

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development
Planning Division

Historic Designation

Date: April 20, 2010

Proposal: Local Designation of Rex Hardware building at 2601 Lyndale Avenue South

Applicant: Machelles Norling, on behalf of SMJ Investments, LLC
(612) 940-3297

Address of Property: 2601 Lyndale Avenue South

Planning Staff and Phone: Aaron Hanauer, (612) 673.2494

Publication Date: April 13, 2010

Public Hearing: April 20, 2010

Ward: Ward 6

Neighborhood Organization: Whittier Alliance
Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association (neighboring neighborhood organization)

Attachments: Attachment A: Context Maps
Attachment B: Rex Hardware Store Designation Study and Appendices
Attachment C: Letter from Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office
Attachment D: City Planning Commission Memo
Attachment E: HPC Demolition of Historic Resource Actions and Staff Report

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Background

On December 9, 2008, a wrecking permit was submitted for the demolition of the building at 2601 Lyndale Avenue South. After completing a historic review of the property, the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) made the determination that the property was a historic resource and the demolition of the property would require a review by the Heritage Preservation Commission via a Demolition of Historic Resource application.

On March 25, 2009, Mabelle Norling, on behalf of the property owners SMJ Investments, submitted a Demolition of Historic Resource application for 2601 Lyndale Avenue South. At the May 12, 2009 Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) meeting, CPED recommended that the HPC approve the demolition of the Rex Hardware Store with conditions for mitigation and recordation. The HPC, however, voted to deny the demolition permit and placed Rex Hardware Store under interim protection for a one year period to complete an historic designation study.

CPED completed additional research as part of the historic designation study for the Rex Hardware Building. During this research, CPED found that the Rex Hardware building is a prime example of an early 20th century streetcar development, captures the history of Minneapolis neighborhood hardware stores, and is a high quality example of a commercial building built in an early Utilitarian architectural style.

CPED is recommending that the Rex Hardware building and property be designated a Minneapolis landmark. The proposed designation meets local designation Criteria of Significance One, Three, Four, and Five, outlined in Section 599.210 of the City Code (see Appendix B for designation study).

- *Criterion One:* The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history;
- *Criterion Three:* The property contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city identity;
- *Criterion Four:* The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction;
- *Criterion Five:* The property exemplifies a landscape design or development pattern distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design or detail.

The proposed designation of the 2601 Lyndale Avenue South is also consistent with the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth (see Appendix D for City Planning Commission memo). The designation of the Rex Hardware Store would be consistent with the Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan in meeting the following policies:

- Policy 1.1: Preserve and enhance a system of Neighborhood Commercial Nodes that includes a mix of housing, neighborhood-serving retail, and community uses.
- Policy 8.1.4: Designate resources recommended for designation from historic surveys and listed on the National Register of Historic Places which has no local protection.
- Policy 8.5.1: Identify and protect important historic and cultural landscapes.
- Policy 8.7.1 Protect historic resources from demolition and explore alternatives to demolition.
- Policy 10.10.7: Encourage the renovation of existing commercial buildings.

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In addition, the designation of the Rex Hardware Store would be beneficial to the surrounding area and be consistent with the Lyn Lake Small Area Plan. On June 26, 2009 the City Council adopted the Lyn-Lake Small Area Plan. The subject property is located within the focus area of the Lyn Lake Small Area Plan. The proposed designation of Rex Hardware would be consistent with The Lyn-Lake Small Area Plan and the document's recommended principles:

- Maintain and grow an independent and diverse business mix.
- Promote a clean, safe, pedestrian friendly urban environment.
- Maintain and cultivate a residential and commercial identity that is uniquely Lyn-Lake.

Furthermore, the designation of the subject property would provide the opportunity to maintain and grow an independent and diverse business mix in Lyn Lake that would enhance the identity of the area and promote a safe, pedestrian friendly urban environment. The intersection of 26th and Lyndale has a great collection of local, independent businesses including: Tree House Records, Common Roots Café, The C.C. Club, French Meadow, Once Upon a Crime, and The Bulldog, If the Rex Hardware Building is demolished without plans of an active use in its place it will undermine this important business community by reducing the synergy that can take place in having numerous businesses close together. In addition, the demolition of the Rex Hardware Building would undermine the pedestrian friendly urban environment by not allowing the opportunity for an active reuse to be at this location where people in the neighborhood could obtain products or services by walking.

Per the Heritage Preservation ordinance, the draft designation study was sent to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Minneapolis City Planning Commission for review and comment. At the April 1, 2010 City Planning Commission meeting, CPED provided the Minneapolis Planning Commission a report on how the designation is consistent with the Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan, will have a beneficial impact on the surrounding area, and is consistent with the Lyn-Lake Small Area Plan (Attachment D). The Planning Commission commented that prior to reading the designation study they did not consider the relationship of the Rex Hardware building and its relationship with commercial streetcar development as part of the building's significance.

On April 2, 2010, SHPO provided favorable comments on the designation. SHPO stated that, "Such nodes [26th Street West and Lyndale Avenue South] frequently contained a variety of small-scale, family run retail businesses such as drug stores, grocery stores, meat markets, bakeries and hardware stores. Having been in business for 91 years from 1914-2005, the Allen/Rex Hardware Store is noteworthy because it is the longest operating hardware store in Minneapolis that was originally built as a hardware store. As such, it is an ideal candidate for local designation (Attachment C1)."

At the April 20, 2010 Heritage Preservation Commission meeting, the HPC is scheduled to act upon the designation and make a recommendation on the designation to the Zoning and Planning Committee. The Zoning and Planning Committee is scheduled to take place on May 20, 2010 and the subsequent full City Council meeting is scheduled to take place on May 28, 2010.

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At this time, CPED staff also recommends extending the period of interim protection until the HPC has acted upon the local designation study or a period of two (2) months (to July 12, 2010), whichever comes first.

Findings:

1. The property at 2601 Lyndale Avenue South was constructed in 1914 as a neighborhood hardware store, and continued to operate as a neighborhood hardware store until 2005.
2. The property at 2601 Lyndale Avenue South is significant based on Criterion One. Rex Hardware is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history. Even though Minneapolis still has neighborhood hardware stores throughout the city, Rex Hardware, more than any other hardware store building in Minneapolis illustrates the economic rise and fall pattern of neighborhood hardware stores as a collection in the 20th and 21st centuries. Rex Hardware operated as a hardware store for most of the 20th century, and ended operation in the early part of the 21st century because of the impact of large hardware chains and shifting homeownership trends in the surrounding neighborhood.
3. The property at 2601 Lyndale Avenue South is significant based on Criterion Three. Rex Hardware contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city identity. The Clark J. Allen/Rex Hardware Building is an important part of the City of Minneapolis' commerce history as a neighborhood hardware store. The building holds the distinction of being the longest operating hardware store in Minneapolis that was originally built as a hardware store (91 years).
4. The property at 2601 Lyndale Avenue South is significant based on Criterion Four. Rex Hardware embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction. The Allen Hardware building was completed in a Utilitarian architectural style. The building represents a clean, pre-modern, one-story commercial storefront building from the early 20th century. Built of red brick masonry, the building contains a simple corbelled cornice, large store front windows, and a brick chimney. At this time, the City of Minneapolis does not have another commercial-use landmark designed in this architectural style.
5. The property at 2601 Lyndale Avenue South is significant based on Criterion Five. Rex Hardware is associated with development pattern distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design or detail. The Rex Hardware Store (originally known as the Clark J. Allen Hardware Store) at 2601 Lyndale Avenue South is a quality example of streetcar era commercial development common in Minneapolis between 1890 and 1930, specifically it serves as a high-quality example of commercial development for the Bryant Avenue Streetcar Line.
6. The designation of the Rex Hardware building is consistent with the Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan policies 1.1, 8.1, 8.5, 8.7, and 10.10.
7. The designation of the Rex Hardware Store is consistent with the Lyn-Lake Small Area Plan in that it preserves the existing fabric and feel of the Lyndale Avenue. At this time, there is no substitute development pending for 2601 Lyndale Avenue South. The demolition of the building at 2601 Lyndale Avenue South would eliminate an important part of this historic, intact, commercial node.

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8. On May 12, 2009 the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission took action to establish interim protection and directed the Planning Director to commence a designation study.
9. Interim protection has been in effect since May 12, 2009. Unless further action is taken by the Heritage Preservation Commission, interim protection will expire on May 12, 2010.
10. In order to complete the designation process, the City Council shall make the final decision on all designations. A vote from the City Council on the designation is scheduled for May 28, 2010.
11. An extension of interim protection for two months will allow the designation study process to be completed while the subject property is under interim protection.
12. During the interim protection period, no alteration or minor alteration of a nominated property (including all buildings, structures, and landscape features) is allowed except where authorized by a certificate of appropriateness or a certificate of no change, as provided in the city's preservation ordinance.
13. The Rex Hardware Building is recommended for property and exterior designation. Interior designation is not recommended.

Staff Recommendation

CPED staff recommends that the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** the Rex Hardware Store Designation Study and attachments as findings of fact and submit the same together with a recommendation to the Zoning and Planning Committee of the City Council to **approve** a local designation of the Rex Hardware Building at 2601 Lyndale Avenue South. The designation shall include the property and exterior of the principal structure. Interior designation is not recommended.

CPED staff also recommends that the HPC **extend** the period of interim protection until the City Council has acted upon the local designation study or a period of two (2) months (to July 12, 2010), whichever comes first.