

**Excerpt from the  
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING  
Community Planning & Economic Development (CPED)  
250 South Fourth Street, Room 300  
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1385**

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The following actions were taken by the Heritage Preservation Committee on May 17, 2016. The Heritage Preservation Committee's decisions on items are final subject to a ten calendar day appeal period.

Commissioners: Mr. Paul Bengtson, Ms. Laura Faucher, Mr. Chris Hartnett, Ms. Susan Hunter Weir, Ms. Ginny Lackovic, Ms. Linda Mack, Mr. Dan Olson, Mr. Ian Stade and Ms. Constance Vork

Commissioners absent: Ms. Laura Faucher, Ms. Ginny Lackovic and Mr. Dan Olson

Committee Clerk: Fatimat Porter 612.673.3153

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#### **ITEM SUMMARY**

##### **Description:**

##### **Item #5**

##### **4401 Lyndale Avenue North and 4400-4430 Lyndale Avenue North, Ward 4 Staff report by [Jim Voll](#), BZH 28734**

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt the report and attachments as findings of fact and submit the same together to the Zoning & Planning Committee of the City Council for the local designation of the properties located at 4401 Lyndale Avenue North and 4400-4430 Lyndale Avenue North:

##### **A. Historic Designation.**

Action: The Heritage Preservation Commission **adopted** the report and attachments as findings of fact and submit the same together to the Zoning and Planning Committee of the City Council with a recommendation to **approve** the local designation of the district at 4401 and 4400-4430 Lyndale Avenue North.

**Absent:** Faucher, Lackovic, Olson

**Aye:** Bengtson, Hartnett, Hunter Weir Mack, Stade, Vork

**Motion passed**

#### **TRANSCRIPTION**

**Staff Jim Voll presented the report.**

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** Thank you. Commissioners are there any questions? I want to make sure and remind you that this is strictly about the historic district and not about the additional request on the agenda. Are there any questions for staff? Commissioner Mack.

**Commissioner Mack:** I have a question about the vacant land that is listed as contributing. It's on page 41 of the study. But you probably know it, it's part of the yards. But what would be the implication of listing a vacant lot as contributing.

**Staff Voll:** Well I think the most important to me in the study would be the rail corridor. I mean there would be something there. We've often done that with several properties. The yard, it's just hard to separate out from the building. I think and if you want to, and in your recommendation be clear about it that you concur I think our intent would be for design guidelines. Not to say that has to stay a vacant yard.

**Commissioner Mack:** Ok, that was my point.

**Staff Voll:** We could draft design guidelines that say that that could be used for parking to support the business or more intensive activities to support the building. So its not our intent to say that that stays an open yard. The rail corridor though we may say in the design guidelines that should not be built over, that it may have to have some sort of treatment that shows the significance like we've done in other districts.

**Commissioner Mack:** Thank you.

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** Any other questions for staff? Alright, thank you. We'll open up the public hearing. Is the property owner here? Reminder to state your name and address for the record.

**Public hearing is opened.**

**Mark Kaster (50 S 6<sup>th</sup> St):** Mr. Vice Chair, members of the commission I'm a partner at Dorsey and Whitney and I'm representing the owners of 4401 Lyndale Ave N LLC and its owners Reed and Kyle Lewis. And with me today is Kathy Osbourne who is a PE working on staff for the owners. I've submitted a letter to the commission which I think you all have now. And ask that that be entered as part of the record in the public hearing here today. Let me begin with some comments on the designation. It was in May 2015 that the 4401 property was nominated for consideration individually as a local landmark. It was the resolution of the City Council at that time. And somehow the scope here changed and we went from designation as an individual landmark to a historic district. From our perspective that scope change that enlarge of scope is a procedural defect. My clients weren't notified about their inclusion in a new historic district, the C.A. Smith district. And in fact they don't want to be part of a historic district and they don't think that there's rational for being part of the district. But be that as it may you've got a nomination process. And here the property 4401 property was nominated for local landmark status and not as part of a district. So if you want to expand that scope it seems to me from a procedural process you have to go back and do that nomination so that anybody interested in development of a historic district will have notice and would be able to comment and provide its input into the process. So because of the failure of the process we'd ask that you vote today to deny the staff recommendation for consideration of a historic district. Turning to the substance of my

*Heritage Preservation Commission Meeting – Minutes excerpt*

clients concerns, we don't think that the 4401 property should be designated as a local landmark. And there are a number of reasons for that and they're really incorporated in both the materials that I've submitted and some of the materials we've put together with respect to our certificate of appropriateness. The staff here focuses on the former lumber yard and saw mill operations. And as you heard from staff, these are all located east of what's now Lyndale Avenue North. My client's property is located on the west side of that property. And of course all of these properties really have been entombed now by the highway, Highway 94. So there are no lumber operations. The integrity of this area really all gone lumber mills the saw mills all of that is no longer present. What we have at 4401 located west of Lyndale is not particularly noteworthy from a historic perspective. It was a small machine shop. A typical brick and mortar start to construction and later concrete block construction. If you look at the three criteria that the staff uses to recommend designation the property is not in a criterion one. The property, 4401 property, is not associated with significant events and broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history. The property consist of a hodge podge of structures thrown together to form a machine shop. Its located on the west side of a busy Lyndale Avenue. It's not unlike hundreds of other machine shops that are located in garages and warehouses all throughout the City of Minneapolis. The property remains zoned I2 and continues to be used for a variety of industrial operations. So we don't believe it meets criterion one. As to criterion number two the staff indicates that this district is associated with the lives of significant persons or groups. I think this criterion also fails. The original owners of the property were perhaps good inventors but what did they invent here, the saw, a sawblade. It wasn't an invention that was so transformative that it changed the industry or even history. We're not talking about the light bulb here we're talking about a sawblade. Now we can debate the relevance or the significance of patenting a sawblade but if the City wants to recognize these inventors it can do so without encumbering this property. And the owners are certainly willing to work with the City to put up signage or to rename a road or to take other actions that would not significantly encumber the property. And then under criterion number three the staff indicates that the district is significant because it contains property associated with a distinctive element. And as I said before there's nothing particularly distinctive about this. It's a warehouse, it's a machine shop and that's really a pure and simple. It consists of a variety of structures that were grouped together. If we take a look at that history I mean you can see over time that there were significant changes to this property. Wrecking activities back in the thirties forties. The most significant additions really occurred after the period of significance in I think 66, 67, 68, and 69 when the largest parts of this property were actually renovated or there was remodeling or additions that were made. In terms of integrity we're talking about property immediately to the north, maybe this is historic for other reasons but I don't think it's particularly historic in terms of this property. That's the property the McDonalds restaurant immediately to the north abutting our property. Immediately to the south is a plastics recycling transfer station again not particular significant and certainly not for purposes of integrity functioning for any kind of historic significance. You'll hear later and I'll reserve my comments for item number six on the agenda what's being proposed here by my client to make small changes to the property to remove the front office buildings and to add an addition very similar to the activities that have been taking place at this property over the course of its history. Finally there's an

economic component to this. Some of the old structures, the office building in front, it's a small unusable not serviceable structure. Not serving any purpose. It cost to put that back into any kind of service is in the millions of dollars and not something that is economically feasible. Again I'll speak more to that on the next agenda item but I just wanted to raise it here for purposes of your consideration on whether this property ought to be designated. With that I will take any questions you might have.

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** Thank you. Any questions from the commission? Alright thank you. Is there anyone else that would like to speak on this item? Step forward and state your name and address for the record please.

**Buzzy Bohn (3333 Fremont Ave N):** I'm not a lawyer, I'm not an architect but I am a community historian. Unlike the previous speaker I do believe there was significance to the invention of Arnold Mereen and Charles Johnson. They invented the first of the horizontal slab saws. Which is what created their business because it was so in demand. They invented it in 1901 by 1905 it was in such demand that they left C.A. Smith and went across the street, well across the road I guess in those days, and created this business. While it's true that the freeway cut off that particular C.A. Smith and Mereen Johnson from the railroad there's still parts of the lumbering industry when the waters low on the Mississippi you can still see it which how I got into the looking at the preservation of that part of Minneapolis. Lumber milling north of downtown to the city limits was a huge part of Minneapolis' history. And it was very significant to North Minneapolis in particular this neighborhood which is called Camden because it originally was Camden Place Township which was then eventually incorporated into the City of Minneapolis. I think it would be a disaster to get rid of that one, what is the only part of lumbering, lumber mill industry in Minneapolis and is still left other than the Lumber Exchange downtown. I think it has significance. I think that having that designation would help preserve what little we have left. I mean there's a reason there's a lumber men's statue in Weber Park. It's because it's a big part of our community. And so I hope that you do give it this designation as being a historic district. Thank you.

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** Thank you. Anyone else? Again state your name and address for the record please.

**Jeff and Nancy Stevenson (4400 Lyndale Ave N):** Nancy is the daughter of the owner of the, what's been called C.A. Smith. We wanted to just overview the letter we shared with you in your packet and talk a little bit about the 4400-4430 as a project. Just a quick side note, her father long since dead purchased the property in 1946 so they've been a 70 year family ownership of the property and it's time for us as the younger surviving daughter to move forward with something else other than worry about the building.

**Nancy Stevenson:** We're trying to sell; we've been trying to sell the building. So we're mostly interested in what a new owner would want. We can't do, we can't fix it, we're not young enough.

**Jeff Stevenson:** So the key items to kind of reiterate from the letter are that the project, there are two buildings, one is the office, it's not vacant in a sense we're using it as office space for ourselves. We just live out of time so it's a burden to come back and forth frequently but we do use the office for basic operations of the residual. And then the warehouse building which has noted a tenant, another part time tenant that helps use some of the old machines that are still available occasionally. The office building has its unique features and is in need of restoration but it is functional as long as you can live within historic standards, high ceilings, high staircase and so on. The 4430 building was built really over the last, over about a 20 year period has multiple mix of materials, fixtures, finishes and it's really not built as a commercial building in today's standards so our point is that the owners, the new owners and many people have lost interest because of the confusion over what could be done. The new owners really will have to have some major city support to make it happen. It's not a new commercial space. There are kilns, there are bearing walls and there are upper floors that need to have a new elevator to be able to function well. I know the neighbors are very interested in having the space available for both historic and community purposes. It's a little bit inappropriate and unfair to presume that we or some owner can facilitate the dream and put in the money and yet the cash flow particular it's just the first floor spaces probably won't support what's needed to make the renovations work. You could tear the building down I don't think that's the neighbors preference but then buy sort of buying into the concept of a historic strategy sort of brings the City Council and the rest of the resources to the city to help support Northside in a project that they've been after for quite a long time. Private enterprise probably can't support it by itself. So that's our key feature since this is the main public dialogue on, this meeting and the City Council and preparations are out. This brings the City Council into some recognition if the Northside needs this; it's not a free standing private party that can make it happen. Beyond that, there's a lot of work to do and the infrastructure is desperately need after 120 years to have some attention.

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** Thank you. Anyone else? Seeing no one we'll close the public hearing.

**Public hearing closed.**

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** Commissioners deliberation, questions for staff? Commissioner Hartnett.

**Commissioner Hartnett:** I have a question for staff. Based on the comments of the property owners and the possible maybe probable lack of economic viability of the buildings in their current condition and their location and the surrounding neighborhood and what not can you comment a bit, you know sometimes all we're trying to do is protect the buildings until a viable option comes along. And that can take time. And as we know buildings require maintenance. So can you speak to the condition and if you feel like these buildings, maybe take them one by one or just in general are in a current condition that they can survive for a period of time, a few years, ten years until there may be a more viable economic use.

**Staff Voll:** Well as you know when we do a designation study we're charged with looking at integrity not necessarily the integrity of the physical condition of the building but the integrity to convey its historic significance. So a lot of that research, everything that I would tell you would be opinion. The 4401 property, they have submitted some information and that's the next item on your agenda where that could be considered. But I guess what I would suggest is, I can't speak about the office building on the 4401 site; I can say that they are operating in the 4401 building so I mean it is being used right now. That's the most I can say about it. That's not scientific study of economic value or condition or anything like that. On the east side of the site from everything I've heard from talking to people the office building, the 4400 office building or the turret building as it's sometimes called, is probably a very good candidate for being reused. The 4430 building probably does have some condition issues but I don't have a, well I mean it does have some condition issues but to the extent of whether those condition issues are beyond the economic viability of the property, you've heard the owner say that's their opinion. I don't have a lot of information where I could make an evaluation of whether that's true or not. So I can't answer that question.

**Commissioner Hartnett:** Well I mean just in general. The ceilings are they leaking are they wet are they in....

**Staff Voll:** My understanding is yes there is water damage in the ceilings and the roofs of the building but there's a business in there right now Guided Salvage. So the question of what it would take to renovate that building and then what it would take for cash flow to cover that is not something I'm prepared to answer. But there are some condition issues with it. I can say what we've done as a city which I know is maybe not as comprehensive as people would like, is that we have offered to put together a team to help with potential buyers of the property to sit down and explain to them building code issues, zoning code issues and preservation issues. I'm not talking about the east side of the site here cause that building is just sales, so that it can be a one stop shop for them so that it's not a confusing process. And we've done that with some property owners. We have looked at teeing up a National Register nomination for both properties although we're not doing that without the property owners consent. But if a future property owner wanted to do that, we would have that work done for them so that they could have a tax credit. And our business development staff has looked at potential ways to help people. But we, you know there's not a City Council allocation of dollars for the property. But we've offered to help in those ways that we can. Would that be enough to solve the issues of once again I can't answer that question right now.

**Commissioner Hartnett:** Thank you.

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** Commissioner Vork.

**Commissioner Vork:** I'd like to make a motion.

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** Can you hold that for just a moment? Are there any other questions of staff before we make a motion? I do have a couple of questions for staff here. The first one is the metal shed that was referred to, explain that again who referred to it as potentially being contributing?

**Staff Voll:** The State Historic Preservation Office when they reviewed it they wrote back saying they think it contributes to the district. But that's all they said was that sentence. We don't concur that it's not contributing we believe that it, but I don't have any reason why they would think that is contributing to the district. The work that we did, did not find it as contributing to the district. And it is in poor condition.

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** Ok. The other question I have is, the questions that were brought up about it being originally an individual landmark application versus a historic district. Can you just address that?

**Staff Voll:** Well I don't see anything in the ordinance that says you can't go between the two. And I guess I would disagree with it being scope creep. I mean all of the properties were nominated as two landmarks. So I guess it would depend on what somebody would mean by scope. I mean the area didn't get bigger, the number of properties being considered being bigger. So if that was really a concern for people we could have designated this as two landmarks. The district we felt read better to the public to understand what was going on there to communicate its history. The district is easier for us to administer. It does not create the significance of the properties. Mereen Johnson is significant as a part of the outgrowth of the post lumber industry and the industrial development that helped develop Camden whether it's a landmark or a district. So it could very easily be two landmarks and it would be the same thing.

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** Ok. And then the last question I have is the criteria two the significant person. In the last application that we looked at that didn't quite meet the bar to hit that criteria and this one it did. What's the differentiation between the people associated with this property versus the previous application.

**Staff Voll:** Well I have the folks who did the research here and they may be able to speak to it. I would say that I do believe that we probably could have done a better job explaining that in the staff report. So if you'd like to have them come up and talk a little bit about the significance of those folks. I don't think that's the primary criteria. I think the other two are the primary ones. And that was, you know from the research that they did they said that they were important members of the community so it was something that was added because of that. But I wouldn't hang my hat on the designation on that criteria but if you'd like to hear a little bit more about C.A. Smith and his importance in the state they're here to give a little bit more information than we have in the designation study and what I put in the staff report.

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** I think I'm satisfied with what we have for other criteria. So I would guess I would open it up again to commissioners. Commissioner Vork.

**Commissioner Vork:** I'll get it rolling with a motion. I move that we adopt the report and attachments as findings of fact and submit the same together to the Zoning and Planning Committee of the City Council with a recommendation to approve the local designation of the district at 4401 and 4400-4430 Lyndale Ave N.

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** We have a motion from Commissioner Vork, do we have a second?

**Commissioner Mack:** Second.

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** Second from Commissioner Mack. Any discussion?

**Commissioner Mack:** I would just like to say that it was really, I know this kind of property doesn't seem extraordinary but it was really fascinating to read the history. And to read about C.A. Smith and all the patents and the fact that this business did really well right through the thirties. And I drove up there this morning and it's an ordinary property and that's historic too. And so I feel for the owners because I wish so much in this city and other cities had funds to give out to people who own ordinary properties that are historic and want to maintain them. We don't have that as such but I think the staff has outlined some ways to move forward. And many of the buildings are being used and it's really terrific.

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** Commissioner Hunter Weir.

**Commissioner Hunter Weir:** I think one of the things that makes this kind of a designation study difficult is people expect beautiful architecture and of course this is functional. Still in all it has some wonderfully designed windows I think from what I can see. And I feel, I learned a new word, never heard of shooks before. So that was pretty interesting. And I do sort of think it's important to recognize people like Mr. Smith who we don't hear about. Because frankly what do I know about things like sawblades, which is nothing. But still he had a big impact on the local economy and I think that's worthy of acknowledgement.

**Vice Chair Bengtson:** I would also say that I agree that the utilitarian nature of these structures don't mean that's it not something that's a part of our heritage and something that should be remembered and preserved. I will say that I think there's a lot of beauty in these buildings as well and not just utilitarian. And I think that once again we have an opportunity for staff to work on design standards and include the property owners in a review of those design standards to make sure that the continued efforts that staff has already made to try to work with the property owners continues on as the design standards go forward. Any further comments from the commission? Would the clerk call the roll?

**Absent:** Faucher, Lackovic, Olson

**Aye:** Bengtson, Hartnett, Hunter Weir Mack, Stade, Vork

**Motion passed**

**Item #5**

**4401 Lyndale Avenue North and 4400-4430 Lyndale Avenue North, Ward 4  
Staff report by [Jim Voll](#), BZH 28734**

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt the report and attachments as findings of fact and submit the same together to the Zoning & Planning Committee of the City Council for the local designation of the properties located at 4401 Lyndale Avenue North and 4400-4430 Lyndale Avenue North:

**A. Historic Designation.**

Action: The Heritage Preservation Commission **adopted** the report and attachments as findings of fact and submit the same together to the Zoning and Planning Committee of the City Council with a recommendation to **approve** the local designation of the district at 4401 and 4400-4430 Lyndale Avenue North.

**Absent:** Faucher, Lackovic, Olson

**Aye:** Bengtson, Hartnett, Hunter Weir Mack, Stade, Vork

**Motion passed**