

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division
Demolition of a Historic Resource
BZH-27287

Proposal: Demolition

Applicant: City of Minneapolis (Beth Grosen), 612-673-5002

Address of Property: 1101 Nicollet Mall

Planning Staff: Aaron Hanauer, Senior City Planner, 612-673-2494

Date Application Deemed Complete: March 30, 2012

Public Hearing: April 17, 2012

Appeal Period Expiration: April 27, 2012

Ward: 7

Neighborhood Organization: Downtown West

ATTACHMENTS

- A. CPED Attachments
 - A1: Zoning Context Map
 - A2: Historic photos
 - A3-A6: Aerials Peavey Plaza
 - A7-A18: Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) Survey
 - A19-A26: Phase I/Phase II Architectural History Investigation for the Proposed Southwest Transitway Project
 - A27-A37: Existing Condition Images
 - A38: Lyceum Theater Image
- B. Materials Submitted by Applicant
 - B1-B5: Application
 - B6-B7: Neighborhood and City Council Letters
 - B8-B9: Replacement Financials
 - B10: Survey
 - B11: Photo Key
 - B12-B17: Images
 - B18: Section
 - B19: Facilities Needing Demo
 - B20-B26: Reconfigured Illustrations and Diagrams
- C. Public Comments
 - C1-C2: Public Comments

A. BACKGROUND

Per 599.460, a wrecking permit application can be approved administratively if the building or structure is not considered a historic resource. If the property is considered a historic resource because it is believed that it meets at least one of the seven local designation criteria, a proposed demolition would require a Demolition of Historic Resource application. In January 2012, CPED-Planning informed the project manager, Beth Grosen that the proposal to demolish Peavey Plaza would be considered a Demolition of Historic Resource application.

On March 13, 2012, Ms. Grosen submitted a Demolition of Historic Resource application.

B. DESCRIPTION

Background: Peavey Plaza is located on half a city block between Eleventh and Twelfth Streets along Nicollet Mall in downtown Minneapolis; it shares the block with Orchestra Hall (Attachment A1).

Orchestra Hall was completed in 1974 and Peavey Plaza in 1975; additional construction took place to the north corner of the Plaza in 1979. The final cost was approximately \$3 million.¹ Peavey Plaza was developed as a recreational and cultural gathering space for the city. The ideas followed the American form of the "park plaza," featuring green space and hard cover, terraces to create amphitheatre-like environment, and water to minimize the amount of hard cover.²

The Lyceum Theater Building stood on the site of Peavey Plaza until it was cleared to make way for the plaza (Attachment A38).

Physical description: Peavey Plaza is a significant example of a designed urban park plaza in the Modernist style. "The overall design is asymmetrical but geometrical, employing primarily squares and rectangles over several changes in grade."³ The focus of the plaza is the 140-foot by 200-foot reflecting pool, which is 10 feet below the elevation of the surrounding streets. The plaza has a "complexity of stairs, terraces, walls, water features, and larger gathering spaces. Peavey Plaza employs these principles in ways that are unique to Minneapolis's temperate climate, rectilinear street arrangement, and affinity for its arts and cultural institutions."⁴

The concrete steps also provide seating, and the entire space is softened by sloped planting beds and trees along the northwest, southwest, and southeast sides of the reflecting pool (Attachments A27-A37). Terraces occupy the upper and lower elevations of the northeast side. A large elevated metal and concrete water feature cascades through

¹ Hess, Roise and Company. *Phase I/Phase II Architectural History Investigation for the Proposed Southwest Transitway Project, Hennepin County*. March 2011

² The Library of Congress. *Historic American Landscape Survey, Peavey Park Plaza*. 2008.

³ Hess, Roise and Company. *Phase I/Phase II Architectural History Investigation for the Proposed Southwest Transitway Project, Hennepin County*. March 2011

⁴ The Library of Congress. *Historic American Landscape Survey, Peavey Park Plaza*. 2008.

numerous rectilinear, multi-level basins to the central reflecting pool at the plaza's lowest point (Figure 1 below).

In warm weather Peavey Plaza is utilized for cultural gatherings and performances, in the winter it is flooded and used for ice skating.



Figure 1. Peavey Plaza



Figure 2. Peavey Plaza

C. PROPOSED CHANGES

The Applicant is proposing to rebuild Peavey Plaza to make way for a new plaza (Attachment B20-B26).

D. 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 up to one hundred-eighty (180) days to allow parties interested in preserving the historic resource a reasonable opportunity to act to protect it.

D1. SIGNIFICANCE

The subject property is a historic resource and is a candidate for possible local historic designation as a City of Minneapolis landmark based on an analysis of the local criteria.

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

Peavey Plaza is associated with significant events that exemplify broad patterns of economic and social history. The plaza is significant for its association with the series of post World War II urban renewal projects that begun in the late 1950s and continued into the 1970s in downtown Minneapolis.⁵ Nicollet Mall, Orchestra Hall, Peavey Plaza, and the Loring Greenway were downtown improvements made to help attract residents and businesses in the late 1960s and 1970s and helped reshape the southern portion of downtown Minneapolis as seen today.

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

Peavey Plaza is associated with the lives of significant persons, the Peavey family. However its association with the Peavey family does not warrant designation.

The Peavey family contributed to the building of the plaza with a \$600,000 gift on its 100th year of business; Minneapolis was Peavey Company's hometown since 1884. Peavey Company was one of the country's major flour millers and grain merchandisers whose scope included food processing, agribusiness, and specialty retailing. The Peavey family is also responsible for donating the Peavey Fountain, a fixture on Lake of the Isles near Kenwood Parkway and

⁵ The Library of Congress. *Historic American Landscape Survey, Peavey Park Plaza*. 2008.

Peavey Field, bounded by Park and Chicago Avenues and Franklin Avenue and East 22nd Street.⁶

When evaluating a property's significance based on its association with a person or group for listing on the National Register or local designation, the criterion is generally restricted to those properties that illustrate (rather than commemorate) a person's important achievements.

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

The subject plaza is associated with distinctive elements of city identity. The plaza was built as part of the 1960s and 1970s rebuilding of the City of Minneapolis to compete with the exodus of businesses and residents moving to the suburbs. The plaza was built at the same time and is adjacent to Nicollet Mall, Orchestra Hall, and the Loring Park Development District, which has transformed the look and feel of the southern portion of downtown Minneapolis.

The fountains of Peavey Plaza are often used as a symbol for the city and are instantly recognizable. Peavey Plaza has served as an important recreational and cultural gathering space in downtown Minneapolis since it was built in 1974. The plaza has been the host to numerous downtown events and music festivals since that time.

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

The plaza does not embody distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style.

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

Peavey Plaza, built in 1975, exemplifies a landscape design distinguished by uniqueness and detail. The American Society of Landscape Architects recognizes Peavey Plaza as a national landmark for outstanding landscape architecture. It is a significant example of a designed urban park plaza in the Modernist style. The sunken plaza design emerged during the late 1950s and continued into the 1970s. The sunken park plaza departed from previous landscape architecture design principles and represented a new urban park aesthetic.⁷

Larry Millet, in the *AIA Guide to the Twin Cities*, states "The plaza is considered a highpoint of modern-period landscape architecture in Minneapolis. Peavey Plaza is an important product of Minneapolis' mid-twentieth-century urban renewal, which resulted in a remarkable physical and cultural renaissance of the city."

⁶ City of Minneapolis Press Release: *City's Peavey Plaza to be Dedicated*. Tuesday, June 10, 1975

⁷ The Library of Congress. *Historic American Landscape Survey, Peavey Park Plaza*. 2008.

Peavey Plaza was acknowledged as a significant Modernist design from the time of its construction. In 1978, a few years after it was completed, it won the ASLA's Professional Design Competition.

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

The property exemplifies the work of a master landscape architect, M. Paul Friedberg. M. Paul Friedberg is a New York landscape architect, "who is associated with the development of urban park plaza design and the application of a modern aesthetic applied to park design."⁸ His international achievements include Pershing Park in Washington D.C., the Olympic Plaza in Calgary, Canada, and the Andromeda Houses in Jaffa, Israel.⁹

Friedberg is well known for his modern urban landscape designs, such as the Riis Plaza in Manhattan. Friedberg's redesign of Jacob Riis Plaza in the lower east side of New York City during the mid-1960s became the landscape model for housing plaza design.¹⁰ Friedberg's other local contributions include the Loring Greenway and Honeywell campus. "He strove to humanize the urban environment by designing "adventure" play spaces where children could create their own activities."¹¹

In 1979, not long after Peavey Plaza was completed, Friedberg was made a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) in acknowledgement of his groundbreaking work. In 2004, he received the ASLA Design Medal, the organization's highest honor. His individual designs have received over 85 national and international awards.¹²

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

The property does contain information important to history. However, these items do not make the property eligible for designation.

Peavey Plaza is the site of the Minneapolis Auditorium/Lyceum Theater. The corner of Peavey Plaza contains a plaque commemorating this building. In addition, the site contains a time capsule that was placed under Peavey Plaza during its construction. Farmers and Mechanics Savings Bank and the Peavey Company, were celebrating 100 years of business in 1974 and "anticipating the dedication of Peavey Plaza, together initiated a "time capsule" to contain items representing the people of Minneapolis in 1975 for the interest of people of the city in 2075."¹³

⁸ The Library of Congress. *Historic American Landscape Survey, Peavey Park Plaza*. 2008.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Hess, Roise and Company. *Phase I/Phase II Architectural History Investigation for the Proposed Southwest Transitway Project, Hennepin County*. March 2011

¹³ City of Minneapolis Press Release: *City's Peavey Plaza to be Dedicated*. Tuesday, June 10, 1975

D2. UNSAFE OR DANGEROUS CONDITION

The Applicant does not contend that the demolition of the subject property is necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition. However, the Applicant states that the plaza is in poor condition and needs a substantial amount of repairs to allow it to function as it originally did.

D3. REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO DEMOLITION

The Applicant has proposed the rebuilding of a plaza as a public gathering space.

D4. INTEGRITY

The National Register traditionally recognizes a property's integrity through seven aspects or qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The plaza's integrity of materials has been compromised with alterations; however its overall integrity is still good.

Location: Peavey Plaza retains its integrity of location. The plaza was completed in 1975 at its current location.

Design: The original design of Peavey Plaza remains intact. Although the plaza has had alterations from its original construction, including different plantings and replacement concrete, the current design resembles the appearance of the plaza when it was completed in 1975.

Setting: The setting of Peavey Plaza remains intact. The surrounding properties provide context to the rebuilding that took place in the southern portion of downtown Minneapolis during the 1960s and 1970s, including Nicollet Mall, Orchestra Hall, the Loring Greenway, and the Loring Park Development District.

Materials: The materials of Peavey Plaza have been compromised. The effects of the harsh Midwest climate began to show on the plaza's steps, walkways, terraces, fountains, and vegetation during the past several decades. The following are a list of alterations/modifications that have taken place.^{14,15}

- Pre-cast concrete modular retaining walls were added to Twelfth Street replacing existing sloped lawn and planting area adjacent to the accessible pedestrian ramp to the lower plaza;
- Pre-cast concrete modular retaining wall added adjacent to Nicollet Mall. This city project replaced existing sloped lawn and planting areas similar to sloped areas that exist along Twelfth Street;
- New plantings including forsythia, barberry, and hosta plantings (none of which were included in the original Friedberg design);

¹⁴ The Library of Congress. *Historic American Landscape Survey, Peavey Park Plaza*. 2008.

¹⁵ Hess, Roise and Company. *Phase I/Phase II Architectural History Investigation for the Proposed Southwest Transitway Project, Hennepin County*. March 2011

- Honeylocust trees were removed;
- Earthen berms have been replaced with landscape timbers;
- Concrete pavers were replaced with poured concrete;

Workmanship: The plaza retains the integrity of the original workmanship. The evidence of M. Paul Friedberg’s design is still evident. The overall space, feeling, fountains, concrete pools, and lights still remain.

Feeling: The property retains its integrity of feeling. Taken together, the overall space, fountains, pool, concrete and other original features convey the property’s historic character.

Association: With the neighboring buildings and landscape still extant, the Peavey Plaza retains sufficient physical features to maintain its integrity of association.

D5. ECONOMIC VALUE OR USEFULNESS OF THE EXISTING STRUCTURE

Peavey Plaza shares a block with Orchestra Hall on Nicollet Mall between 11th and 12th Streets. It is approximately one acre (41,351 sq. ft). The appraised value is \$3,609,900.¹⁶

The Applicant states that the rehabilitation of the existing Peavey Plaza is not feasible due to the impact repair work would have on the original materials of the plaza and the cost of rehabilitation (Attachment B19).

The rehabilitation challenges include the impact of replacing all of the concrete in order to replace/restore the water pumps. The replacement of the concrete would impact a substantial portion of the plaza. The Applicant explains:

“The fountains have been failing in recent years and today only one of the three pumps that serve the fountains is still in operation. The pipes that supply the fountains have become rusted and clogged and because they are buried in concrete retaining walls below the lowest level of the plaza, they are inaccessible. Repair and replacement of these pipes and the stormwater treatment and storage system would require cutting of much of the concrete on the fountains. It would be difficult to patch these cuts in old weathered concrete and leave a consistent and attractive finish (Attachment B2).”

Ms. Grosen adds that making a renovated Peavey Plaza would require accessibility improvements which, with the current grade, would require a 200-foot ramp along 12th Street which would substantially alter the original design (Attachment B2 and B19).

Ms. Grosen states that the architect and planning team investigated four concept designs for Peavey Plaza:

- A “replacement” of all existing fountains and features with like materials and a new ADA ramp on 12th Street,
- A “hybrid” including demolition and reconstruction of the large fountain at 12th Street and Nicollet Mall and other new design components,
- A “street grade” concept,

¹⁶ City of Minneapolis Property Information, 1101 Nicollet Mall, Accessed April 2, 2012

- An alternative commons multi-grade concept.

The alternative commons multi-grade concept was the one that was chosen by the Applicant (Attachment B20-B26).

The estimated project costs for these four concepts range between \$4.9 and \$8.7 million dollars. The replacement option with like materials and design was the most expensive, \$8.7 million (Attachment B8-B9). In addition to being the most expensive alternative, the Applicant outlines two other problems that do not make the replacement-in-kind option of Peavey Plaza financially feasible. First, any rebuilding/renovation scenario will require millions of dollars in donations/private dollars. Ms. Grosen states that potential funders will not contribute millions of dollars to restore the plaza to its original design because it cannot address accessibility, safety, and sustainability issues adequately (Attachment B1-B4). Second, the operation and maintenance costs are substantially greater than income generated with the current design.

The maintenance cost of the plaza ranged from \$176 to \$284 thousand dollars per year from 2004 to 2011. The income generated during this time period fell far short in covering these costs or the capital improvements that are needed.

E. PUBLIC COMMENT

Staff has received no comment letters as of the date of publication of this staff report.

F. FINDINGS

1. Peavey Plaza is a historic resource;
2. Peavey Plaza is significant and eligible for designation as a City of Minneapolis landmark by meeting local designation criterion 1, 3, 5, and 6;
3. The final cost for constructing Peavey Plaza in 1974-1975 was \$3 million.
4. Peavey Plaza has experienced a number of alterations; however, the overall integrity of the plaza is good;
5. The demolition is not necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition of Peavey Plaza;
6. Peavey Plaza requires substantial rehabilitation work. The rebuilding of Peavey Plaza with like materials and design is estimated to cost \$8.7 million dollars.
7. The rebuilding of Peavey Plaza with like materials and design is not financially feasible due to its cost and the inability to raise adequate finances for a restoration project of an identical design.

G. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt the above findings and **approve** the demolition of Peavey Plaza at 1101 Nicollet Mall with the following mitigation conditions:

1. As mitigation for the demolition of Peavey Plaza, 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 exterior spaces and site design;
2. As mitigation for the demolition of Peavey Plaza, a salvage plan for the plaza's fountains and other features shall be prepared and submitted to CPED-Planning.
3. As mitigation for the demolition of Peavey Plaza, a plan shall be prepared and submitted to CPED-Planning staff for the relocation of the 1974 time capsule and Peavey Plaza plaques.

Attachment B1-B26: Applicant Attachments

