

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

FILE NAME: 2601 Lyndale Avenue South/ Rex Hardware (BZH 25831)
 APPLICANT: Machel Norling (612) 940-3297 on behalf of property owner SMJ, Inc.
 DATE OF APPLICATION: March 25, 2009
 PUBLICATION OF STAFF REPORT: May 5, 2009
 DATE OF HEARING: May 12, 2009
 APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION: May 22, 2009
 STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Aaron Hanauer, (612) 673-2494
 REQUEST: Demolition of a Historic Resource

A. SITE DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

District/Area Information	
Local Historic District/Individual Landmark	N/A
National Historic District/Individual Landmark	N/A
District/Landmark Areas of Significance	N/A
Neighborhood	Whittier
Property Information	
Address	2601 Lyndale Avenue South
Classification	Historic Resource
Construction Date	1914
Historic Contractor	Day Labor
Historic Architect	John V. Koester
Architectural Style	Commercial/Retail
Historical Use	Commercial/Retail:
Current Use	Vacant
Historic Name	Allen Hardware Store
Current Name	Rex Hardware Store
Original Owner	Clark J. Allen

B. PROPOSED CHANGES

Ms. Norling, the applicant, submitted a wrecking permit for 2601 Lyndale Avenue South on or about December 9, 2008 for 2601 Lyndale Avenue South. On December 24, 2009, CPED staff informed the applicant that the demolition of 2601 Lyndale Avenue South will require a Demolition of Historic Resource application. Ms. Norling submitted the Demolition of Historic Resource application on or about March 26, 2009.

The applicant states that it is their intentions to “take down the structure and level the lot so it is ready for construction at the earliest possible time when funding can be acquired (see Appendix A6).”

On June 11, 2007, the applicant received planning commission approval for the construction of a 16-residential unit building with retail space on the first floor on this lot and the adjacent lot at 2607 Lyndale Avenue South (see Appendix A13-A28 for plans and rendering). The project approvals have lapsed and no application has been made for a new mixed-use project. The applicant states that it is their intentions to have a mixed use project at some point in the future, but they would like to take down the structure and level the lot so it is ready for construction at its earliest possible time when funding is available (see Appendix A6).

When the applicant received land use approvals in 2007, formal demolition approvals were not sought.

C. NECESSITY OF DEMOLITION

The Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, Title 23, Heritage Preservation, Chapter 599 Heritage Preservation Regulations states that before approving the demolition of a property determined to be an historic resource, the commission shall make findings that the demolition is necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property, or that there are no reasonable alternatives to the demolition. In determining whether reasonable alternatives exist, the commission shall consider, but not be limited to the significance of the property, the integrity of the property and the economic value or usefulness of the existing structure, including its current use, costs of renovation and feasible alternative uses. The commission may delay a final decision for a reasonable period of time to allow parties interested in preserving the historic resource a reasonable opportunity to act to protect it.

C1. UNSAFE OR DANGEROUS CONDITION

The applicant states the property is in complete disrepair, however, neither the applicant nor the general contractor that conducted a structural and mechanical analysis state that the property is in an unsafe or dangerous condition.

Ms. Norling does point out that the roof is caving in, the foundation is crumbling, and the flooring is falling through to the basement. Per CPED's request, the applicant submitted a structural inspection report. It was completed by A Friend of the Family Inc.; however, a date is not listed (see Appendix A7-A9). This report states that substantial work is required for the foundation, floor, roof, and exterior. In addition, plumbing, electrical, and heating work is also required. The estimated cost of making the structural and mechanical improvements is estimated to be \$360,000-\$445,000 (see Appendix A8).

C2. REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO DEMOLITION

C2a. SIGNIFICANCE

The subject property is a historic resource; however, at this time, it does not appear eligible for designation as City of Minneapolis landmark based on an analysis of the local criteria.

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

At this time, the property does not appear to be associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic, or social history. The subject property was constructed in 1914 as a neighborhood hardware store and it operated as a neighborhood hardware store from 1914-2005.

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

At this time, the property does not appear to be associated with the lives of significant persons or groups worthy of designation. No additional information was found on the original store owner, Clark J. Allen. The Shoms, who purchased the property in 1944, renamed the hardware store Rex Hardware and operated at this location from 1944 to 2005 (see Appendix B15-B16).

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

This commercial property may hold the distinction of being the longest operating hardware store in Minneapolis that was originally built as a hardware store (91 years). The building at 2601 Lyndale Avenue South was originally built as a neighborhood hardware store in 1914. City records show that the property was the Clark J. Allen Hardware store from 1914-1943. In 1944, Bernie and Anne Shom purchased the property. The property was known as Rex Hardware from 1944-2005.

Staff identified three other hardware store companies and buildings that may potentially have operated longer as a hardware store: The Gardner Hardware Company, the Nile Hardware Building, and the Simms Hardware Building.

- The Gardner Hardware company has been in business for 125 years. It operated at its original location (3rd Street and Hennepin Avenue) from 1884 until after 1922. It moved to its current location, 515 Washington Avenue North (Historic Name: Maytag Company Building) in the 1960's.
- The Nile Hardware Building located at 2301-2307 38th Street East, which was noted in 2002 as being potentially eligible for historic designation, was built in 1925. It ceased operation as a hardware store in 1934.
- The Simms Hardware Store 411-413 14th Avenue SE (location of Al's Breakfast) built in 1904 ceased operation as a hardware store prior to 1951.

The City of Minneapolis currently has five landmarks in which the historical use is commercial/retail (see Appendix B10-B14):

1. John Nordstrom Store at 2110 24th Avenue South (1883)
2. Crowell Block 2957 Lyndale Avenue South (1888)
3. Melrose Flats 13-23 5th Street N.E. (1890-1892)
4. The Handicraft Building at 89-91 10th Street (1907)
5. Despatch Laundry 2611 1st Avenue South (1929)

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

The subject property does not exemplify the distinctive characteristics of an architectural style. The property is a simple commercial design. The building was constructed of red brick masonry. It contains a corbelled cornice, large store front windows, and a chimney. These architectural details still remain today.

Local 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 exemplify a landscape design or development pattern distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design or detail.

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

The building was designed by John V. Koester. Koester. Mr. Koester was a prominent local architect who designed significant buildings in Minneapolis and St. Paul including the apartment building at 1623 West Lake Street (1914), the Dinky Dome (1915) at 1501 University Avenue, the La Salle Holding Company at 700-712 Marquette Avenue (raised in 1916), and the Chittenden and Eastman Furniture Building (1917) at 2402 University Avenue in St. Paul (contributing structure to the University Avenue Historic District). Mr. Koester also contributed to The Western Architect magazine (see Appendix B1).

The City of Minneapolis does not have a property designed by John V. Koester that is currently designated. Mr. Koester is unique in that he worked as an architect in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Few architects prior to World War II worked in Minneapolis and St. Paul (Source: AIA Guide to the Twin Cities). The subject property at 2601 Lyndale Avenue South is Mr. Koester's oldest extant commercial work.

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

Staff is unaware of there being information important in prehistory or history at this location and does not recommend further archeological evaluation. All state and federal regulations apply to excavation of this site.

C2b. INTEGRITY

The City of Minneapolis and the National Register recognize a property's integrity through seven aspects or qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. CPED believes that 2601 Lyndale Avenue South requires rehabilitation work, however, that it retains its integrity.

Location: The subject property retains its integrity of location. The property was built at this location in 1914.

Design: The subject property retains its integrity of design. The property was built in a simple commercial design with a corbelled cornice, flat roof, brick chimney, and large commercial windows; these building design elements remain.

Setting: The subject property's integrity of setting remains intact. The subject property is located at the corner of 26th Street West and Lyndale Avenue South. The three other commercial properties at this corner were either built in the late 19th or early 20th centuries.

Materials: The subject property retains its integrity of materials. The building was constructed with a flat roof, red brick, large store front windows, and a chimney. These items still remain today.

Workmanship: The property was constructed with few flourishes, but it does retain the workmanship of the original construction

Feeling: The building's integrity of feeling remains. The subject property until 2005, continued to serve as a commercial retail entity, in particular a hardware store.

Association: The subject property does not currently retain its integrity of association. Association is the direct link between a property and the event or person for which the property is significant. The subject property may have been the longest operating hardware store that was originally built as a hardware store. It has been vacant since 2005.

C2c. ECONOMIC VALUE OR USEFULNESS OF THE EXISTING STRUCTURE

The subject property is zoned C1. The Hennepin County estimated market value as of January 2, 2008 was \$514,500. The applicant submitted an independent estimated market value analysis completed on August 8, 2008 that states the estimated market value of \$330,000 (see Appendix A11)

At staff's request, the applicant submitted a structural analysis for the demolition of historic resource application. The report states that the rehabilitation costs for structural and mechanical range from \$360,000-\$445,000. Specific details were not provided on how these figures were derived. The structural analysis states, "The cost of brining the building to code far exceeds value of property when completed (see Appendix A9)." However, a proforma that shows that a rehabilitation of the property is not financially feasible nor has the applicant provided a detailed scope of work that details their cost estimate.

Ms. Norling states that it is her intentions to construct condominiums on this site. However, applications for this construction have not been submitted.

CPED believes that a new retail use is a viable option at this location. The building contains approximately 4,700 square feet of space on the main floor and the other retail buildings at the 26th Street and Lyndale Avenue South intersection have operated as commercial uses for over 100 years.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

CPED notified residents and the neighborhood association on April 20, 2009. As of May 1 one public comments has been received (see Appendix C)

E. APPLICABLE POLICIES

The following is a policy from The Minneapolis Plan: Minneapolis's Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1999 that is applicable to this application:

Policy 1.7: "Minneapolis will recognize and celebrate its history." This policy is supported by the following implementation step "encourage new developments to retain historic structures, incorporating them into new development rather than demolishing them."

F. LYN-LAKE SMALL AREA PLAN (Draft)

The Lyn-Lake Small Area Plan is in a final draft form. It was discussed at the April 20, 2009 Planning Commission meeting and continued to the May 18, 2009 Planning Commission meeting. This document provides the following recommendations for the area on Lyndale Avenue between West 24th Street and West 28th Street:

“Between West 24th Street and West 26th Street, there are more residential uses than in other sections of Lyndale Avenue South. Since there is a somewhat solid stretch of homes in these blocks, efforts should also be made to preserve the existing fabric and feel of the street, and when possible retain the existing building stock. Commercial uses may be appropriate in order to allow the existing structures to remain. If new development is proposed, the scale and design should complement the existing residential structures (page 47).”

“Between West 26th Street and West 28th Street, Lyndale Avenue South is likely to have more intense development than some portions of the street to the north because 26th and 28th Streets provide quick access across the city. These blocks can provide a transition between the Activity Center and areas to the north (page 47).”

G. FINDINGS

1. The subject property is a historic resource that was built in 1914.
2. The subject property is a simple commercial building built with few flourishes. It does retain the original red brick corbelled cornice, large store front window openings, and chimney.
3. The applicant states it is their intentions to construct a mixed use (commercial/residential) structure on this lot, however, no plans have been submitted for this proposal.
4. The applicant’s submitted structural inspection report which states the property is in a significant state of disrepair. However, the applicant did not state the property is in an unsafe or dangerous condition.
5. This property may hold the distinction of being the longest operating hardware store in Minneapolis that was originally built as a hardware store (91 years).
6. The City of Minneapolis currently has five landmarks in which the historical use is commercial/retail.
7. The building was designed by John V. Koester. Mr. Koester was a prominent local architect who designed significant buildings in Minneapolis and St. Paul.
8. Few architects prior to World War II worked in Minneapolis and St. Paul.
9. Based on a review of local designation criteria, the subject property is a historic resource but at this time does not appear eligible for designation as City of Minneapolis landmark.
10. 2601 Lyndale Avenue South retains its architectural integrity.
11. The Hennepin County estimated market value as of January 2, 2008 was \$514,500.
12. The applicant submitted an independent estimated market value analysis completed on August 8, 2008 that states the estimated market value of \$330,000.
13. The submitted structural analysis states that the rehabilitation costs for structural and mechanical range from \$360,000-\$445,000. Specific details were not provided on how these figures were derived.
14. The structural analysis states, “The cost of brining the building to code far exceeds value of property when completed.”
15. A proforma that shows that a rehabilitation of the property is not financially feasible nor has the applicant provided a detailed scope of work that details their cost estimate.
16. The applicant states that it is her intentions to construct condominiums on this site. However, applications for this construction have not been submitted.

17. The subject property's building or another building that provides an active use would be in compliance with the Lyn-Lake Small Area Plan.

H. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

CPED recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings and **approve** the demolition application of the property at 2601 Lyndale Avenue South with the following conditions:

1. A photographic recordation of the property shall be prepared and submitted to staff that is in accordance with the guidelines of the Minnesota Historic Property Record. The recordation shall include all interior and exterior spaces including outbuildings and site design;
2. The applicant shall provide the opportunity for a salvage organization to bid on the salvage of materials from the structure;
3. Final demolition permit will not be issued until all necessary land use approvals for new construction are granted.

I. ATTACHMENTS

- A. Application
- B. CPED Information
- C. Public Comments