

**Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division**  
Demolition of a Historic Resource  
BZH-27371

**Proposal:** Demolition

**Applicant:** City of Minneapolis Problem Properties Unit, Kellie Jones, 612-673-3506

**Address of Property:** 2501 Golden Valley Road

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

**Date Application Deemed Complete:** June 15, 2012

**Public Hearing:** July 24, 2012

**Appeal Period Expiration:** August 3, 2012

**Ward:** 5

**Neighborhood Organization:** Willard-Hay

**ATTACHMENTS**

- A. CPED Attachments
  - Zoning Context Map
  - Historic Resource Map
  - Golden Valley Apartments Proposed Historic District Map
  - Aerial
  - Images of Golden Valley Apartment Proposed Historic District
- B. Materials Submitted by Applicant
  - Application
  - City Council and Neighborhood Notification
  - Application Statement
  - Estimated Cost to Rehabilitate 2501 Golden Valley Road
  - Nuisance Condition Process Review Panel Hearing 3/8/12
  - Photo Key
  - Exterior and Interior Images

**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.

On March 1, 2012, CPED-Planning informed the City of Minneapolis Problem Properties Unit that a demolition of the apartment building would require a Demolition of Historic Resource application given its architectural significance (Criterion 4), and its association with a prominent architect (Criterion 6). On June 15, 2012, Kellie Jones of the City of Minneapolis Problem Properties Unit submitted a complete Demolition of Historic Resource application.

## **B. DESCRIPTION**

The subject property is located at the southwest corner of Golden Valley Road and Sheridan Avenue North. The area of the subject property is a combination of multifamily apartment buildings and low-density residential buildings primarily built from the early 1900s through the 1940s. There are a total of eight, 1920-era apartment buildings, including the subject property, that were built along a three-block stretch of Golden Valley Road between Sheridan Avenue and Vincent Avenue.

In 2002, the North Minneapolis Certified Local Government (CLG) study identified the eight Golden Valley Road apartment buildings as a potential historic district:

*A small historic district is proposed for local designation for the apartments on the 2500 to 2700 block of Golden Valley Road and one just north of Golden Valley Road on Thomas Avenue North. These large apartment buildings, unique to North Minneapolis, were constructed between 1926 and 1929 (2501 Golden Valley Road was built in 1926) and were all designed by the architect Perry E. Crosier. Crosier began his career as an architect in 1909 at the age of 19. He worked for architectural, real estate, and contracting companies prior to starting his own company of architects and contractors, the Crosier Construction Company (1914-16). Crosier continued to practice independently, designing several apartment buildings, churches, and movie theaters throughout the Minneapolis area.*

*The two-and-one-half-story, brick buildings feature Spanish Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival style influences. The Golden Valley Apartments Proposed Historic District is recommended for local designation under Criterion 4 for architecture as a collection of period revival style apartment buildings in North Minneapolis.*

The apartment building at 2501 Golden Valley Road was built with a dark red/brown brick on all four elevations and designed with Spanish Revival and Colonial Revival elements. The Spanish Revival details include the clay tile shed overhangs, rounded arches over the center windows, and iron grillwork on the second story balcony. The Colonial Revival elements include the building's symmetrical design with its main entrance, fenestration, and brick pattern. The building also contains a centered decorative parapet, festoons, diamond shaped concrete accents, and decorative brickwork.

The City Assessor's office rates the overall building condition as "poor". The Applicant states that it sustained substantial damage to the roof, windows, and exterior walls in the 2011 tornado. A temporary roof was installed after the tornado; however, the temporary roof did not maintain its structural integrity and the building sustained further damage due to extensive

water intrusion. Due to the water damage, the building has extensive mold growth throughout and buckled floors. In addition, radiators, copper, and the boiler heating system were stolen.

## **PROPOSED CHANGES**

The City of Minneapolis Problem Properties Unit is proposing to demolish the apartment building at 2501 Golden Valley Road.

### **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 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 has historic significance given its association with distinctive elements of the Willard Hay neighborhood (Criterion 3), architectural design (Criterion 4), contribution to a development pattern distinguished by uniqueness (Criterion 5), and association with a prominent Minneapolis architect (Criterion 6).

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

The property is not associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic, or social history.

The 1920-era Golden Valley Road apartments are unique to North Minneapolis; few if any apartment buildings of this size had been built prior. The building of the Crosier designed apartments illustrates an increased demand and/or supply of a different housing type in North Minneapolis during an economically prosperous decade for the City. However, the increased demand and or supply did not continue after these apartments were completed in 1929. Similarly sized and designed apartment buildings were not constructed in North Minneapolis during the Great Depression nor after World War II when single family houses were favored.

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

In a cursory review, the apartment building at 2501 Golden Valley Road is not known to be associated with the lives of a person significant to the history of Minneapolis that would warrant

local designation. Dr. Benjamin M. Medof (1899-1967) was the original owner of the subject property. Benjamin Medof grew up in North Minneapolis and went to North High School. He attended the University of Minnesota and became a dentist. He practiced dentistry in the Medical Arts Building in Downtown Minneapolis. In 1950, B.M. Medof applied for a patent for the packaging of dental floss.<sup>1</sup> The significance of Mr. Medof's patent is not known. However, the number of patents for improving dental floss or products associated with dental floss was numerous. By 1975, more than 1,300 patents were issued in this area of dental hygiene.

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

The property is associated with distinctive elements of North Minneapolis and the Willard Hay neighborhood. The Golden Valley Road apartment buildings are a rare example of well-designed, larger multifamily construction in North Minneapolis from the first part of the twentieth century (the buildings range from nine to 13 units). Most apartment buildings being built at this time in North Minneapolis contained four or fewer units.

The subject property is one of eight, 1920-era apartment buildings in a three-block span of Golden Valley Road. These apartment buildings have unifying characteristics including size (two-and-half stories), massing, and detail (period revival architecture). The construction of the Golden Valley Road apartments was part of the successful economic times of Minneapolis and North Minneapolis in the 1920s. In 1922, the *Northsider* newspaper stated that the North Side dwellings were “not of cheap construction but homes that could equally well be located in any “show” residence section of the city.”

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

The 2002 Mead and Hunt Historic Resources Inventory of Bryn Mawr and Near North Neighborhoods recommended the 1920s Golden Valley apartment buildings as a potential district under *Criterion 4* for architecture as a collection of period revival style apartment buildings in North Minneapolis. The apartment building at 2501 Golden Valley Road displays distinct characteristics of two period revival architectural styles; Spanish Colonial Revival and Colonial Revival. The Spanish Colonial Revival characteristic displayed include the red clay tile shed overhangs, rounded arches over the center windows, and iron grillwork on the front balcony. The Colonial Revival elements include a simple rectangular building that is symmetrical. The building symmetry is seen with the main entrance, fenestration and brick pattern.

The Golden Valley Road apartment buildings are unified in their size, massing, and detail. Although the buildings are not contiguous, they are the predominant feature of Golden Valley Road between Sheridan and Vincent Avenues and can transport an observer to an earlier time period.

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<sup>1</sup> United States Patent Office. Dental Implement: Benjamin M. Medoff (Patent 2,522,794). September 19, 1950.

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

The property at 2501 Golden Valley Road may exhibit a development pattern distinguished by uniqueness. The subject property and the other Golden Valley Road apartments of the 1920s may be one of the finest concentrations of early 20<sup>th</sup> century apartments in North Minneapolis. There were likely few larger apartment buildings (more than four residential units) in North Minneapolis designed by architects at this time. Multifamily housing construction in North Minneapolis (and citywide) was halted shortly after the completion of the Golden Valley Road Apartments (1926-1929) with the Great Depression (1929-1939) and the increased demand for single-family houses after World War II.

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

The property exemplifies the work of a master architect, Perry Crosier (1890-1953). Born in Minneapolis, Crosier began his career in 1909 as a draftsman for Harry Wild Jones. From 1910 to 1913 he worked for Bertrand and Chamberlin. He worked for architectural, real estate, and contracting companies prior to starting his own company of architects and contractors, the Crosier Construction Company (1914-16). Crosier continued to practice independently, designing dozens of apartment buildings, churches, movie theaters, along with a variety of other structures throughout the Minneapolis area.<sup>2</sup> Other prominent structures designed by Perry Crosier include the following:

- Belmont Apartments at 1000 Franklin Avenue (1919)
- Avalon Theater expansion, 1500 East Lake Street (1937)
- Fair Oaks Apartments, 3rd Avenue South and East 24th Street (1939)

The Avalon Theater is individually designated as a local historic landmark and the Fair Oaks Apartments are contributing buildings to the Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District. The Golden Valley Road Apartments is likely the largest concentration of Crosier's work in Minneapolis. The Fair Oaks Apartment buildings in the Whittier Neighborhood include six buildings which appear as a unified campus.

The subject building was constructed by the Balhin Construction Company. In a cursory review, no historic information was found on this company.

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

In a cursory review, CPED believes that the property does not yield information important to prehistory or history.

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<sup>2</sup> Lathrop, Alan K. *Minnesota Architects: A Biographical Dictionary*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

## **D2. UNSAFE OR DANGEROUS CONDITION**

The City of Minneapolis Problem Properties Unit states that the property is in an unsafe and dangerous condition due to being in a serious state of disrepair. Ms. Jones states that the condition of the building is poor and has gotten worse since the tornado damage in May of 2011. She reports that “no building permits have been pulled by the property owner or any signs of rehabilitation since the tornado.” The conditions report includes the following:

- Missing roof, windows, and masonry;
- Compromised wall, flooring, subflooring, joists, and studs due to mold infiltration and intrusion;
- Missing heating and plumbing systems (including copper) that were reported stolen.

On December 22, 2011, the City of Minneapolis Problem Properties Unit informed the property owner of its intent to pursue demolition of the structure because of the poor condition. The owner appealed the order to demolish stating that it was a “due process violation, arbitrary act, not sufficient cause, working with insurance company to settle claims and make repairs. The building was vandalized after the tornado and the plumbing, electrical and heating was damaged making it more difficult with insurance company to settle the claims.”

Ms. Jones states that the owner has repeatedly been asked by city staff to provide a full and comprehensive plan for rehabilitating the property since the tornado. To date, a rehabilitation plan has not been submitted.

The proposed demolition of the apartment building was reviewed by the Minneapolis Nuisance Condition Process Review Panel (NCPRP) on May 10, 2012. The City of Minneapolis NCPRP consists of the director of operations, licenses and environmental services, the fire marshal, the director of housing policy and development, and the city assessor or their designees. The City of Minneapolis panel’s authority comes from Minnesota Statue Section 463.26, which permits cities to enact and enforce ordinances on hazardous buildings in order to enhance the livability and preserve the tax base and property values of buildings within the city.

The panel concluded that the property constituted a public nuisance and should be demolished. Among the factors the panel based their decision on was the poor condition of the property.

*“The building is in extreme disrepair and will require a major renovation to return it to a livable state. All wall and flooring materials, including many of the supporting structure such as subflooring, joists, and studs will need to be removed and replaced due to the mold infiltration and intrusion. Due to extensive vandalism, the entire heating and plumbing systems will need to be replaced. Moreover, a renovation of this scale would also require that all electrical and mechanical systems be brought up to code.”*

## **D3. REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO DEMOLITION**

A rehabilitation of the property would be an alternative to the proposed demolition. However, it has been 13 months since the property was significantly impacted by a tornado and no

rehabilitation plans have been submitted to the City of Minneapolis nor has rehabilitation work been completed. The lack of rehabilitation work since the tornado damage has caused the property's condition to worsen and the property to be deemed a public nuisance.

If an approved rehabilitation plan is approved by the City of Minneapolis by October 31, 2012, it would provide an opportunity for the property to be rehabilitated. However, if the property continues to be neglected beyond October 31, the condition of the property will get worse during the winter months.

#### **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 integrity of 2501 Golden Valley Road has been compromised with the loss of original materials; however, the building retains the other six aspects and qualities of integrity.

*Location:* The apartment building at 2501 Golden Valley Road retains its integrity of location. The apartment building was completed in 1926 at its current location.

*Design:* Even though the apartment building has had alterations from its original construction, including the replacement of original windows and removal of exterior brick, the original design of the apartment building remains intact and resembles the appearance of the 1926 construction.

*Setting:* The setting of the apartment building remains intact. The neighboring apartment buildings on Golden Valley Road were also built in the 1920s. The eight apartment buildings between Sheridan and Vincent Avenues were recognized in the 2002 North Minneapolis Certified Local Government historic context study as the Golden Valley Apartments Proposed Historic District.

*Materials:* The materials of the apartment building have been compromised. The roof, windows and portions of brick are missing. However, the building still retains decorative elements such as keystones, festoons, diamond shaped concrete accents, and decorative brickwork.

*Workmanship:* The apartment building retains the integrity of the original workmanship. The evidence of the architect's original design is still evident.

*Feeling:* The property retains its integrity of feeling with the historic context of the neighboring apartment buildings and the low-density residential from the same era.

*Association:* With the neighboring apartment and single-family buildings of the same vintage still extant, the subject building retains sufficient surroundings to maintain its integrity of association.

## **D5. ECONOMIC VALUE OR USEFULNESS OF THE EXISTING STRUCTURE**

The cost of rehabilitation significantly exceeds the estimated market value. The City of Minneapolis Problem Properties Unit estimates that the rehabilitation of the apartment building would cost between \$618,000 and \$870,000 (the figure was derived using the RS Means square footage estimates). Ms. Jones states that the rehabilitation cost estimate only reflects the cost to bring the building to bare minimum code requirements and that the estimate does not include the cost of additional enhancements that would be required if the building were to be restored to its original historic character.

Hennepin County Property Information records show that the estimated market value for the property is currently \$150,000 (down from \$297,000 in 2011). If the property was rehabilitated, the estimated market value is between \$352,000 and \$374,000.

## **D. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

## **E. FINDINGS**

1. In 2002, the North Minneapolis Certified Local Government (CLG) study identified the eight Golden Valley Road apartment buildings as a potential historic district: These large apartment buildings, unique to North Minneapolis, were constructed between 1926 and 1929.
2. The subject property has historic significance given its association with distinctive elements of the Willard Hay neighborhood (Criterion 3), architectural significance (Criterion 4), contribution to a development pattern distinguished by uniqueness (Criterion 5), and association with a prominent Minneapolis architect (Criterion 6).
3. The property exemplifies the work of a prominent architect, Perry Crosier (1890-1953). Crosier designed the 1937 addition to the Avalon Theater and the Fair Oaks Apartments, both of which are locally designated.
4. The property at 2501 Golden Valley Road may exhibit a development pattern distinguished by uniqueness. The subject property and the other Golden Valley Road apartments of the 1920s may be one of the finest concentrations of early 20<sup>th</sup> century apartments in North Minneapolis.
5. The integrity of 2501 Golden Valley Road has been compromised with the loss of original materials; however, the building retains the other six aspects and qualities of integrity.
6. The subject property is currently in poor condition. The Applicant states that it sustained substantial damage to the roof, windows, and exterior walls in the 2011 tornado.
7. A temporary roof was installed after the tornado; however, the temporary roof structure did not maintain its structural integrity and the building sustained further damage due to extensive water intrusion through the roof and through the missing and damaged windows.
8. Due to the water damage, the building has extensive mold growth throughout and buckled floors.

9. No building permits have been pulled by the property owner or any signs of rehabilitation since the tornado.
10. The poor conditions include the following: missing roof, windows, and masonry; compromised wall, flooring, subflooring, joists, and studs due to mold infiltration and intrusion; and missing heating and plumbing systems (including copper) that were reported stolen.
11. The Problem Properties Unit states the owner has repeatedly been asked to provide a full and comprehensive plan for rehabilitating the property since the tornado. To date, a rehabilitation plan has not been submitted.
12. The City of Minneapolis Problem Properties Unit contends that the property is in an unsafe and dangerous condition due to being in a serious state of disrepair.
13. The proposed demolition of the apartment building was reviewed by the Nuisance Condition Process Review Panel (NCPRP) on May 10, 2012. The panel concluded that the property constituted a public nuisance and should be demolished.
14. The cost of rehabilitation significantly exceeds the estimated market value. The City of Minneapolis Problem Properties Unit estimates that the rehabilitation of the apartment building would cost between \$618,000 and \$870,000. This rehabilitation cost estimate only reflects the cost to bring the building to bare minimum code requirements and that the estimate does not include the cost of additional enhancements that would be required if the building were to be restored to its original historic character.
15. Hennepin County Property Information records show that the estimated market value for the property is currently \$150,000 (down from \$297,000 in 2011). If the property was rehabilitated, the estimated market value is between \$352,000 and \$374,000.
16. A rehabilitation of the building would be an alternative to demolition. However, it has been 13 months since the property was significantly impacted by a tornado and no rehabilitation plans have been submitted to the City of Minneapolis nor has rehabilitation work taken place since then. The lack of rehabilitation work since the tornado damage has caused the property's condition to worsen.
17. If an approved rehabilitation plan is approved by the City of Minneapolis by October 31, 2012 it would provide an opportunity for the property to be rehabilitated. However, if the property continues to be neglected beyond October 31, the condition of the property will get worse during the winter months.

## F. 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 the apartment building at 2501 Golden Valley Road, but **delay** the demolition until October 31, 2012 to allow parties interested in preserving the historic resource a reasonable opportunity to act to protect it.