

**CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
CPED PLANNING DIVISION
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT
BZH-26009**

FILE NAME: 131 Oak Grove Street – Henry E. Ladd House

APPLICANT: CPED, nominated by Councilmember Lisa Goodman, (612) 673-2207, with support from Citizens for a Loring Park Community, the property owner, the Lowry Hill History Committee, and Elizabeth Vandam

DATE APPLICATION COMPLETE: January 29, 2010

PUBLICATION OF STAFF REPORT: February 22, 2011

DATE OF HEARING: March 1, 2011

APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION: March 11, 2011

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: John Smoley, Ph.D., 612-673-2830

CLASSIFICATION: Landmark Designation Study

A. SITE DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

District/Area information	
Historic District	N/A
Neighborhood	Loring Park

Historic Property information	
Current name	Oak Grove Care Center
Historic Name	Ladd House
Current Address	131 Oak Grove Street
Historic Address	131 Oak Grove Street
Original Construction Date	1889
Original Contractor	W.D. Lewis
Original Architect	Harry Wild Jones (1859-1935)
Historic Use	Residence
Current Use	Rooming House
Proposed Use	To Be Determined Subject to Code of Ordinances; Currently For Sale
Other Historical Designations	N/A

The Ladd House is a 2.5 story residence designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style by Harry Wild Jones and built by W.D. Lewis for Henry E. Ladd in 1889 at a cost of \$18,000.¹ Nearly every exterior feature is carved from tan Kasota limestone. The building's complex, composition shingle-covered roof of hips, gables, parapets, and a turret is the most notable exception, though bracketed, narrow eaves are comprised of this Mankato stone. An open porch curves around the northern and eastern sides of the home. The porches flat roof is supported by Doric columns set atop a simple stone balustrade set in a grid pattern. The columnar pattern is repeated in mullions of select window groupings around the home. Aluminum storm windows obscure the primary fenestration.

On January 29, 2010, Councilmember Lisa Goodman, with support from Citizens for a Loring Park Community, the property owner, the Lowry Hill History Committee, and Elizabeth Vandam, moved to nominate the property known as the Henry E. Ladd House, 131 Oak Grove, Minneapolis, for local historic designation and to establish interim historic protections pursuant to Minneapolis Code of Ordinances §599.240(b) covering all internal and external alterations to buildings, accessory structures and landscape features on the property, including demolitions, additions, renovations and other improvements. Councilmember Goodman also moved that the Planning Director be directed to prepare the necessary documentation to bring this nomination forward to the Historic Preservation Commission no later than April 20, 2010. The Council adopted this motion.

At their April 6, 2010 meeting the Heritage Preservation Commission approved the nomination of 131 Oak Grove St and directed the Planning Director to prepare a designation study of the property. That study is attached.

On February 3, 2011, the State Historic Preservation Officer found 131 Oak Grove Street to be eligible for local designation.

On January 27, 2011, CPED brought the completed designation study to the Committee of the Whole of the Planning Commission. The Committee recommended the property be designated.

B. EVALUATION

The property has been evaluated to various extents several times. The Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office maintains records of three surveys of the property. In July 1973 the subject property was inventoried and deemed significant for its architecture by an unnamed evaluator. A Minnesota Historic Property Inventory Form filled out by someone named Don briefly summarizes the property's features but does not evaluate its significance. A third survey conducted in 1974 by former Minnesota State Historical Architect Charles Nelson recommends the building be added to an unspecified inventory. In 2008 the building was documented in a reconnaissance survey of the Loring Park neighborhood. The evaluators, Mead and Hunt, did not recommend further study of the property to determine whether it was eligible for local and/or national designation as a historic property.²

¹ City of Minneapolis Building Permit #B18188, 131 Oak Grove Street; "Building Permits," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 6 April 1889, 8.

² Mead & Hunt, "Historic Resources Inventory: Historic Resources in the Loring Park and Elliot Park Neighborhoods, Re-survey of Lowry Hill East Neighborhood," Reconnaissance

The City of Minneapolis' Planning Division maintains these surveys as well as one additional survey: a National Register of Historic Places nomination form prepared by Carl Gray and Isaac Efah in 1982. These student evaluators deemed the property significant for its architecture, craftsmanship, neighborhood identity, city identity, and architect.

C. CONSIDERATION FOR DESIGNATION

Based on the 2010 nomination, CPED-Planning-Preservation and Design conducted a designation study (dated February 22, 2011) attached within.

Chapter 599 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, Heritage Preservation Regulations, authorizes the HPC to hold a public hearing to consider proposed designations and to make findings and recommendations to the Zoning and Planning Committee of the City Council with respect to proposed designations as follows:

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.

D. DESIGNATION CRITERIA

Section 599.210 of the Heritage Preservation Regulations establishes criteria to 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. To be eligible for designation, a property must meet at least one of the following designation criteria:

- (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 or neighborhood 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.

E. FINDINGS

1. Consistency with designation criteria:

The Henry E. Ladd House appears eligible for designation as an individual landmark per the ordinance's criteria 3, 4, and 6. It does not appear significant under criteria 1, 2, 5, and 7.

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

The property in question does not appear to be the site of historically significant events. While it did merit mention in the *Minneapolis Tribune* in numerous articles, such mention generally referred to its owners, the Ladds, and their social or philanthropic pursuits.

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

The Ladd House was constructed by W.D. Lewis for Henry E. Ladd in 1889 for \$18,000.³ While Henry Ladd was a wealthy, successful Minneapolitan, he does not appear to be historically significant. While his financial success enabled Ladd to fund the construction of an opulent mansion and contribute to philanthropic causes, Ladd does not stand out above his peers in Minneapolis history.

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

131 Oak Grove Street is historically significant as one of the few tangible remnants of the Loring Park neighborhood's residential origins. The subject property was originally an elegant single family residence constructed in the fashionable, wealthy neighborhood that sprung up around Minneapolis' first city park: Central Park (now known as Loring Park). The neighborhood has seen dramatic change over time. A high rise apartment building, parking garage, and interstate highway now border the subject property. Of the thirty-six single-family structures that stood along Oak Park Street in 1914, only four remain: 131 Oak Grove and three others. 131 Oak Grove also includes a stone retaining wall that spans multiple lots and is emblematic of original design features of the neighborhood. See designation study, section 2, for details.

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

³ City of Minneapolis Building Permit #B18188, 131 Oak Grove Street; "Building permits," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 6 April 1889, 8.

As a residence embodying the distinctive characteristics of the Richardsonian Romanesque style, 131 Oak Grove Street is historically significant. See designation study, section 2, for details.

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

The subject property does not appear significant under criterion 5. The design of the yards appears mundane. A concrete driveway and two deciduous trees are the major landscape features. Such features are quite common to other residences in Minneapolis. An early photograph indicates that none of these features are original and that the vegetation onsite (deciduous trees and grass) during the period of significance remains quite common.

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

131 Oak Grove Street is historically significant as an example of a Richardsonian Romanesque residence designed by Harry Wild Jones, a protégé of the style's developer. See designation study, section 2, for details.

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

The subject property has not yielded information important in prehistory or history. Records available at the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office indicate that no archaeological sites have been identified on the subject property nor have any archaeological surveys have been conducted on or near the property in question.

The subject property is not likely to yield information important in prehistory, defined as the time prior to written recordation of past events in a given area. The subject property is located approximately one thousand feet from Loring Pond today, and was even further away from the pond's pre-1883 predecessor with its surrounding wetlands.⁴ Sites in close proximity (generally five hundred feet or less) to bodies of water have a higher than average potential to include archaeological evidence of precontact human habitation, since bodies of water generally serve as sources of water, food, and transportation. Access to the pond has historically been limited by a marsh that surrounded the water. In 1883 the Park Board enlarged the pond and excavated a smaller portion of the pond from the marsh. Adjacent development further removed the wetlands.⁵ This dredging and filling heavily impacted soils on the edges of the marsh

⁴ U.S. Surveyor General's Office, *Minnesota Public Land Survey Plat Map*, Township 29 N, Range 24 W, 4th Meridian, 1876 [<http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/glo/Index.htm>] accessed 11 February 2011; U.S. Surveyor General's Office, *Minnesota Public Land Survey Plat Map*, Township 29 N, Range 24 W, 4th Meridian, 1885 [<http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/glo/Index.htm>] accessed 11 February 2011.

⁵ Steve Trimble, *In the Shadow of the City: A History of the Loring Park Neighborhood* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Community College Foundation. 1990) 25-27.

that would have been easily accessible to precontact humans, further reducing the likelihood of this area yielding information important in prehistory.

The subject property is not likely to yield information important in history. Building permit records do not indicate the presence of buildings onsite prior to the construction of the present building in 1889.⁶ City records indicate the lot was connected to the municipal sewer system in 1889.⁷ This indicates an extremely low likelihood of the lot containing privy vaults bearing archaeological evidence. Other archaeological sources of information such as sheet refuse (general surface trash scatters that accumulate over time), trash pits, and builder's trenches may still be present on the lot. Generally, this sort of evidence is found in the backyards of residences, and much of the rear yard of this property has been impacted by a driveway and parking area whose general size and placement appears to be original.

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Staff has received letters supporting the nomination from the property owner, the Lowry Hill History Committee, D.B. Montgomery, Erik Roth, and from Elizabeth Vandam: author of *Harry Wild Jones: American Architect*.

G. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

CPED recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings and **approve** the landmark designation of the Henry E. Ladd House, and forward the study and recommendation to the Zoning and Planning Committee of the City Council with a recommendation to **approve** the designation of the property at 131 Oak Grove Street.

⁶ City of Minneapolis Building Permit Index Card, 131 Oak Grove Street.

⁷ City of Minneapolis Public Works and Engineering Sewer and Water Connections Inspection.