

Minneapolis Planning Department
Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 26, 2002

TO: The Honorable Gary Schiff, Chair
Zoning and Planning Committee
Members of the City Council

FROM: Greg Mathis

RE: Jewish Community Relations Council appeal of a decision of the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) regarding mitigation for the demolition of a building located at 4610 East Lake Street

The matter before you is an appeal by the Jewish Community Relations Council of a decision made by the HPC at a public hearing on October 15, 2002. The appeal affects the property at 4610 East Lake Street.

A. BACKGROUND

The building that was located at 4610 East Lake Street was historically known as the River-Lake Gospel Tabernacle. The structure was designed by Minneapolis architect Perry Crosier and built specifically for the Tabernacle in 1928. The two-story Period Revival structure featured polychromatic brick façade with a Spanish tile pent roof. The front of the building contained a broadcast booth, a kitchen, offices, restrooms, and meeting space. The rear section of the building was a gambrel-roofed structure containing an auditorium and stage.

The plan to demolish the Tabernacle building was first brought to the attention of the HPC staff in July 2001, when the Lander Group applied to the Planning Commission for approvals to redevelop this site. Development Services staff asked HPC staff to evaluate the property, so historical considerations could be addressed in reports to the Planning Commission. After researching the property, HPC staff determined that the property was a potential historic resource.

HPC staff notified the developer that the demolition of the building would require approval by the HPC. The HPC reviewed the demolition request at a public hearing on September 18, 2001. After hearing the staff report and all public testimony, including statements from commissioners who had visited the site, the HPC determined that the property was an historic resource because

of its significance as a rare building type and its association with early radio broadcasting. Nevertheless, the HPC found that there were no reasonable alternatives to demolition and approved the demolition subject to a condition that “the developer submit a mitigation plan to HPC staff for approval.”

On May 28, 2002, the developer submitted a mitigation plan proposal to the Planning Department. The plan called for the preparation of a photographic report to document the history and significance of the Tabernacle, and donating copies of the report to the Minneapolis Public Library, the Hennepin County Historical Society, and the Minnesota Historical Society. The plan did not include any on-site interpretation of the broadcast booth window as suggested by the HPC. Because of this, staff determined that the proposed plan did not comply with the intent of the HPC decision.

In June 2002, the developer appealed to the HPC the decision of the Planning Director to require an on-site interpretative exhibit as part of the mitigation for the demolition of the Tabernacle. The HPC reviewed the appeal at a public hearing on July 9, 2002. After listening to the staff report and all public testimony, the HPC denied the appeal. As part of its decision, the HPC specified the following as required components of the mitigation plan:

1. The broadcast booth window and all equipment from the broadcast booth must be offered to the Pavek Museum of Broadcasting in St. Louis Park, Minnesota.
2. A research report must be prepared to document the history and significance of the property. The report must include historical research; a photographic record of the building; and measured drawings of the façade (south elevation), the floor plan and the site plan. Copies of the report must be donated to the following agencies:
 - Minneapolis Planning Department, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 - Minneapolis Public Library, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 - Hennepin History Museum, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 - Northwest Architectural Archives at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 - Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota
 - Pavek Museum of Broadcasting, St. Louis Park, Minnesota
3. An on-site exhibit in the new development, documenting the significance of the River-Lake Gospel Tabernacle Building. The exhibit must be installed in a secure, public area and include the following:
 - At least one display panel. The panel must include a brief text on the significance of the Tabernacle Building, photographs of the Tabernacle, and a site plan showing where the Tabernacle stood.
 - The broadcast booth widow must be included in the exhibit if the Pavek Museum does not accept it.
4. The HPC staff must approve the mitigation plan, the research report, and the interpretative exhibit.

The developer submitted a revised mitigation plan to the Planning Department on July 25, 2002 and HPC staff approved this plan on July 29, 2002.

Approximately one month after the HPC made its decision regarding the mitigation plan, the Planning Department received a letter from the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC). The letter explained that Paul and Luke Rader, the founders of the Tabernacle, were well-known anti-Semites. For this reason, JCRC had concerns about the appropriateness and content of an on-site exhibit. In September, two articles appeared in the Minneapolis Star Tribune that addressed the concerns surrounding the mitigation plan. The newspaper articles generated additional letters to the Planning Department regarding the on-site interpretative exhibit. On September 26, Planning Department staff and Carole Zellie, the historical consultant working on the research report, met with representatives of the JCRC to discuss their concerns about the mitigation plan. In light of the information presented by the JCRC and the community, the Planning Department determined that there was sufficient new information to warrant a public hearing to give the HPC an opportunity to review and comment on the new information.

B. HPC DECISION

On October 15, 2002, the HPC held an additional public hearing to review the mitigation plan for the tabernacle building. After hearing the staff recommendation and all public testimony, the HPC modified the requirements for the mitigation plan. The HPC deleted its requirement for an on-site exhibit and added a requirement that in lieu of on-site exhibit, a small 12" x 12" plaque that reads "the River-Lake Gospel Tabernacle stood on this site from 1928 until 2002" must be installed in the new development. (The decision was based in part upon agreement by the Pavek Museum of Broadcasting to accept the broadcast booth window. Because of this, the single major physical element proposed for interpretation in the on-site exhibit is no longer available.)

C. APPEAL:

The appellant is appealing the HPC decision to require a plaque in the new development to commemorate the River-Lake Gospel Tabernacle building.

D. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Zoning and Planning Committee adopt the following findings, **approve** the appeal, and amend the mitigation plan by deleting the requirement of an on-site plaque in the new development.

1. Community concerns have been expressed about the on-site exhibit, which is seen by some as recognition of Luke and Paul Rader. The JCRC and others believe that because of the content of their messages, Luke and Paul Rader do not deserve public tribute.
2. Carole Zellie of Landscape Research has completed the draft *River Lake Gospel Tabernacle Mitigation Report*. The report documents the architectural significance and social and cultural history of the Tabernacle, including preaching, bible teaching, radio broadcasts, and social services such as food pantries. It also points out that for many, the building symbolized anti-Semitism and racial intolerance.
3. In light of the space limitations in the new development, and the substantial controversy surrounding the religious history of the property, the proposed mixed residential-commercial building is not an appropriate location for what perhaps should be a museum-type interpretive

center. The HPC (city) mandated plaque cannot adequately interpret the site and could be considered as a memorial to the preaching of Paul and Luke Radar. For this reason, a commemorative plaque should not be placed in the new building.

Attachments:

- A. Appeal of the Decision of the Heritage Preservation Commission Application
- B. Minutes from the October 15, 2002 HPC meeting
- C. Memo from HPC Staff to the HPC, dated October 8, 2002, including attachments
 - 1. 7/29/2002 letter from the Planning Department to Gateway Real Estate approving the mitigation plan dated 7/25/2002.
 - 2. The approved mitigation plan, dated 7/25/2002
 - 3. 7/5/2002 email from Clarence and Anyce Day to the HPC.
 - 4. 8/6/2002 letter from the JCRC to the HPC.
 - 5. 8/21/2002 letter from the Planning Department to the JCRC, including attachments.
 - 6. 9/15/2002 Minneapolis Star Tribune article by Maura Lerner, entitled "Demolished Tabernacle Stirs Up Echoes of a Darker Era."
 - 7. 9/16/2002 letter from Neil Ross to the HPC.
 - 8. 9/19/2002 letter from Joyce Housman to the HPC.
 - 9. 9/20/2002 Minneapolis Star Tribune article by Barry D. Cryton entitled "Christian Faith at Jews Expense."
 - 10. 9/25/2002 letter from Dr. Robert Cleath to the HPC.
 - 11. 9/26/2002 email from the Pavek Museum of Broadcasting to HPC staff.
 - 12. 10/4/2002 letter from the JCRC to the HPC.
- D. Documents presented to the HPC during the October 15, 2002 public hearing
 - 10/13/2002 email from Anyce Day to the HPC