

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development
Planning Division

Historic Designation

Date: October 28, 2009

Proposal: Local Designation of National Register of Historic Places
Minneapolis Warehouse District

Applicant: City of Minneapolis CPED

Address of Property: See Map

Planning Staff and Phone: Brian Schaffer, 612.673.2670

Publication Date: October 29, 2009

Public Hearing: November 5, 2009

Ward: Ward 7 & 5

Neighborhood Organization: Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
North Loop Neighborhood Association

Attachments: Attachment A: Minneapolis Warehouse District Designation
Study – October 28, 2009
Attachment B: Map of District and List of Properties
Attachment C: HPC Nomination Staff Report and Action –
January 13, 2009
Attachment D: City Planning Commission Memo –
September 1, 2009
Attachment E: Letter from Minnesota State Historic
Preservation Office – October 9, 2009
Attachment F: Comments
Letter from Preserve Minneapolis

Executive Summary

- The local designation of Minneapolis Warehouse District implements the following City Council adopted plans:
 - The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth (2009)
 - The Warehouse Action Plan (2000)
 - The Minneapolis Preservation Plan (1991)
- The designation study has been reviewed the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Minneapolis Planning Commission. The designation received favorable comments from both groups.
- The proposed designation meets local designation criteria one, four and six.
 - *Criterion One:* The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history
 - *Criterion Four:* The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction.
 - *Criterion Six:* The property exemplifies works of master builders, engineers, designers, artists, craftsmen or architects

Background

In 1978 the North Loop Warehouse Historic District was locally designated by the Minneapolis City Council. In 1989, the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District is substantially larger in size than the locally designated North Loop Warehouse District; this difference in size is attributed to a larger scope of significance for the NRHP district.

On January 13, 2009 the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) nominated the National Register of the Historic Places (NRHP) Minneapolis Warehouse District for local designation and called on the Planning Director to commence a designation study of the district.

The proposed designation would expand the boundaries of the locally designated North Loop Warehouse District to the boundaries of the NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse District, effectively creating a new local Minneapolis Warehouse District whose boundaries include the entirety of the NRHP district. The foundation for the designation study is based on the National Register nomination prepared by Rolf Anderson in the 1980s.

Public Process and Engagement

Public engagement on the designation has involved many outlets. CPED has hosted a walking tour of the district, held public meetings on the designation, and has presented at other organizations' meetings. On top of our active outreach we have been utilizing a project webpage to provide updates on the process and products during the designation study. The webpage has been active since December 2008. The webpage is frequently updated and has been the primary tool in providing information about the designation process.

Outreach for meetings on the warehouse designation include three mailings to property owners within or adjacent to the district. This list included nearly 2,200 property owners. In

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In addition to mailings, CPED has worked with the recognized neighborhood, business and other active organizations in the area to increase awareness and outreach of the designation.

These organizations include:

- Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
- North Loop Neighborhood Association
- Warehouse District Business Association
- 2010 Partners
- Preserve Minneapolis

The following is a list of meetings which the designation has been discussed.

- December 2, 2008: HPC Meeting: Direction to CPED to prepare nomination
- January 13, 2009: HPC Public Hearing: Nomination of Historic District
- January 21, 2009: NLNA Planning & Zoning Meeting: Discuss Designation Process
- January 28, 2009: NLNA Annual Meeting: Discuss Designation Process
- May 14, 2009: Community Meeting on History and Character of District
- May 20, 2009: NLNA Planning & Zoning Meeting
- June 9, 2009: Community Meeting Components of Compatible Design in District
- June 16, 2009: 2010 Partners Meeting
- June 16, 2009: HPC Business Meeting: Discuss Compatible Design in District
- July 9, 2009: Community Meeting: Discuss Design Guidelines
- July 21, 2009: HPC Business Meeting Discuss Draft Design Guidelines
- September 17, 2009: City Planning Commission: Discuss and Review Designation
- October 6, 2009: Walking Tour of proposed local Minneapolis Warehouse District
- October 6, 2009: HPC Business Meeting: Discuss and Review Designation Study
- October 21, 2009: NLNA Planning & Zoning Meeting: Designation Process Update
- November 5, 2009 HPC Public Hearing on Designation of Minneapolis Warehouse

Consistency with City of Minneapolis Adopted Plans and Policies

The historic resources located in the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District are the non-renewable, visible remains of the heritage of Minneapolis. Once lost, they can never be replaced. The preservation and maintenance of historic resources result in a community's sense of stewardship for present and future generations.

The City of Minneapolis has adopted policies and plans that support the preservation of its heritage and it has specifically identified and recommended the NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District for local designation in adopted policy dating back to 1991. The local designation of the Minneapolis Warehouse District implements the following City Council adopted plans:

The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth (2009)

The designation of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District is explicitly supported by the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth. In 2009 the City Council approved the comprehensive plan: The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth.

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Policy 8.1 of the comprehensive plan provides the most guidance on this item and states the following: “Preserve, maintain, and designate districts, landmarks, and historic resources which serve as reminders of the city's architecture, history, and culture.”

Implementation Step 8.1.4 calls for the designation of resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places that have no local protection. The NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District is the most prominent of these resources.

The Warehouse Action Plan (2000)

The Warehouse Action Plan was adopted by the HPC and Minneapolis City Council in 2000. The plan was developed for the NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic in response to the demolition of five historic buildings for the construction of the Federal Reserve Bank. The plan calls for the local designation of the National Register of Historic Places Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District.

The first goal of the Warehouse Action Plan is to “Preserve the distinctive character of the Plan Area, through rehabilitation of buildings, conservation of historic streetscape features, and compatible design for new construction.” The Plan goes on to state:

Past preservation efforts in the area have focused on buildings. However, the Plan Area's other features -bridges, railroad corridors, spur lines, retaining walls, areaways, and brick and granite pavers, are often threatened with deterioration, vandalism, and removal. These remnants provide important physical evidence of the historic warehousing and jobbing activities in the district. They physically and visually connect the massive buildings and structures, and are a key part of the complexity of the cultural landscape. Overall, the historic character of the Plan Area is one of Minneapolis' greatest assets.

Minneapolis Preservation Plan (1991)

In 1991 the City of Minneapolis adopted Phase II of its Preservation Plan. The Minneapolis Warehouse District is explicitly identified in the plan in reference to the commerce and architectural heritage of Minneapolis. The Preservation Plan states:

One of the best-preserved references to the critical period of commercial growth in Minneapolis in the 1880s and 1890s is the National Register of Minneapolis Warehouse District. Its 160 buildings are significant for both their architecture and commercial history. The existence of the district is inextricably connected to the rail yards along the riverbanks that fed the commercial activities of the area.

Local Designation Criteria

The City of Minneapolis developed seven local designation criteria based on the larger historical context of the city as outlined in the Preservation Plan. The proposed designation meets the following designation criteria.

Designation Criterion One:

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

The Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District is historically significant as an early example of commercial growth as the city's warehouse and wholesaling district, which expanded during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when Minneapolis became a major distribution and jobbing center for the northwest. The resources within the district include the best remaining examples of an agricultural implement warehousing industry, which in 1915 exceeded the flour and grain trade as the biggest business in Minneapolis, and the wholesaling industry, which in 1919 became a billion dollar industry. These industries reached the size they did because of the access to the agrarian economies of the northwest facilitated by the railroads. The buildings, structures, and industrial landscape of the warehouse district reflect the genesis and evolution of these industries as they grew from one or two warehouses in 1865 to approximately 300 in 1920.

Designation Criterion Four:

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

The buildings in the district demonstrate every major architectural style from 1865 through 1930. They range 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 warehousing industries created the demand for engineering and architectural advances and the success of the businesses allowed for investments in ornate details.

Designation Criterion Six:

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

Many of the buildings in the district were designed by the City's most talented and successful architects whose work is often scarcely represented in other parts of the city.

Reviews & Comments

The Preservation Chapter (Chapter 599) of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances requires that the designation be submitted to the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for review and comment.

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State Historic Preservation Office

The designation was submitted to SHPO for comment on August 3, 2009. In a letter dated October 9, 2009 SHPO (see appendix X for the letter) provided favorable comments on the designation and stated:

“The documentation submitted makes a solid case for local designation under Criteria 1, 4, and 6 for its association with broad patterns of social history, because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of architectural style, and because it exemplifies works of master builders, engineers, and architects. “

City Planning Commission

The Minneapolis Code of Ordinances also requires that the designation be submitted to the Minneapolis City Planning Commission (CPC) for review and comment. The Ordinance states that 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.

The designation study was submitted to the CPC on September 1, 2009. On September 17, 2009 the CPC provided favorable comments on the designation study and adopted the report and findings prepared by CPED staff that addressed the factors listed above. A copy of that report is located in Appendix X.

Resources of the District

The Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District Designation Study, dated October 28, 2009, provides a thorough analysis of the historic context and significance of the district. The designation study further describes and evaluates each resource. The district contains a total 254 individual resources. The district contains 158 buildings, 65 structures, and 31 sites. 60 of these resources are considered noncontributing. The designation study is located in Appendix A of this report.

The buildings in the district demonstrate every major architectural style from 1865 through 1930 and representative works of the city's most talented architects of the time. The buildings in the district have received the most attention since local and national warehouse district designations were adopted. However, the landscape features of district (including the streets, alleys, loading docks, and rail corridors) are significant and integral components of the districts' identity; they are as equally important to the heritage of Minneapolis as the buildings. These features are physical reminders of the interconnectedness of the warehousing, manufacturing, and railroad industries that shaped commerce of Minneapolis in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The location of the streets, alleys, rail corridors, and rail yards shaped both the patterns of development in the area and the configuration of its buildings.

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The inclusion of physical features such as streets, alleys, rail corridors and rail yards as resources in a designation is common practice and is keeping with the guidelines and processes set forth by the Secretary of the Interior and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. It is also consistent with City of Minneapolis approved Warehouse Action Plan.

The best example of the interconnectedness of the railroads and the warehousing and manufacturing industries is the Fourth Avenue North Rail Corridor or more recently referred to as the "Cut". This feature is a physical manifestation of the power of the railroads and their social, economic and physical impact on the development of Minneapolis.

Until 1890, the Great Northern Railroad (now Burlington Northern Santa Fe) and the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroads crossed Washington Avenue North, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Streets North at grade. A lawsuit between the two railroads and the City of Minneapolis was settled in 1890. The settlement resulted in numerous changes in the corridor and created the physical features present today. The rail corridor was widened to accommodate six tracks and its grade was lowered. The Great Northern and Minneapolis & St. Louis rail yards were also lowered, yet remained at higher grade than the corridor tracks. Traffic Street was created by the conversion of an alley into a street to mitigate the reduced access to the site because of the grade change. The First and Second Street bridges were lengthened to accommodate the additional tracks in the corridor. Washington Avenue was bridged over the lowered tracks. Third, Fourth and Fifth Streets were bridged over the rail yards and the rail corridor. The bridge abutments and transitional grade required for the viaducts resulted in the grade changes experience along Fifth Avenue North at Third, Fourth and Fifth Streets North.

These physical alterations facilitated better railroad access in the area, which further fueled the expansion of the warehousing and manufacturing industries in the area. Not only did this facilitate the growth in the commerce of the businesses, it also shaped the physical development of the area. Once completed, new firms could now locate north of Fourth Avenue North and have rail access. The grade changes and bridging also allowed for the street car line to extend down Washington Avenue North. Without these significant alterations this portion of Minneapolis would not have developed in the pattern that it did and some key firms may not have located in this area or the City.

Boundary

The proposed boundaries of the local designation of the Minneapolis Warehouse House District match the NRHP district boundaries. This boundary was evaluated using the methodology outlined in the designation study. The boundaries include the highest concentration of resources associated with the contexts outlined in the designation study.

The alignment of the proposed local district boundaries is consistent with the boundaries of the NRHP district. It is also consistent with direction given by the City Council in 2000, when it adopted the Minneapolis Warehouse Action Plan.

Having the boundaries of the local and national historic district match provides consistency for property owners, neighborhood and business organizations, City staff and elected officials to evaluate alterations in the district. This concern of consistency in review and protection of historic resources is so strongly felt that the City included an implementation step in The

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Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth that calls for the designation of resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places that have no local protection.

A map of the district and a list of the properties included in the district are included in Attachment B.

Conclusion

Since its listing on the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service eighteen years ago, the City of Minneapolis has identified the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District as a key context of its heritage that is worthy of the honor of local designation by the Minneapolis City Council. The local designation implements eighteen years of plans adopted by the City Council and developed by city staff and city residents.

The Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office has reviewed the designation and found that it meets local designation criteria one, four and six. The City Planning Commission has reviewed the designation and found that it is consistent with and supported by the Comprehensive Plan and other locally adopted plans.

Staff Recommendation

CPED Staff recommends that the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** the above report and attachments as findings of fact and submit the same together with a recommendation to **approve** the local designation of the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District to the Zoning & Planning Committee of the City Council with the following conditions:

1. The Minneapolis Warehouse District includes the 254 resources evaluated and listed in the designation study. These resources include the properties identified in the map and listed in Attachment B of this report.
2. The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties will be used to evaluate alterations in the district, as they have during interim protection, until such time local design guidelines are adopted.