

**CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
CPED PLANNING DIVISION
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

FILE NAME: National Register of Historic Places Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District

CATEGORY/DISTRICT: Historic Resource

CLASSIFICATION: Nomination for Consideration for Designation as an addition to the North
Loop Warehouse Local Historic District

APPLICANT: City of Minneapolis, Community Planning and Economic Development
Department

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A. BACKGROUND

In 1978 the City Council adopted the local designation of the North Loop Warehouse Historic District. It was designated for its architectural significance and commerce significance associated with the wholesaling industry and its supporting industries. The boundaries of this district can be seen in blue stripes in attachment A.

In 1989 the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District was nationally designated and listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its architectural significance and commerce significance associated with the wholesaling and implementing industries in Minneapolis. The boundaries of the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District can be seen in red in attachment A. The boundaries partially overlap the boundaries of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District, a local and national historic district. The Minneapolis Warehouse National Historic District includes more properties than the North Loop Warehouse Local Historic District. This difference in size is due to the larger scope of significance for the national historic district designation.

In 1993 the plans for the Federal Reserve Bank Project required a federal historic review known as a Section 106 Review under the National Historic Preservation Act. The review determined that the bank project would have an “adverse effect on properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places” as the project required the demolition of three structures within the NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District. The outcome of this review was a Memorandum of Agreement, which required that a preservation action plan be developed for the Warehouse Historic District.

The Minneapolis Warehouse Preservation Action Plan, which was adopted by the City Council in December of 2000, calls for the boundaries of the local historic district to be expanded to include the boundaries of the national historic district.

Changes to locally designated districts are reviewed by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission as mandated in the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, but there is no design review associated with National Register designation. The locally designated district has received greater protection from demolition and has benefited from regulation and design review afforded to locally designated districts. A large portion of what is considered Minneapolis' warehouse district both historically and associatively has not had the benefit of regulatory review because it is not locally designated. Some buildings in this unprotected area have received inappropriate alterations that compromise their historic integrity.

In response to recent development pressures that threaten the historical integrity of the National Register Historic District the HPCC, on December 2, 2008, directed staff to prepare a nomination for local designation of the area known as the NRHP Warehouse Historic District.

B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE PROPERTY

The following is an excerpt from the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form prepared by Rolf Anderson in 1989.

The Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District is a 30 block area located immediately west of downtown Minneapolis and south of the Mississippi River. The district contains 160 building and 3 structures and is roughly bounded by 1st Avenue North on the east, 1st Street North on the south. Only 20 of these 160 buildings have been categorized as noncontributing and of these, 14, are modest one-story structures which do not detract from the overall appearance of the district.

The oldest buildings constructed in the warehouse district were small commercial structures, typically three stories tall. Many were built with storefronts on the 1st floor and hotels and manufacturing spaces above. As the area developed into the city's warehouse and wholesale district in the 1880s, the size of the buildings dramatically increased and was normally 5 to 7 stories with mill or semi-mill construction. After the turn of the century, massive utilitarian structures were built employing reinforced concrete and structural steel. The Warehouse District has retained its original sense of time and place with four steel bridges still in place, many streets paved with bricks or cobblestones, and with trains passing through daily on original track beds around which the area first developed. Architecturally the buildings include every major architectural style popular during the period of significance from Italianate, Queen Anne and Richardsonian Romanesque to Classical Revivals and early 20th century Commercial Styles.

The boundaries for the district were determined by the highest concentrated areas of wholesale/warehouse structures as well as by several vacant expanses of land which no longer retain any historic associations. These vacant areas include a large area south of the Mississippi River, a rectangular area south of North 1st Street which once served as a railroad yard and a vacant "L"-shaped area south of 3rd Street North and west of 2nd Avenue

The National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form is attached. The Form contains information regarding the significance of the jobbing, wholesaling, implement warehousing and other related industries that shaped the physical, economic and social development of Minneapolis.

D. CONSIDERATION FOR NOMINATION

Per section 599.230 the Heritage Preservation Commission shall review all complete nomination applications. If the HPC determines that a nominated property appears to meet at least one of the local designation criteria the commission may direct the planning director to commence a designation study of the property.

The properties contained within the National Register District have significance under local designation criterion number one for the commercial activity that exemplified the economic and social development of Minneapolis and the upper Midwest. Criterion three for containing distinctive element of the City's identity and criterions four and six for the strong examples of the architectural styles, designed by leading architects and engineers, that were popular during the district's period of significance.

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

And

(3) The property contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city identity.

The Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District is historically significant as an area of early commercial growth as the city's warehouse and wholesaling district, which expanded during the late 19th and early 20th centuries when Minneapolis became a major distribution and jobbing center for the upper Midwest. The jobbing -wholesaling, implement warehousing and other related industries shaped the physical, economic and social development of Minneapolis. The district continues to play a role in the economic growth of Minneapolis with shops, restaurants, offices and residential units being developed along side long-established commercial and industrial businesses.

Minneapolis was positioned as a hub to the rapidly expanding railway system. The City's location as a hub drew the attention of national manufactures of farm machinery. These manufactures quickly developed land for warehousing and the area became known as 'Implement Row'. The area began at 5th Street and 3rd Avenue North and extended along 3rd Avenue to 1st Street and eventually expanded west along spur tracks to 7th Avenue. The implement industry became so successful that "by 1908 Minneapolis could boast that it was largest distribution point in the world for agricultural implements. By 1915 the manufacture and distribution of farm equipment had succeeded the flour and grain trade as the biggest business in Minneapolis dollar volume."¹

Wholesalers were naturally attracted to the area northwest of the business district where land values were relatively low and railroad lines nearby. In his book *A Half Century of Minneapolis*, Horace Hudson succinctly summarizes the rise of the jobbing industry. "It was inevitable that the receiving market for grain and other farm products of the northwest should become in time the

¹ Society for Industrial Archaeology, *A Guide to the Industrial Archaeology of the Twin Cities* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1983), p. 90.

principal distributing market for the goods for which these products were to be exchanged. As the greatest grain market of the west Minneapolis was bound to become a jobbing city as well.”²

Many wholesalers began modest businesses in the area of Washington Avenue North with the leading lines in 1878 consisting of (1) groceries, fruit and cigars, (2) dry goods, notions and clothing and (3) produce and commission. Many of these small businesses merged and expanded and would move several times within the warehouse district in order to acquire larger facilities. Such was the case with the North Star Boot and Shoe Company, the George Newell Company and the Wyman, Partridge & Company, each of whom had been located on Washington Avenue North only to ultimately move to massive warehouse buildings along 1st Avenue North. By 1919 wholesaling in Minneapolis became a billion dollar market.³

The warehouse district continued to grow and eventually expanded north of Hennepin Avenue from the river to 6th Street and along Washington Avenue and the adjacent side streets with rows of massive warehouses constructed after the turn of the century. By 1920 there were approximately 300 warehouse businesses in Minneapolis.

(4) The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction

And

(6) The property exemplifies works of master builders, engineers, designers, artists, craftsmen or architects.

Many of the buildings were designed by the City’s most talented and successful architects whose work is often scarcely represented in other parts of the city. Every major architectural style was employed from the Italianate, Queen Anne and Richardsonian Romanesque to numerous classically inspired revivals and the curtain wall Commercial Styles. Structurally, the heavy timbered mill and semi-mill construction eventually gave way to structural steel and innovative designs in reinforced concrete. The growth of the jobbing and warehousing industries created the demand for engineering and architectural advances and the success of the businesses allowed for investments in ornate details. For these reasons the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District is a showcase of commercial architecture in the Midwest. The following are among the notable architects who designed buildings in the warehouse district.

- Charles E. Bell
- George Emile Bertrand
- Christopher Adam Boehme
- Cass Gilbert
- Warren Hayes
- Edwin Haley Hewitt
- Harry Wild Jones

² Horace B. Hudson, *A Half Century of Minneapolis* (Minneapolis: The Hudson publishing Co., 1908), p. 426

³ National Register of Historic Places Registration Form- Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District 1989

- Frederick G. Kees
- Gottlieb Magney
- Wilbur H. Tusler
- Charles Sedgwick
- Edward Stebbings
- Carl F Struck
- Claude Allen Porter Turner
- William Channing Whitney

E. APPLICABLE ORDINANCES:

Chapter 599. Heritage Preservation Regulation

ARTICLE V. DESIGNATION

599.200. Purpose. This article is established to promote the preservation of historic resources by providing the commission with authority to recommend the designation of landmarks and historic districts and to adopt design guidelines for designated properties.

599.210. Designation criteria. The following criteria shall be considered in determining whether a property is worthy of designation as a landmark or historic district because of its historical, cultural, architectural, archaeological or engineering significance:

- (1) The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history.
- (2) The property is associated with the lives of significant persons or groups.
- (3) The property contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city identity.
- (4) The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction.
- (5) The property exemplifies a landscape design or development pattern distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design or detail.
- (6) The property exemplifies works of master builders, engineers, designers, artists, craftsmen or architects.
- (7) The property has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

599.220. Nomination of property. Nomination of a property to be considered for designation as a landmark or historic district shall be submitted to the planning director on a nomination application form approved by the planning director and shall be accompanied by all required supporting information. A nomination may be made by any of the following:

- (1) A member of the heritage preservation commission.
- (2) A member of the city council.
- (3) The mayor.
- (4) The planning director.
- (5) Any person with a legal or equitable interest in the subject property.

599.230. Commission decision on nomination. The commission shall review all complete nomination applications. If the commission determines that a nominated property appears to meet at least one of the criteria for designation contained in section 599.210, the commission may direct the planning director to commence a designation study of the property.

599.240. Interim protection. (a) Purpose. Interim protection is established to protect a nominated property from destruction or inappropriate alteration during the designation process.

(b) Effective date. Interim protection shall be in effect from the date of the commission's decision to commence a designation study of a nominated property until the city council makes a decision regarding the designation of the property, or for twelve (12) months, whichever comes first. Interim protection may be extended for such additional periods as the commission may deem appropriate and necessary to protect the designation process, not exceeding a total additional period of eighteen (18) months. The commission shall hold a public hearing on a proposed extension of interim protection as provided in section 599.170.

(c) Scope of restrictions. During the interim protection period, no alteration or minor alteration of a nominated property shall be allowed except where authorized by a certificate of appropriateness or a certificate of no change, as provided in this chapter.

599.250. State historic preservation office review. The planning director shall submit all proposed designations to the state historic preservation officer for review and comment within sixty (60) days.

599.260. City planning commission review. The planning director shall submit all proposed designations to the city planning commission for review and comment on the proposal within thirty (30) days. In its review, the city planning commission shall consider but not be limited to the following factors:

- (1) The relationship of the proposed designation to the city's comprehensive plan.
- (2) The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding area.
- (3) The consistency of the proposed designation with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the city council.

599.270. Designation hearing. Following completion of the designation study the commission shall hold a public hearing to consider the proposed designation, as provided in section 599.170. Any person having a legal or equitable interest in a nominated property shall be allowed reasonable opportunity to give testimony or present evidence concerning the proposed designation.

599.280. Commission recommendation. Following the public hearing, the commission shall make findings with respect to the proposed designation and shall submit the same together with its recommendation to the zoning and planning committee of the city council. In making its findings and recommendation, the commission shall consider the

designation criteria contained in section 599.210, the information contained in the designation study, the state historic preservation officer's comments, the city planning commission's comments, the planning director's report and all testimony and evidence received at the public hearing relating to the designation.

F. FINDINGS:

1. The properties included within the NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District have significance under local designation criterion number one “the property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history” for being associated with the warehousing, implement, and wholesaling industries that shaped the physical, economic and social development of Minneapolis.
2. The properties included within the NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District have significance under local designation criterion number three “The property contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city identity” for being associated with the warehousing, implement, and wholesaling industries that shaped the physical, economic and social development of Minneapolis.
3. The properties included within the NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District have significance under local designation criterion number four “the property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction” for exemplary collection of extant buildings showcasing a variety of significant architectural styles.
4. The properties included within the NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District have significance under local criterion six “the property exemplifies works of master builders, engineers, designers, artists, craftsmen or architects” for exemplary collection of buildings showcasing variety architectural styles by the City’s leading architects.
5. In 2000 the Warehouse Action Plan was adopted by the Minneapolis City Council. The plan called for the merger of the local and national warehouse historic districts.
6. In December of 2008 the Heritage Preservation Commission directed staff to prepare a nomination for to merge the local and national warehouse historic districts.

G. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings, **nominate** the collection of properties known as the National Register of Historic Places Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District for local designation and **direct** the Planning Director to commence a designation study of the collection of properties known as National Register of Historic Places Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Map of the Area
2. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form
3. Frequently Asked Questions – originally posted on the HPC website December 31, 2008.