’s identity in that it represents a “century long pattern of development and evolution of the area.” The staff report adds that it is “a distinctive example of the mansion development along Blaisdell Avenue in the Whittier neighborhood that occurred in the early twentieth century.” Association with a pattern of mansion and other development may qualify a particular building as contributing to a historic district, but that does not necessarily make it also a “distinctive element” of neighborhood identity justifying designation as a landmark. In fact, staff’s conclusion regarding Criterion # 3 is inconsistent with its conclusion regarding Criterion #1 that the “Snyder Mansion, alone, does not exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history.” (Emphasis added.)

When the Designation Criteria ordinance was amended in 2009 to add distinctive elements of “neighborhood identity” to the criteria for historic significance, the staff report for that amendment did not elaborate on what type of features the new criterion was intended to encompass. As it is being applied now by CPED staff, it is conflated with factors supporting designation of historic districts, which makes it redundant and essentially meaningless. Attached with this letter are photos of many other nearby homes on Blaisdell and Pillsbury that are also associated with the pattern of mansion development in the area. Are they all to be considered distinctive elements of neighborhood identity? If so, they should all be designated.

“Distinctive” is defined as “different from others” and “uniquely characteristic of a person, group, or thing.” (Encarta Dictionary.) 2118 Blaisdell is not “uniquely characteristic” of the many Whittier mansions, including the Gale Mansion, which was also designed by Ernest Kennedy. Finally, if one were to survey Whittier residents about what features they consider to be “distinctive elements” of their neighborhood, it is hard to believe that 2118 Blaisdell would be high on the list, if named at all.

Impaired Integrity Undermines Designation As An Exemplary Work of Ernest Kennedy

The designation study grossly understates the impact of the very large addition on the integrity of the building. The property would never qualify for the National Register, yet the study concludes that the exterior “retains excellent integrity of design.” That assertion is also inconsistent with the conclusion that the addition undermines the integrity of the architectural style for purposes of Criterion #4. The study similarly dismisses the other very significant changes to the setting, including the loss of the large carriage house/garage and the replacement of neighboring residential fabric with a large parking lot.

The study recognizes that many Kennedy-designed properties are locally and nationally designated as historic. These include two grand and pristine examples of Kennedy’s work that are protected in the Washburn Fair Oaks historic district – the Gale and the Fiske Pillsbury mansions. Due to its impaired integrity, 2118 Blaisdell does not “exemplify” Kennedy’s work, particularly in comparison to other, already-designated examples.

Interior Designation Should Be Denied

Interior designation raises significant policy and implementation concerns. It is a particularly intrusive restriction of private property rights and burdensome. Traditionally, the City reserved interior designation for public spaces like theater lobbies, with some exceptions where the owners of private homes requested the designation. Interior designations of private buildings are impractical to monitor or enforce. It should not be imposed over an owner’s objection without a thoroughly-considered policy basis and well-defined implementation practices, none of which have been developed by the City.

The designation study includes no context evaluation or discussion about why this particular interior should be subject to designation. Many homes in the City have preserved beautiful, original decorative features, but because they are private and not subject to inventory, there is no way to fairly determine what type and level of interior design merits designation. Further, other grand Kennedy interiors, such as the Gale Mansion, are not designated.

May 17, 2016

Finally, as both a practical and policy matter, because 2118 Blaisdell is not a public space, no public purpose will be served by an interior designation.

Conclusion

We respectfully urge the Commission to recommend that neither the exterior, nor interior of 2118 Blaisdell be designated as a historic landmark.

Best regards,

FAEGRE BAKER DANIELS LLP

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Carol Lansing".

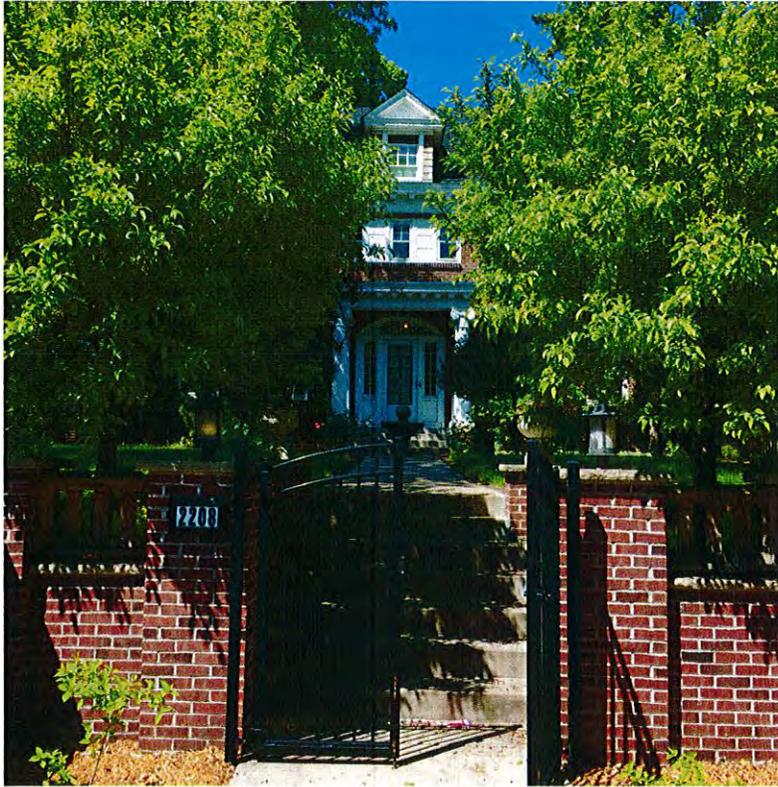
Carol Lansing

LANSC

Attachments

US.106427080.01

2208 Blaisdell



2214 Blaisdell



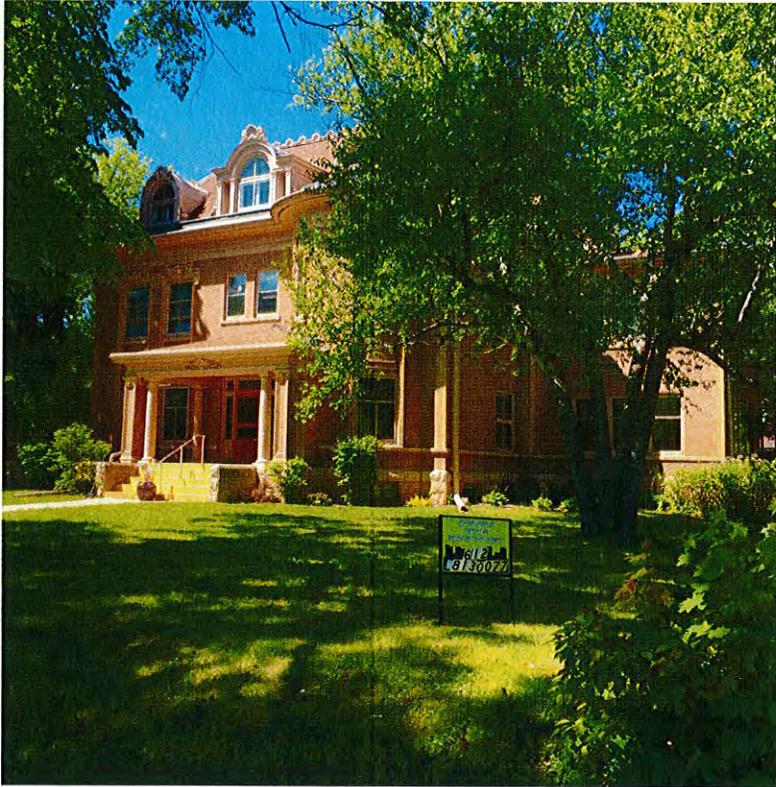
2302 Blaisdell



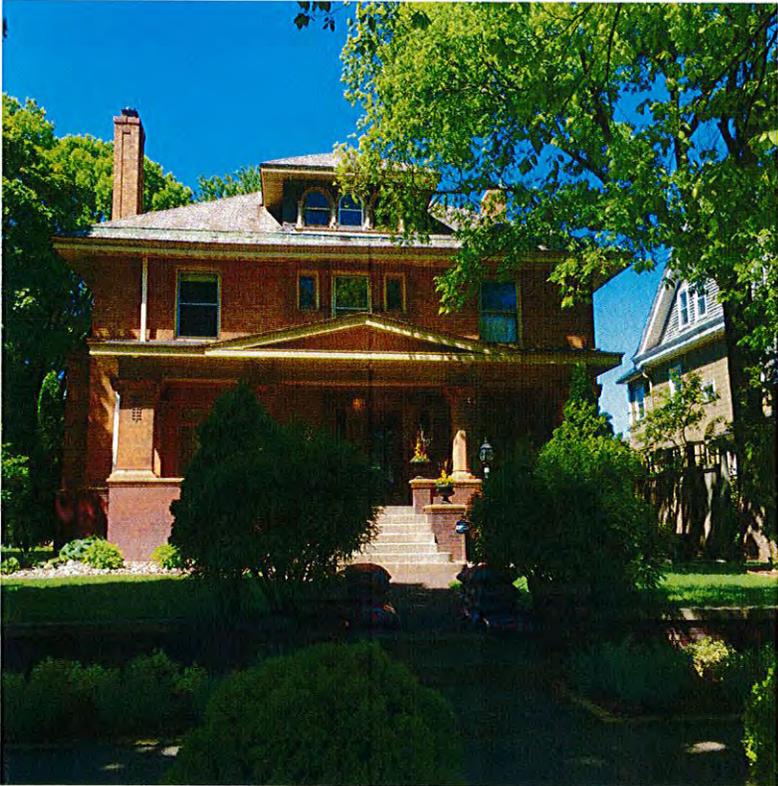
2322 Blaisdell



2400 Blaisdell



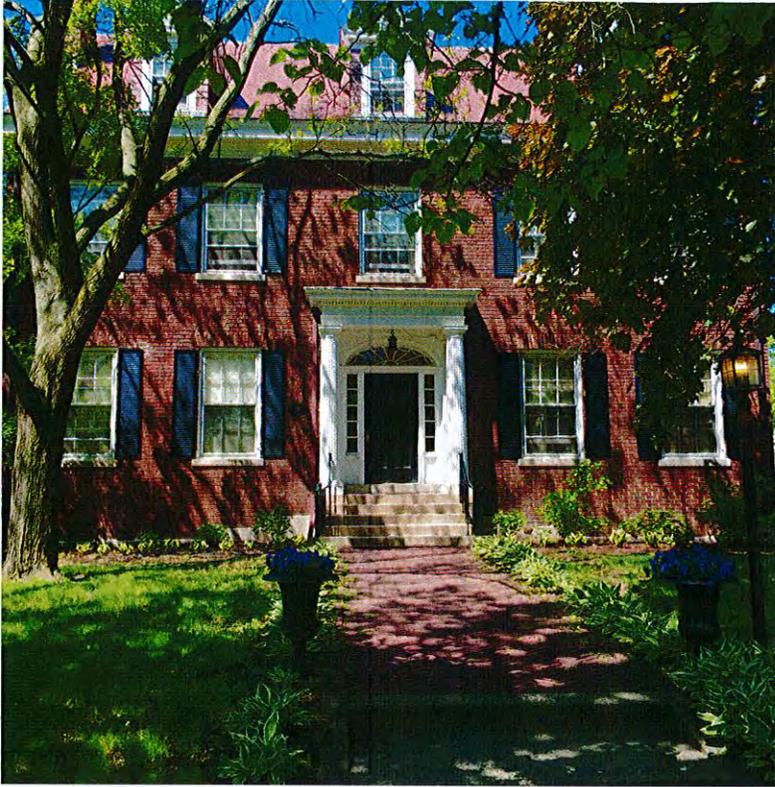
2008 Pillsbury



2100 Pillsbury



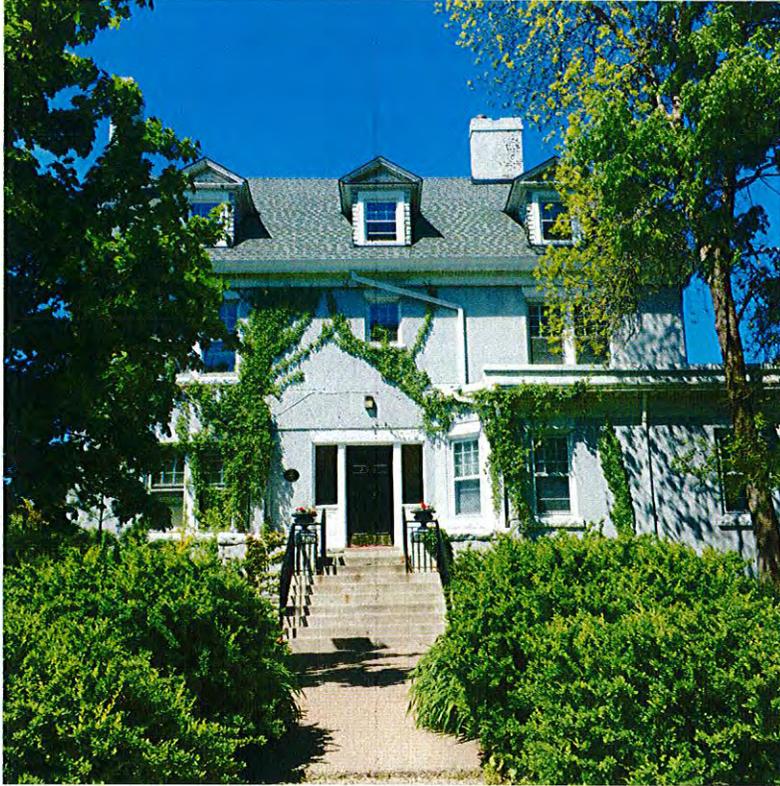
2112 Pillsbury



2115 Pillsbury



2118 Pillsbury



2201 Pillsbury



