

**CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS  
CPED PLANNING DIVISION  
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT  
BZH-26402**

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FILE NAME: 2006 Laurel Avenue West – Higgins Residence

APPLICANT: CPED-Planning

DATE APPLICATION COMPLETE: n/a

PUBLICATION OF STAFF REPORT: June 15, 2010

DATE OF HEARING: June 22, 2010

APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION: July 2, 2010

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

CLASSIFICATION: Nomination for Consideration for Designation as a Local Historic Landmark

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**A. SITE DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND**

<b>District/Area information</b>	
Historic District	N/A
Neighborhood	Bryn Mawr

<b>Historic Property information</b>	
Current name	O'Neill Residence
Historic Name	Higgins Residence
Current Address	2006 Laurel Avenue West
Historic Address	2000-2006 Laurel Avenue West
Original Construction Date	1888
Original Contractor	Erick Lund
Original Architect	none
Historic Use	Residence
Current Use	Residence
Proposed Use	Residence
Other Historical Designations	N/A



2006 Laurel Avenue West, date unknown, photo submitted by Rick Carter from Hennepin History museum Files



2006 Laurel Avenue West, 2010, photo submitted by Rick Carter

The residence once owned by Henry R. Higgins is a 2.5-story house designed in the Queen Anne style. Erick Lund constructed the house for Eugene A.L. Arnold in 1888 for an estimated cost of \$6,000.<sup>1</sup> The residence is laid out in a massed plan essentially two units deep by three units wide but modified by a variety of horizontal and vertical projections. These projections along with the variety and placement of exterior features such as an offset front porch, dormers, and oriel windows clearly indicate the building's Queen Anne origins.

A complex, side-gabled roof clad in composition shingles is punctured by a tall, square, red brick chimney with a clay flue. An octagonal tower with a conical roof extends upward just east of the main entrance. Below the conical roof's narrow eaves and short brackets are a series of fixed and double hung rectangular, arched, and fanlight windows, half of the height of the half story and the full height of the second and first story portions of the tower. Conical-roofed

<sup>1</sup> City of Minneapolis Building Permit #B16442.

dormers bookend the tower. Projecting gables extend out of the second story on the northern and southern sides as well as the half story of the eastern and western sides. Half timbering sits atop and between two double hung windows in the southern gable. Shingles cover the top portions of gabled walls with horizontal siding covering the walls beneath. Recessed arches rise out of eave returns beneath the western and southern gables.

A cross gable with a broken base pediment sits in the middle of an open, first-floor, shed roofed front porch. Square posts extend down from the roof to a shingled knee wall periodically punctured by rectangular-shaped openings atop eyebrow-shaped openings. The rectangular openings on the south (front) side of the home are divided by turned wood spindles.

Narrow horizontal wood siding clads the first and second floor walls of the main building. Coursed wood shingles clad the half story and front porch. Stucco clads the walls of a hipped roof one-story rear addition. A Dish Network TV antenna is attached to the interior (west) side of the building.

The north (rear) side of the home provides the clearest evidence of change. Gabled dormers project out of the roof's northern side. A hexagonal, hipped, windowless projection several feet in height juts out just below a second story window. Four entrances exit onto this side of the property, one into the stucco addition; one into a recessed first floor entrance; and two atop a replaced stairway and into an enclosed second-story stairwell or entryway.

The residence sits on a roughly rectangular, flat, corner lot, with 93.5 feet of frontage along Laurel Avenue West and 145.71 feet of frontage along Newton Avenue South as it curves northwest from its intersection with Laurel. Overgrown vegetation, including grass, shrubs, and trees, comprises the landscaping onsite. No other buildings are on the lot.

On April 16, 2010, Councilmember Lisa Goodman moved to nominate the property known as the Henry R. Higgins House at 2006 Laurel Avenue West in 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 June 22, 2010. The Council adopted this motion.

In a 1981 reconnaissance survey of Minneapolis, including properties recommended for further study in the *Minneapolis Buildings-Potential National/Local Historic or Architecture Sites List*, the subject property was recommended for further study. The Minnesota SHPO site inventory files and database included a survey of the property as well. Despite these surveys, a 2002 reconnaissance survey of North Minneapolis by 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, stating that it had lost historic integrity since the earlier surveys (Attachment B).<sup>2</sup>

## B. CONSIDERATION FOR NOMINATION

Per section 599.230 of the Heritage Preservation Regulations, the Heritage Preservation Commission shall review all complete nomination applications. If the Heritage Preservation Commission determines that a nominated property or 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.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The subject property may be eligible for designation as an individual landmark under criteria 2, 4, 6, and 7:

Criterion 2 The property is associated with the lives of significant persons or groups.

Eugene A.L. Arnold was the original owner of the home when it was built in 1888.<sup>3</sup> Arnold apparently did not live onsite, as the social column of the *Minneapolis Tribune* notes Arnold's wife entertaining at her home at 85 Dell Place in September 1889 shortly after the subject property's construction.<sup>4</sup> By the summer of 1904 Henry R. Higgins was the owner of the home.<sup>5</sup> Arnold and Higgins may have been realtors. Higgins he owned forty acres on Portland Avenue in 1887, the year before the subject property was constructed and Arnold owned a Minneapolis restaurant in 1882.<sup>6</sup> The men merited little mention in the *Minneapolis Tribune* beyond very brief ads and social column notes.

More prominent than either Arnold or Higgins was the Viehman family, who owned 2006 Laurel Avenue West from at least 1908 until 1931.<sup>7</sup> George J. Viehman headed the Minneapolis-based Viehman Grain Company.<sup>8</sup> His son G.E. Viehman ran the Viehman Automobile Company, headquartered at 311 South Third Street.<sup>9</sup> The Viehman family parlayed their success into other

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<sup>2</sup> Mead & Hunt, "North Minneapolis Historic Resources Inventory: Bryn Mawr and Near North Neighborhoods (South Area)," Reconnaissance Survey Files, Planning Division, Community Planning and Economic Development Department, Minneapolis, MN.

<sup>3</sup> City of Minneapolis Building Permit #B16442; City of Minneapolis Building Permit Index Card, 2006 Laurel Avenue West.

<sup>4</sup> "The Social Whirl," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 1 September 1889, 10.

<sup>5</sup> City of Minneapolis Building Permit #B59653, 2006 Laurel Avenue.

<sup>6</sup> "Display Ad No. 1-No Title," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 15 March 1887, 7.; "Display Ad No. 2-No Title," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 27 September 1882, 8.

<sup>7</sup> "Nelson-Mansfield Wedding," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 26 November 1908, 3; Abstract Index, Minneapolis, Bryn Mar Block 2, Hennepin County Recorder's Office.

<sup>8</sup> "Grain Elevator Is Burned with Loss of \$90,000," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 27 February 1919, 1.

<sup>9</sup> "New Concern Gets Auburn," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 31 March 1912, 51.

interests to include a realty company.<sup>10</sup> George E. Viehman's son, George Edwin Viehman, Jr., was a radio announcer and producer for WCCO radio for many years after serving in the navy during World War II.<sup>11</sup> In 1958 Viehman managed Al Quie's special election in which he won Minnesota's first congressional seat. This success with the future governor's campaign propelled him to leadership of the state's Republican Party in 1959. Viehman died of prostate cancer at the early age of 39 in 1961.<sup>12</sup>

The subject property is clearly associated with the Viehman family. Whether the home is the best remaining example of the Viehman's legacy and whether the family is significant within the context of Minneapolis' commercial and political history is worthy of further investigation in a designation study.

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

The subject property is a 2.5-story house designed in the Queen Anne style.

The Queen Anne style in the United States is derived from a British architectural movement begun in the late 1860s. The style is characterized by irregularity of plan and massing; a variety of wall colors and textures, including shingles, horizontal siding, and half-timbering; projecting upper stories; a variety of window forms; and a variety of roof forms though the gable predominates. Though more accurately derived from Elizabethan architecture, the Queen Anne style became popular in the United States following its use in British buildings constructed for the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876. The style represents a backlash against the realities of high Victorian architectural "reality" and a return to a more fanciful version of the past.<sup>13</sup> Yet the industrialization, urbanization, and mass production that characterized life in the last quarter of nineteenth century America made the Queen Anne style possible. Mass produced, ornate woodwork; home designs disseminated by popular architectural style books; and nationwide railroad transportation networks that expedited the delivery of "kit homes" and parts spread the Queen Anne style far and wide.

The residence at 2006 Laurel Avenue West clearly embodies the Queen Anne style. The building's basic two-by-three massed plan is modified by a variety of horizontal and vertical projections. These projections along with the variety and placement of exterior features such as an offset front porch, dormers, and oriel windows clearly indicate the building's Queen Anne origins.

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<sup>10</sup> "Viehman Realty Company Buys Apartment House," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 5 March 1922, A6; "Culbert Mills Are Sold to the Viehman Company," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 5 December 1921, 3.

<sup>11</sup> "Viehman Overcame Physical Handicaps; Radio Personality Loves Life, People," *Richfield News*, 3 November 1955.

<sup>12</sup> "Viehman Was One of Era's Most Forceful Political Personalities," *Minneapolis Star*, 15 August 1961.

<sup>13</sup> Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1992) 115-117.

The subject property's place within the City's other historically significant Queen Anne architecture requires further study. The City does have numerous other designated buildings that reflect this architectural style. Eight landmarks, one historic district (the Healy Block Historic District), numerous properties within historic districts, and vernacular derivations of the style embodied in landmarks like north Minneapolis' concrete block houses stand as testament to this nationwide style. Indeed, more Minneapolis landmark residences are designed in the Queen Anne style (eight examples) than any other architectural type save Prairie (nine examples), and there is no designated district devoted to the Prairie style in Minneapolis. These Queen Anne style landmarks include the following properties:

<p>Baker-Emerson House 2215 Dupont Avenue North Constructed in 1883</p>	
<p>Coe, Amos B., House 1700 3rd Avenue South Constructed 1884-1886</p>	

Bardwell-Ferrant House  
2500 Portland Avenue South  
(originally 1800 Park Avenue South)  
Constructed in 1883, modified in 1890

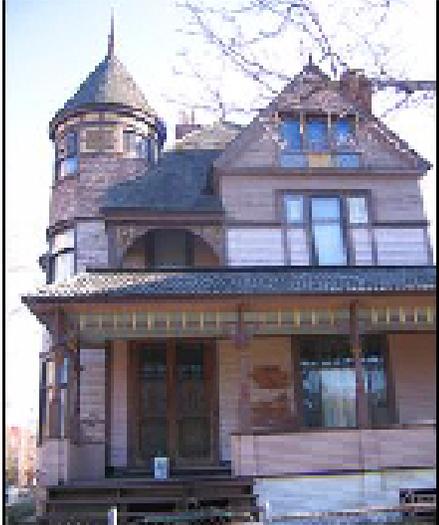


Florence Court  
1022 University Avenue S.E.  
Constructed in 1886



Hafstad, Jacob, House  
159 Arthur Avenue S.E.  
Constructed in 1894



<p>Legg, Harry, House  1601 Park Avenue South  Constructed in 1887</p>	
<p>Lohmar, John, House  1514 Dupont Avenue North  Constructed in 1898</p>	
<p>Cattanach, Donald, House  1031 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.E.  Constructed in 1893</p>	

Like all of these homes, the subject property was constructed family residence. Like all of these residences but two, the subject property was constructed in the 1880s. Like all of these buildings but two, the subject property appears to be significant for its embodiment of the Queen Anne style alone. Further research, through the designation study process, is warranted, to determine the place of 2006 Laurel Avenue West among other examples of properties designated for their embodiment of the Queen Anne style.

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

The property has no architect of record. Erick Lund is listed as the builder of record on the property's building permit index card, though the building permit lists no builder.<sup>14</sup> Lund merited mention in the *Minneapolis Tribune* numerous times between 1867 and 1922. Lund appears to have been a builder with enough capital to pursue his own speculative real estate projects and commission historically significant architects like Harry Wild Jones.<sup>15</sup> Further research is needed to determine whether Lund is a master builder and whether this home exemplifies his work.

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

The property may yield information important in prehistory or history. The subject property is located within 1000 feet of Basset Creek and in between Basset Creek and the Devil's Backbone: the ridge that runs north of Lowry Hill and Kenwood. These terrain features have created a logical route for east-west traffic between the western portions of the city and St. Anthony Falls. Given these conditions, it is possible that the site might yield information important in prehistory, but the building in question might have to have its foundation demolished to explore this possibility. The issuance of a plumbing permit in 1888, the year the home was constructed, indicates that the site may not contain the remains of any outhouses, which are common sources of historic archaeological data. Even if those did exist, the quality of items likely found in such depositories and the relative availability of written records from this time period indicates that the archaeological evidence on the lot likely possesses little potential to yield information important in history which cannot be gained through studies of written records. Nevertheless, the property's location along known transportation routes and habitation sites merits further investigation of potential archaeological significance in a designation study.

The subject property does not appear eligible for designation as a landmark per the following criteria:

Criterion 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* several times

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<sup>14</sup> City of Minneapolis Building Permit #B16442; City of Minneapolis Building Permit Index Card, 2006 Laurel Avenue West.

<sup>15</sup> "Costly Homes," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 22 January 1893, 9.

before 1923, such mention referred to a short social page note on a 1908 Viehman family wedding and ads listing an apartment for rent.<sup>16</sup>

Criterion 3 The property contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city or neighborhood identity.

The property in question does not appear to be associated with distinctive elements of city or neighborhood identity. The subject property is the site of a residence, which is extremely common in the City of Minneapolis. The neighborhood has seen regular change over time, as demonstrated by numerous period architectural styles in the few blocks around the property. Queen Anne residences rub elbows with Minimal Traditional, Flat Pack, and vernacular residences and small commercial node buildings. If any style dominates the neighborhood it is Craftsman.

Criterion 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. Shrubs, trees, and grass, the major landscape features, are quite common to other residences in Minneapolis.

## **B. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Staff has received two comment letters on the proposal from one neighbor (Attachment D).

## **C. APPLICABLE ORDINANCES**

### ***Chapter 599. Heritage Preservation Regulation***

#### **ARTICLE V. DESIGNATION**

**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 or neighborhood identity.

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<sup>16</sup> "Nelson-Mansfield Wedding," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 26 November 1908, 3; Classified Ad, *Minneapolis Tribune*, 12 April 1911, 16; Classified Ad, *Minneapolis Tribune*, 19 February 1930, 15.

- (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.

**599.230. 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 prepare or cause to be prepared a designation study of the property. In cases where an application for demolition is initiated by the property owner, the planning director may determine that the property owner bears the full financial responsibility of conducting the designation study. In all cases, the planning director shall define the scope of services for a designation study, review qualifications of agent conducting study and make a determination of what constitutes a final submission upon completion.

**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. (2001-Or-029, § 1, 3-2-01)

#### **D. FINDINGS**

1. The nominated property appears to meet at least one of the criteria for designation contained in section 599.210 (criterion 4).
2. The property may meet additional criteria of significance. A full review will be undertaken during the designation study.

#### **E. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

CPED recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings and **approve** the nomination of 2006 Laurel Avenue West as a landmark; **establish** interim

protection; and **direct** the Planning Director to prepare or cause to be prepared a designation study.

**Attachments:**

- A. Staff report – A1-A13
- B. Materials submitted by CPED – B1-B6
  - a. Location map – B1
  - b. 350' map – B2
  - c. 2002 North Minneapolis reconnaissance survey excerpt – B3-B6
- C. Materials submitted by Rick Carter – C1-C15
- D. Materials submitted by other parties – D1-D2