

DRAFT DESIGNATION STUDY: 2707 ½ East Lake Street

Town Talk Diner



DRAFT: January 8, 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mayor and City Council of the City of Minneapolis

R.T. Rybak, Mayor

Barbara Johnson, Council President
Robert Lilligren, Council Vice President

Kevin Reich
Cam Gordon
Diane Hofstede
Don Samuels
Lisa Goodman
Elizabeth Glidden

Gary Schiff
Meg Tuthill
John Quincy
Sandy Colvin Roy
Betsy Hodges

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission

Chad Larsen, Chair
Ginny Lackovic, Vice-Chair
Tammy Lindberg, Secretary
Kevin Kelley
Laura Faucher
Alex Haecker
Sue Hunter-Weir
Linda Mack
Robert Mack
Jody Tableporter

Minneapolis City Planning Commission

David Motzenbecker, Chair
Council Member Gary Schiff
Lauren Huynh
Liz Wielinski.
Dan Cohen

Richard Mammen
Ryan Kronzer
Alissa Luepke-Pier
Theodore Tucker

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED)

Jeremy Hanson Willis, Director
Steve Poor, Interim Director- Development Services
Jack Byers, Interim Director- Long Range Planning
Chris Vrchota, City Planner, Development Services-Zoning, Principal Investigator

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Designation Study Purpose and Background.....	page 4
Part 1: Physical Description of Property.....	page 5
• Parcel location, shape, and size	
• Description of building(s) on the property	
• Description of interior features	
• Description of landscape and landscape features	
Part 2: Historic Significance.....	page 8
• Streamline Moderne Architecture	
• Other possible significance	
Part 3: Rationale	page 10
• Designation Criteria	
• Integrity of historic resource	
• Other Considerations	
Part 4: Registration and Classification Information.....	page 18
Photographs, drawings, and other documents	
• Figure 1, Town Talk Diner, December 2011	page 21
• Figure 2- Town Talk Diner, Storefront Detail, December 2011	page 22
• Figure 3- Town Talk Diner, Sign Detail, December 2011	page 23
• Figure 4- Town Talk Diner and adjacent building (west), December 2011	page 24
• Figure 5- Town Talk Diner and adjacent building (east), December 2011	page 25
• Figure 6- Town Talk Diner, Entry Detail, December 2011	page 26
• Figure 7- Town Talk Diner, Planter Detail, December 2011	page 27
• Figure 8- Town Talk Diner, Storefront Detail, December 2011	page 28
• Figure 9- Town Talk Diner, Before 2 nd Story Addition, Date Unknown	page 29
• Figure 10- Town Talk Diner, Hennepin Avenue Location, Circa 1954	page 30
Notes.....page 31
Sources and References.....page 32
Appendices.....page 33

Designation Study Purpose and Background

In January 2011, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported the closure of the Town Talk Diner due to various business problems. As with similar such news about various properties that might be considered eligible, this item was reported to Commissioners by staff during the “New Business” section of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) on February 1, 2011.

At their regularly scheduled meeting on February 15, 2011, the HPC initiated a nomination of the Town Talk Diner during the “New Business” portion of the meeting. After completing an initial review, CPED recommended to the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) on March 1, 2011 that the property exhibited at least one of the local designation criteria found in section 599.210 of the Heritage Preservation Ordinance. The HPC adopted CPED’s findings and placed the Town Talk Diner under interim protection and called for a designation study to be conducted.

This Study is intended to fulfill the requirements for local historic designation outlined in Title 23, Chapter 599.230 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances. The study is based on a review of resources including books, newspaper clippings, building permit records and property files from CPED’s collections.

BASIC PROPERTY INFORMATION	
Current name	Town Talk Diner
Historic Name	Town Talk Diner
Current Address	2707½ East Lake Street
Historic Address	2707 ½ East Lake Street
Original Construction Date	1946
Original Contractor	Sebco, Inc.
Original Architect/Designer	Sebco, Inc.
Historic Use	Commercial
Current Use	Commercial
Ward:	9
Neighborhood:	Longfellow

PART 1: PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

This section provides a description of the physical characteristics of the property, including both the parcel and features on the parcel, such as structures and landscaping.

Parcel location, shape, and size

The building is located on a larger parcel that includes three commercial buildings. The parcel is located at the southeast corner of East Lake Street and 27th Avenue South, in the Longfellow neighborhood. The parcel measures approximately 157' x 95', totaling 14,213 square feet.

Description of building(s) on the property

The Town Talk Diner is a small two-story commercial structure that appears to have been built as an infill development between two larger commercial structures in the 2700 block of East Lake Street. The diner building is long and narrow with the short end of the building facing the public sidewalk and street. The buildings that flank the diner are commercial buildings built in the simple, vernacular style common to commercial nodes associated with the growth of the streetcar system in Minneapolis during the nineteen-teens and twenties. (See Figure #4, page 24 and Figure #5, page 25.) It is very likely that these buildings were built as a result of the opening of the Selby-Lake streetcar line in 1906. The intersection of at Lake Street and Snelling Avenue, one block west of the site, was a major transfer point between the Selby-Lake line and the Snelling Avenue line¹.

Description of the primary structure

Date(s) of construction: The 4-story building on the corner of East Lake Street and 27th Avenue South originally, addressed as 3001 27th Avenue South, was constructed in 1908 for the Flour City Odd Fellows organization². (This building has itself been recommended for further evaluation for local designation and/or listing on the National Register of Historic Places.) A building permit was issued to Paul Pearson in 1946 for "store front and interior alterations" at 2701 ½ East Lake Street³. Paul Pearson was the original owner of the Town Talk Diner and no references to the diner are found in the building permit records prior to this date. It is likely that this was the building permit for the construction of the storefront that became the Town Talk Diner.

Size and massing: The buildings that flank the diner are mostly vertical in their articulation; each one has a strong architectural demarcation between retail frontages on the ground floor and office or residential

spaces on the upper floors. In contrast and by virtue of its very narrow plan, the façade of the Town Talk is more vertical in orientation.

Architectural style: The ground-floor commercial façade stands out from the adjoining buildings in both color and style. The flush-mounted window, entry door, and surrounding trim are clad in stainless steel reflective of the Streamline Moderne style. (See Figure #2, page 22) The assembly is punctuated with a combination of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal decorative elements. The entry door is pushed to the west side of the façade. The remaining façade east of the door, which is dominated by a large storefront window, slants inwards in plan from east to west. Below the window, a triangular planting bed juts out to the sidewalk, reestablishing the edge of the building as the rest of the wall recedes. (See Figure #7, page 27)

Above the ground floor façade and the sign above is a simple painted stucco wall with a nondescript double-hung window, centered within the width of the building. (See Figure #1 page 21) The second story is an addition that was constructed in 2003⁴. The front façade of the addition is simple in nature, designed in such a way as to minimize distraction from the strong presence of the first floor façade and sign. No alterations were made to the sign and first floor façade at the time of the addition.

The dominant feature of the façade is the distinctive, stylized sign advertising the name of the business. The sign sits above the first floor commercial frontage and spans the entire width of the narrow building. (See Figure #3, page 23)

The sign is composed of three main elements:

- 1- A field of turquoise blue enamel panels forms the background. Some minor surface rust can be found on the panels.
- 2- Thirteen projecting light boxes, one for each letter of the name, sit in front of the enamel panels. Together, these light boxes spell out "TOWN TALK DINER" in capital letters, one word for each line of text. The letters are rounded, yet blocky.
- 3- Each light box holds numerous incandescent light bulbs that fill in the field of each letter. At night when the bulbs are illuminated, the combination of light points defines the letters of the sign and name – rather than the actual materials and shapes of the sign boxes against the background.

Description of interior features

The Town Talk Diner space was unoccupied during the period of the designation study, the previous business having closed in January of

2011. While preparing this study, staff did not have access to evaluate the interior features of the space. The interior was the subject of a \$75,000 remodeling project in 2002⁵. It was then expanded into the adjoining building in 2006⁶.

Without access to the interior of the diner during the study and without historic plans or photographs as a point of reference, it is not possible to determine the level of integrity of the interior of the diner at this time. Additional information regarding the interior space may become available in the future that could shed additional light on the level of integrity and eligibility for designation of the interior. However, the interior space will not be considered further by this study.

Description of landscape and landscape features

The subject site is completely covered by buildings and is essentially void of landscape elements. The building face is built out to the public sidewalk. There is no green space or other landscaping on the site.

PART 2: HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Streamline Moderne Architecture

The strongest level of significance displayed by the Town Talk Diner is in its representation of the Streamline Moderne style of architecture.

The Streamline Moderne style was an evolution of the Art Deco style. It stripped away the more decorative elements of Art Deco, effectively “streamlining” it. In *Streamline-Art and Design of the Forties*, author Mark Arceneaux described Streamline design as “a balanced combination of the following characteristics: fluted or ribbed panels surrounding the lower portion of an object; detailing such as flush mounted stainless steel windows, chromium ringed portholes, daring expanses and placement of glass; and a totally controlled machine-like quality unblemished by man’s idiosyncratic carvings and embellishments⁷. “ The Town Talk Diner embodies nearly all of these design qualities, including the ribbed panels, flush mounted windows, large expanse of glass and use of metal for the storefront. The storefront retains an exceptionally high level of integrity- there is nothing in the building permit records for the property or in the physical appearance of the storefront that suggests that it has been altered.

The façade of the second story addition is simple in nature, designed in such a way as to minimize distraction from the strong presence of the first floor façade and sign. Importantly, the design of the façade does not compete with the façade of the adjacent early 20th century commercial buildings. The simplicity of design is important because it avoids a sense of false-history and to some extent, the simple backdrop of the second story façade helps set-off the bold graphics of the original façade and sign below it. Going forward, the paint colors used for the second floor façade could be chosen more carefully. Visually, it might appear to “recede” more if it was painted a neutral color that helped it fade into the background; something that can be easily accomplished.

Most importantly, the second story addition is not a critical flaw. It in no way undermines the significance of the integrated design for the first floor façade and building signage – both of which remain intact.

Signage

The most notable design element of the Town Talk Diner is the large sign, which covers an even larger surface area than the storefront itself. This eye-catching sign was undoubtedly seen as crucial to drawing customers into the small storefront, which would otherwise be easy to overlook. Regarding advertising in the 1940s, Mark Arceneaux states, “...when not patriotic in nature (advertising art) tended to depict idealized people and highly streamlined landscapes. Lettering was bold block style and colors were vibrant and pure, with much emphasis on the primaries⁸.” The rounded-yet-blocky letters that comprise the Town Talk Diner sign are a strong example of this design aesthetic. The design integration of the sign and storefront architecture at the Town Talk Diner is the primary character defining feature of the building. While the storefront

is a fine example of Streamline Moderne architecture, the façade alone would be relatively unremarkable if not for the sign and the manner in which the sign and the first floor storefront are integrated through design.

Other Possible Significance

Research for this study did not conclusively identify any other significance for the Town Talk Diner at this time. However additional significance may be found if additional information or research comes to light, especially relating to Paul Pearson and the Pearson family as restaurateurs in Minneapolis and the importance of the Town Talk Diner to Lake Street and the Longfellow neighborhood.

Paul Pearson/Pearson Family

The Town Talk Diner was opened in 1946 by Paul Pearson. Paul Pearson and his family owned a number of dining establishments around Minneapolis. The Town Talk Café, which preceded the Town Talk Diner, was opened at 38th Street and 22nd Avenue in 1938. The café was moved to the subject location and renamed the Town Talk Diner in 1946. Another Town Talk Diner location existed on Hennepin Avenue for a time during the 1950s as well. (See Figure #10, Page 30) Additionally, the family opened Pearson's Drive-Thru on Hiawatha Avenue in 1954, and finally Pearson's Restaurant at 50th and France in 1973, which was owned by the Pearson family until 2011⁹. It is evident that the Pearson family operated several successful restaurants in Minneapolis for over the course of a half-century. Future research may reveal more information about the significance of the Pearson family.

Longfellow Neighborhood

The Town Talk Diner opened at the subject location in 1946. At least three different iterations of the "Town Talk Diner" operated at the site between 1946-2011, with occasional closures between versions of the restaurant and with different owners and operators. While it occupied the same space and operated in various iterations for over 60 years, there was little mention of it found in the historical record over this time. No historic photographs of the diner or Lake Street in the area of the diner were located- the only photograph that was located appears likely to be the other location of the Town Talk Diner on Hennepin Avenue (See Figure #10, Page 30.) It is possible, even likely, that historic photos of the site exist, but they have seemingly not been deemed important enough to be added to collections such as the Minneapolis Collection at the Hennepin County Library or the records of the Minnesota Historical Society, nor have they been shared openly/widely on the internet. While the Town Talk Diner is a familiar part of the fabric and character of Lake Street, further research is needed to determine its significance within the context of the larger neighborhood.

PART 3: RATIONALE

Local historic designation is an official action that promotes the preservation of historic resources by recognizing specific people, places, and events that are deemed to be significant in relation to the history and heritage of Minneapolis. Through the requirements set out in the Heritage Preservation chapter of the City's Code of Ordinances, the act of designation establishes a series of protections that are administered through the ordinance to ensure protection of significant places throughout the city against demolition or inappropriate alterations.

Designation Criteria

Title 23, Chapter 599.210 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances list seven criteria which shall be considered in determining whether a property is worthy of local designation as a landmark because of its historical, cultural, architectural, archaeological or engineering significance. The Town Talk Diner is considered below in relation to each of the seven designation criteria.

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

The Town Talk Diner opened in 1946. This post-war period marked the return of a significant number of former soldiers to the country and the work force. Many in Minneapolis found employment at the Minneapolis -Moline tractor factory, which was located approximately 2 blocks west of the Town Talk Diner at Lake Street and Hiawatha Avenue. The factory has since been demolished and a Target department store and surface parking lot now occupy the site.

Paul Pearson took advantage of the small vacant strip left in the streetscape to build the diner on a busy street near a significant employer. The large, bright, colorful sign brought substantial visibility to the site from passing street cars, buses, and cars, making it easy to spot despite its small size. The Town Talk Diner is a unique example of infill development in a part of the City that was largely built out by the post-war period. The Town Talk Diner meets this criterion.

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

It is evident that Paul Pearson and his family were successful restaurateurs in the City of Minneapolis. This study did not uncover any clear evidence to identify the Pearson family as being significant enough to the history or development of the City of Minneapolis to warrant designation of the Town Talk Diner based solely or partially on association with the family. Further research would be needed to

definitively determine whether or not the Pearson Family or individual members of that family would meet this criterion in relation to this specific property.

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

The Town Talk Diner may be associated with distinctive elements of neighborhood identity, though based on current library research, this cannot be stated for certain. Based on current research, there is not a substantial enough record of the diner's specific role in evolution of the Longfellow neighborhood to make a definitive determination about its specific neighborhood identity. Future research could be conducted into the relationship between the Minneapolis Moline plant and those businesses that spring up in the surrounding area to serve the employees.

Besides the East Lake Street location, at least one other Town Talk Diner was opened and operated in Minneapolis, on Hennepin Avenue near the intersection of West 28th Street – across from the old West High School (See Figure 10). The Hennepin Avenue Town Talk façade has been demolished. Additional research would be necessary to determine how these restaurants were connected beyond their name. For instance, the signage on the Hennepin Avenue façade was different than that of the East Lake location, but both designs fronted a narrow storefront restaurant. With this in mind, future research might consider how this size and style of restaurant was emblematic of the changing nature of commercial corridors in Minneapolis at the end of the streetcar era and on the threshold of the automobile era.

Beyond the specific design of the (East Lake Street) Town Talk sign and façade, it should be noted that the practice of using a name to brand a building was a more common practice in the first half of the twentieth century, one that has largely been lost in the era of overly rational, single-use zoning that came to characterize American cities in the second-half of the Twentieth Century. For instance, many buildings of this era had signage integrated into the architecture of the building. The list includes such examples at the Foshay tower (currently the "W" Hotel), the Young Quinlan Building (currently JB Hudson Jewelers), and the Farmers and Mechanics Bank (currently the Westin Hotel). Each of these buildings became prominent because the business name was integrated into the design of the building façade and the building façade became associated with their location. In each of these buildings, the original business name and sign remain intertwined in the building's architecture, even though each building was later outfitted to incorporate new uses or businesses. And though the name of the business or building may change over time, the design of the original name, sign, and façade remains a symbol of their identity within their neighborhood location. In this way, the Town Talk Diner on East Lake Street may be considered an element of neighborhood identity.

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

The Town Talk Diner embodies characteristics of the Streamline Moderne architectural style. Curved forms, strong lines (usually horizontal), and the use of glass, metal and other “smooth” materials are hallmarks of the Streamline Moderne style.

The Town Talk was built as a narrow 1-story building, necessitating a small, simple storefront with relatively few features or embellishments. However, the features of the Streamline Moderne style are present, including the vertical wave/ribbing pattern found next to the window and on the side adjacent to the door, the form of the front door itself, the use of metal to compose the entire storefront, the sign and the use of lighting on the sign. (See Figure #2, Page 22.) The storefront and sign combine to present a strong example of the Streamline Moderne style.

The sign is the most significant character defining feature of the diner, dominating half of the façade and using a distinctive aqua-green background and lettering comprised of numerous individual light bulbs. The sign defines the Town Talk Diner- with the exceptionally small size of the space and the way that the storefront is dwarfed by the two larger adjoining buildings, the sign is likely the only reason that the Town Talk Diner existed for as long as it did. The fact that the sign has survived in what appears to be an unaltered state and in relatively good physical condition is an uncommon occurrence. Most signs do not survive so long, as they are often replaced as business or tastes in advertising design and technologies change. While signs are often overlooked as historic resources, they are very much part of the history of the businesses they advertise and the buildings they adorn. They are also neglected yet important records of the eras during which they were built.

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

The Town Talk Diner is significant in relation to landscape design or innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design in relation to development patterns. The Town Talk Diner was constructed as an infill development between two buildings built nearly 40 years earlier, in an already developed area. The diner opened in 1946, as the streetcar system was approaching the end of its lifespan and the automobile was becoming entrenched as the favored transportation option for most Americans. Lake Street was an important east-west street car line, and then became an equally important east-west road for automobiles after the decline of the street cars. The large sign was an innovate way to draw attention

and customers to the diner, which would otherwise have been easy to overlook. The Town Talk Diner represents unique example of infill development in an otherwise full-developed part of the city.

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

There is not sufficient evidence to state that the Town Talk Diner exemplifies the work of any builder, engineer, designer, artist, craftsman or architect that is presently considered to be a “master” of their trade. The architect and builder listed on the building permit is “Sebco Inc.” Research did not reveal any significant information about Sebco Inc., so it is difficult to identify them as a master of their trade based on this one example.

That said, the Town Talk Diner itself is an example of the quality of work performed by Sebco Inc. and little work of this particular style is extant in the fabric of Minneapolis. Future research may provide better more conclusive evidence as to the skill and quality of work performed by Sebco Inc.

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

There is no evidence that the Town Talk Diner has yielded or is likely to yield information important to prehistory or history. There may be unknown below ground resources on the site. However, discovery and recovery of any below-ground resources would likely require the demolition of the structure.

Integrity of historic resource

The following is an assessment of the Town Talk Diner as it relates to the seven aspects of integrity as defined by the Department of the Interior:

Location

The Town Talk Diner at 2701½ East Lake Street is in its original location and maintains its integrity.

Design

While the storefront appears to be unaltered and retains its integrity, the overall integrity of design has been impacted by the construction of a 2nd story addition. The impact of the large sign is diminished by this addition, which results in the sign being located mid-façade on the building, rather than capping the building. In spite of this, the integrity of the original design remains. Though not original

to the building, the architecture of the second floor façade is simple enough that it does not overwhelm or destroy the integrity of design.

Setting

The setting of the area immediately surrounding the Town Talk Diner remains fairly well in-tact. There is a collection of early 20th century commercial buildings on both sides of Lake Street in this area, as well as along Minnehaha Avenue just to the west. However, the larger neighborhood has seen substantial redevelopment, with large blocks of newer buildings just to the east. The integrity of setting remains, but has been impacted.

Materials

The original materials on the storefront have retained their integrity. The storefront appears to be original, both materially and in design, as does the sign. Not only does the material appear to be original, it is in good condition. The storefront shows only minor blemishes, which are to be expected in a storefront system that is over a half-century old. The sign does exhibit some surface rusting, especially at the seams in the metal background, but it appears that it could be rehabilitated with minimal effort and without the need for substantial material replacement.

Workmanship

With the original storefront and sign retaining both their integrity of design and materials, the integrity of workmanship remains intact. The storefront retains its relatively simple yet identifiable Streamline Moderne design features, including an angular wave pattern on the side of the storefront window and next to the door and the small planter box beneath the window.

Feeling

The Town Talk Diner does retain its integrity of feeling, though it has been diminished by changes in the surrounding neighborhood, and more substantially by the 2nd story addition. The Town Talk Diner was built as an infill development between two larger and older buildings, in an area that was built out 30-40 years before the diner opened. As a narrow, short storefront between two larger buildings, the Town Talk was notable for its diminutive size. The addition of a second story significantly changed the way that the Town Talk relates to the neighboring buildings and the street. While the building is still dwarfed by the older buildings it sits between, the effect has been lessened by the addition of the 2nd story. When the attention of the viewer is focused on the Streamline Moderne storefront and the large unique sign, however, the Town Talk Diner still evokes the look and feel of a mid-century neighborhood diner.

Association

The Town Talk Diner retains its association with the Streamline Moderne style of architecture because it retains the integrity of both design and materials.

Other Considerations:

Minneapolis Historic Contexts

The Town Talk Diner is not specifically featured in any historic context studies on file with the City of Minneapolis. As an example of the Streamline Moderne style that retains its integrity, it fits within the context of architecture. It was not identified in the *Legacy of Minneapolis* or *Significant Architecture in the History of Minneapolis*, nor was the interior identified as significant in the *Significant Interiors Survey of Minneapolis/St. Paul*.

It is possible that the adjacent buildings, along with other commercial structures in the area from the same era, could form a potential historic district of buildings associated with development along the Lake Street streetcar line.

Relationship to the 1990 Minneapolis Preservation Plan

Designation of the Town Talk Diner would likely fit within the Architecture context in the 1990 Minneapolis Preservation Plan. While not large or especially exceptional, the Town Talk Diner is an interesting small-scale example of the Streamline Moderne style of architecture. The sign is the most notable and unique feature of the building. Signs are an under-represented feature in designations in the City of Minneapolis.

The site is not included in the list of properties recommended for local designation in the 1990 Minneapolis Preservation Plan.

Relationship to the body of locally-designated properties in Minneapolis

The City of Minneapolis designates properties that represent and reflect elements of the city's culture, social, economic, religious, political, architectural, or aesthetic history as local heritage landmarks. As of February 2012, over 150 individual properties have been designated as landmarks in the City of Minneapolis, including places like The Forum Cafeteria, Uptown Theater and the Rand Tower.

The Town Talk Diner exemplifies the Streamline Moderne style of architecture on a much smaller scale than existing landmarks of this style, many of which are movie theaters or larger office and commercial uses. It is in the minority of resources in the City where a substantial degree of the significance of the site

can be attributed to the sign. Signs are often overlooked when considering the significance of the design of a property.

Comprehensive and Long-Range Planning

Title 23, Chapter 599.260 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances requires the planning director to submit all proposed designations to the Minneapolis City Planning Commission for review and comment on the proposed designation. In its review, the City Planning Commission shall consider but not be limited to the following factors:

The relationship of the proposed designation to the city's comprehensive plan.

A number of policies included in *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* could be called into play when considering the potential for designating the Town Talk Diner.

Policy 1.4 states: “Develop and maintain strong and successful commercial and mixed use areas with a wide range of character and functions to serve the needs of current and future users.”

Designating the Town Talk Diner could potentially support and contradict this policy. On one hand, designation of the property would promote the preservation of the storefront and the sign, addressing the “character” portion of the policy. On the other hand, if the space is designated and the inability to change the sign creates difficulty for those seeking to lease or occupy the space, it could be contrary to the “serve the needs of current and future users” portion of the policy.

Policy 8.1 states: “Preserve, maintain, and designate districts, landmarks, and historic resources which serve as reminders of the city's architecture, history, and culture.” Objective 8.1.1 goes on: “Protect historic resources from modifications that are not sensitive to their historic significance.”

If the Town Talk Diner is deemed to be significant enough to warrant designation, designating it as a new historic landmark would directly meet the intent and goal of Policy 8.1. The protections placed on the property as a result of designation would serve to meet policy objective 8.1.1.

The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding area.

If the site is not designated and the storefront is altered, especially if the sign were removed, some of the character of Lake Street would be

diminished. Designation of the Town Talk Diner would help preserve the unique character of this significant thoroughfare.

The consistency of the proposed designation with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the City Council.

The *Hiawatha/Lake Station Area Master Plan*, which was adopted by the Minneapolis City Council on May 18, 2001, did not envision substantial redevelopment or change to this location. It was identified for “retail revitalization”, but there was no specific vision given for this area. The plan focused primarily on areas with strong potential for redevelopment and improvement.

National Register Status

The Town Talk Diner is not currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. An inventory form prepared by Will Stark of The 106 Group in 2002 states: “This property is recommended as not eligible for listing on the NRHP. The property does not contribute to significant broad patterns of history, is not known to be associated with persons important in our past, and is not architecturally distinguished.”¹⁰

Proposed Period of Significance:

If the Town Talk Diner is designated, a period of significance of 1946 is recommended. This is the year it was constructed and when the Streamline Moderne design was realized.

PART 4: REGISTRATION AND CLASSIFICATION INFORMATION

NAME OF PROPERTY	
Historic Name	Town Talk Diner
Current Name	Town Talk Diner
Other Names Used	N/A
LOCATION OF PROPERTY	
Street and Number	2707 ½ East Lake Street
Is building located on its original site?	Yes
Date if moved	N/A
OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY	
Owner's Name	LD Property, LLC
Owner's Address	1305 Vierling Drive Shakopee, MN 55379
CLASSIFICATION	
Ownership of Property	Private
Category of property	Building
Number of contributing resources within property	Buildings: 1 Structures: 0 Sites: 0 Objects: 0
Number of non-contributing resources within property	Buildings: 2 Structures: 0 Sites: 0 Objects: 0
Listed on the National Register of Historic Places?	No.
Date of NRHP listing?	Not Applicable

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
 Minneapolis Department of Community Planning & Economic Development - Planning Division
Designation Study for Town Talk Diner

USE AND FUNCTION	
Historic Use	Commercial- Restaurant
Current Use	Commercial- Vacant (Last use was restaurant)
DESCRIPTION	
Architectural classification/style	Streamline Moderne
<u>Materials:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation • Roof • Walls • Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknown • Flat roof system • Stainless steel, stucco • Glass
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	
Applicable local designation criteria	<p>The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic, or social history.</p> <p>The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction.</p> <p>The property exemplifies a landscape design or development pattern distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design or detail.</p>
Related local context (s)	Architecture
Significant dates	1946
Period (s) of significance	1946
Cultural affiliation	N/A
Names of master builders,	N/A

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
 Minneapolis Department of Community Planning & Economic Development - Planning Division
Designation Study for Town Talk Diner

engineers, designers, artists, craftsmen, and/or architects	
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES	
	See Sources on page 32

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA	
Size of parcel	14,213 s.f.
PIN number	01-02-82-41-20096
Legal Description	To be written upon designation by City Council.



Figure 1- Town Talk Diner, December 2011, Photo by CPED Staff



Figure 2- Town Talk Diner- Storefront Detail, December 2011, Photo by CPED Staff



Figure 3- Town Talk Diner- Sign Detail, December 2011, Photo by CPED Staff

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
Minneapolis Department of Community Planning & Economic Development - Planning Division
Designation Study for Town Talk Diner



Figure 4- Town Talk Diner with International Order of Odd Fellow Building (Building to west of Diner), December 2011, Photo by CPED Staff

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
Minneapolis Department of Community Planning & Economic Development - Planning Division
Designation Study for Town Talk Diner



Figure 5- Town Talk Diner with Building to the East of diner, December 2011, Photo by CPED Staff

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
Minneapolis Department of Community Planning & Economic Development - Planning Division
Designation Study for Town Talk Diner



Figure 6- Town Talk Diner- Entry Detail, December 2011, Photo by CPED Staff

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
Minneapolis Department of Community Planning & Economic Development - Planning Division
Designation Study for Town Talk Diner



Figure 7- Town Talk Diner- Storefront Planter Detail, December 2011, Photo by CPED Staff



Figure 8- Town Talk Diner- Storefront Detail, December 2011, Photo by CPED Staff



Figure 9- Town Talk Diner- Storefront, Prior to 2nd Story Addition, Date and Photographer Unknown, Source: towntalkdiner.com



Figure 10- Town Talk Diner- (Likely Hennepin Avenue Location), Circa 1954, Source: Minnesota Historical Society Photo Library

Note: Based on the design of the storefront and sign, and more tellingly the size of the storefront and the appearance of the adjacent building and the apparent 2nd story over the diner, it is highly unlikely that this is the subject property.

END NOTES

¹ Diers, John W. & Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul*, p. 194

² City of Minneapolis Building Permit Index Card Entry, #B79700, 3001 27th Avenue South

³ City of Minneapolis Building Permit #A26880

⁴ City of Minneapolis Building Permit # BIRE 3019388

⁵ City of Minneapolis Building Permit # BIRE 3018223

⁶ City of Minneapolis Building Permit # BIRE 3039930

⁷ Arceneaux, Marc, *Streamline: Art and Design of the Forties*, p. 31

⁸ Ibid, p. 16.

⁹ Walsh, Paul, “Goodbye, Pearson’s; hello 50th Street Café”, Minneapolis Star Tribune, February 8, 2011.

¹⁰ Minneapolis HPC Inventory Form, HE-MPC-7767, Prepared by Will Stark, 07/30/2002

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

Arceneaux, Marc, *Streamline: Art and Design of the Forties*, Troubadour Press, San Francisco, 1975

Blumenson, John J.-G., *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*, W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 1981.

City of Minneapolis Building Permit Files- 2701-2701 East Lake Street

City of Minneapolis Building Permit Files- 2707 ½ East Lake Street

City of Minneapolis Building Permit Files- 3001 27th Avenue S

Diers, John W. & Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis MN, 2007

Horgen, Tom, 2011: "The Cocktail Scene Takes a Hit", *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Minneapolis, MN

Nelson, Rick: "Town Talk Turns Out the Lights", *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Minneapolis, MN.

Walsh, Paul, 2001: "Goodbye Pearson's; Hello 50th Street Café", *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Minneapolis, MN.

PART 8: APPENDICES

- Appendix A: HPC Action initiating nomination
- Appendix B: Nomination staff report
- Appendix C: HPC Actions from Nomination hearing
- Appendix D: Letter to SHPO (Forthcoming)
- Appendix E: Letter from SHPO (Forthcoming)
- Appendix F: Staff report to City Planning Commission (Forthcoming)
- Appendix G: Staff report to Heritage Preservation Commission (Forthcoming)
- Appendix H: HPC Actions from Designation hearing (Forthcoming)
- Appendix I: Request for Council Action (Forthcoming)
- Appendix J: Zoning and Planning Committee Actions (Forthcoming)
- Appendix K: Actions of the Full City Council (Forthcoming)
- Appendix L: Publication in *Finance and Commerce* (Forthcoming)

**Appendix A: Council Action Initiating
Nomination**

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission

Actions

Regular Meeting

4:30 p.m., Tuesday, February 15, 2011
Room 317, City Hall
350 South Fifth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1385

Commission Membership: Mr. Chad Larsen, Ms. Denita Lemmon, Mr. Kevin Kelley, Ms. Meghan Elliott, Mr. Alex Haecker, Ms. Christina Harrison, Ms. Susan Hunter Weir, Ms. Ginny Lackovic, Ms. Tammy Lindberg, and Ms. Linda Mack

Planning Manager: Jack Byers, 612.673.2634

Committee Clerk: Diana Armstrong, 612.673.2615

Commissioner Mack was absent and excused from tonight's meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 4:40 p.m.

Minutes were approved for the meeting held on February 1, 2010

Discussion Items

1. Warehouse Historic District Heritage Street Plan Update – Wards 5 & 7

Staff: Brian Schaffer, 612.673.2670

No action required

2. Archaeology Policy Implementation

Staff: John Smoley, 612.673.2830

No action required

3. 1215 Marshall Street NE, Grain Belt Office Building – St. Anthony Falls Historic District, Ward 3

Staff: John Smoley, 612.673.2830

Legacy Amendment Grant Update

No action required

New Business

- 1. Nomination for consideration to undertake a local designation study of Town Talk Diner, 2707 ½ Lake Street East. Motion approved to schedule hearing for the March 1 meeting. (Hunter Weir)
- 2. Commissioners Larsen, Kelley, and Haecker will serve on the jury for the 2011 Minneapolis Preservation Awards. (Larsen)

Appendix B: Nomination Staff Report

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

FILE NAME: 2707-1/2 East Lake Street – The Town Talk Diner

NOMINATION DATE: February 15, 2011

NOMINATION MADE BY: Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission

PROPERTY OWNER: LD Property Inc., LLC, Shakopee, MN

APPLICANT: Community Planning and Economic Development Department (CPED) on behalf
of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC)

DATE APPLICATION COMPLETE: N.A.

PUBLICATION OF STAFF REPORT: February 23, 2011

HEARING DATE: March 1, 2011

APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION: March 11, 2011

STAFF REPORT: Jack Byers, Planning Manager, 612-673-2634

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

A. SITE DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

District/Area information	
Historic District	N/A
Neighborhood	Longfellow
Historic Property information	
Current Name	Town Talk Diner
Historic Name	Town Talk Diner
Current Address	2707 or 2707-1/2 East Lake Street
Historic Address	To be determined
Original Construction Date	To be determined
Original Contractor	To be determined
Original Architect	To be determined
Historic Use	Commercial: Restaurant
Current Use	Recently vacated
Proposed Use	To be determined
Other Historical Designations	N/A



Town Talk Diner, 2707-1/2 East Lake Street, Minneapolis, circa 2011

BACKGROUND

In January 2011, the Minneapolis StarTribune reported the closure of the Town Talk Diner due to various business problems. As with similar such news about various properties that might be considered eligible, this item was reported to Commissioners by staff during the “New Business” section of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) on February 1, 2011.

At their regularly scheduled meeting on February 15, 2011, the HPC initiated a nomination of the Town Talk Diner during the “New Business” portion of the meeting. In accordance with the regulations in Chapter 599.220, Commissioner Hunter Weir brought the item forward and described various considerations about the property as relates to the Criteria of Significance outlined in the City’s Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 599.210. Further information on those considerations is noted below. Commissioner Kelley seconded the motion after which the Commissioners deliberated on the motion. Afterward, the Chair called for a vote, the Commission unanimously approved the nomination, and staff was directed to post this item for a public hearing and prepare a report for the proceedings.

Following the HPC meeting of February 15th, CPED Staff contacted the property owner, LD Property Inc., LLC of Shakopee, MN. In phone conversation, staff notified the owner of the Commissions’ action, and the upcoming public hearing.

Property Description

The Town Talk Diner is a small commercial structure that appears to have been built as infill between two larger commercial structures in the 200 block of East Lake Street. The diner building is long and narrow with the short end of the building facing the public sidewalk and street. The buildings that flank the diner are commercial buildings built in the simple, vernacular style common to commercial nodes associated with the growth of the streetcar system in Minneapolis during the nineteen-teens and 1920s. These buildings are mostly vertical in their articulation; each one has a strong architectural demarcation between retail frontages on the ground floor and office or residential spaces on the upper floors.

In contrast and by virtue of its very narrow plan, the façade of the Town Talk is more vertical in orientation. The ground-floor commercial façade stands out from the adjoining buildings in both color and style. The plate glass window, entry door, and surrounding trim are clad in stainless steel reflective of the streamline moderne style. The assembly is punctuated with a combination of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal decorative elements. At various times, other neon lights have been hung in the window. For many years a neon sign that advertised “Pancakes” was hung in the upper left hand side of the window. More recently a similar sign that advertised “Cocktails” was hung in the window.

The dominant feature of the façade is the distinctive, stylized sign advertising the name of the business. The sign sits above the first floor commercial frontage and spans the entire width of the narrow building. The sign is composed of three main elements:

- (1) A field of turquoise blue enamel panels forms the background.
- (2) Thirteen projecting light boxes, one for each letter of the name, sit in front of the enamel panels. Together, these light boxes spell out “TOWN TALK DINER” in capital letters, one word for each line of text. The name of the text style/font of these letters is to be

determined; they stand out as being overly wide and they are exaggerated in their roundness.

- (3) Each light box holds numerous incandescent light bulbs that fill in the field of each letter. At night when the bulbs are illuminated, the combination of light points defines the letters of the sign and name – rather than the actual materials and shapes of the sign boxes against the background.

Above and beyond the ground floor façade and the sign above is a simple stucco wall with a nondescript double-hung window centered within the width of the building.

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

Based on discussion and deliberations at the HPC meeting, Commissioners indicated that the subject property appears eligible for designation as an individual landmark in relation to the following criterion:

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

The Town Talk Diner may be significant in relation to post-World War development in south Minneapolis, particularly in relation to the local history of working class people and the commercial places that served them. Of particular note, the Town Talk Diner is located on East Lake Street near the intersection of Minnehaha Avenue and, as such, would have been close by the long-time industrial manufacturing plant, Minneapolis Moline.

- (2) The property is associated with the lives of significant persons or groups.***

Recent newspaper accounts attribute early ownership of the Town Talk Diner to the Pearson family. The Pearson family also opened and operated a restaurant on West 50th Street, near France Avenue. Additional research would be needed to confirm ownership and to ascertain whether the role that the Pearson family played in the history of Minneapolis is particularly significant.

- (3) The property contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city or neighborhood identity.***

As a commercial enterprise on one of the City's major commercial streets, the Town Talk Diner was likely to be prominent in the sense that it was one of the few restaurants in south Minneapolis at a time when there were few restaurants outside of downtown.

Keeping in mind that art deco and art moderne styles seem not to have been in widespread use around Minneapolis during the heyday of that style, it is important to consider whether the stylistic features of Town Talk may have been influential in the dissemination of that style for various uses and/or building types. As such, the relationship between the opening of the Town Talk with other local examples of commercial architecture should be explored in order to determine whether this property might be considered a distinctive element of the city's identity.

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

By virtue of its high-profile sign, the emphasis on graphics as a stylistic element of architecture and advertising, the Town Talk Diner embodies the characteristics of mid-to late-period art moderne commercial architecture. Likewise, the way the façade's architectural detailing stands out amongst neighboring commercial architecture on Lake Street, the Town Talk Diner is a distinctive element of neighborhood identity and has been for many decades.

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

The Town Talk Diner occupies an atypically narrow building. It appears to have been "shoe-horned" into an opening (perhaps an alley) between two commercial buildings of an earlier time. Beyond the stylistic treatment of the building façade, the location of this building is in some way indicative of commercial values along East Lake Street in this vicinity. Understanding how economic pressure on a commercial corridor engendered this sort of development would be useful for understanding the years immediately prior to the peak of the city's population and at the time right before suburban migration began in earnest.

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

Further research is necessary to determine if the Town Talk exemplifies the work of a notable builder, designer, artist, craftsman, or architect. The arrangement of the elements on the façade appear to be rather deliberate in their design and in their intent to draw attention to a building that is diminutive in size.

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

It is not likely that research will yield information significant to pre-history or archeology.

The subject property is likely to be eligible for designation as an individual landmark. If the Commission determines that it is warranted, further research would be necessary to determine the relationship of this property to each of the criteria of significance. Such research and analysis would be conducted through a formal designation study.

Public Comments

A public hearing was noticed according to standard procedures set forth in the City's Preservation Ordinance. No comments have been received as of the date when staff report was published.

Applicable Ordinances

Chapter 599. Heritage Preservation Regulations

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.
- (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)

FINDINGS

1. The nominated property appears to meet at least one of the criteria for designation contained in Section 599.210 (criterion 6).
2. The Town Talk Diner at 2707-1/2 East Lake Street is likely eligible for exterior designation and may also be eligible for interior designation.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

CPED recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings and **approve** the nomination of 2707-1/2 East Lake Street as a landmark; **establish** interim protection; and **direct** the Planning Director to prepare or cause to be prepared a designation study.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix B: Materials submitted to CPED staff by the Commissioner Hunter Weir at the February 15, 2011, HPC meeting. B1 - B30.

**Appendix C: HPC Actions from Nomination
Hearing**

- 1 bound photocopy of the index, photographs, and narrative for on-site use to the developer, along with a digital copy.
2. The developer shall work with Minneapolis HPC staff on plans to salvage and reuse the marquee and the ten original light fixtures in the auditorium space. If these items are not reinstalled in the new development, they shall be offered to an appropriate user/repository. The developer shall bear the cost of removing them as carefully as possible from the theater, with transportation and installation costs borne by the recipient. A use that would keep the items visible to the public is preferred.
 3. The developer shall also be mindful that significant features (e.g., terrazzo lobby floor, fireplace) might be revealed during the demolition process; these shall be documented with digital photographs and copies of the photographs provided to the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission staff. If time permits, these features shall be documented with large format black-and-white film and added to the Minnesota Historic Property Record documentation set.
 4. The developer shall incorporate interpretation of the theater-e.g., some of the documentation photographs, historic photographs/plans, a brief interpretive plaque-into the new development.
2. By ordinance, approvals are valid for a period of one year from the date of the decisions. Upon written request and for good cause, the planning director may grant up to a one year extension if the request is made in writing no later than March 1, 2012.
 3. By ordinance, all approvals granted in this Demolition of a Historic Resource shall remain in effect as long as all of the conditions and guarantees of such approvals are observed. Failure to comply with such conditions and guarantees shall constitute a violation of this Demolition of a Historic Resource and may result in termination of the approval.

2. 131 Oak Grove Street – Historic Resource, Ward 7

Staff: John Smoley, 612.673.2830

Landmark Designation Hearing

Action: Adopt staff findings, and **approve** the landmark designation of the Henry E. Ladd House, and forward the study (as amended with the additional information submitted on Henry Ladd) and recommendation to the Zoning and Planning Committee of the City Council with a recommendation to approve the designation of the property at 131 Oak Grove Street.

→ 3. 2707 ½ Lake Street East, Town Talk Diner – Historic Resource, Ward 9

Staff: Chris Vrchota, 612.673.5467

Nomination hearing to consider the need for a designation study and interim protection.

Action: Adopt staff findings and **approve** the nomination of 2707-1/2 East Lake Street as a landmark; establish interim protection; and direct the Planning Director to prepare or cause to be prepared a designation study.

Appendix D: Letter to SHPO



**Community Planning &
Economic Development**
Planning Division

250 South 4th Street – Room 110
Minneapolis MN 55415

Office 612 673-2597
Fax 612 673-2728
TTY 612 673-2157

October 5, 2012

Michael Koop
Local Preservation Programs
State Historic Preservation Office
Minnesota Historical Society
345 Kellogg Blvd. West
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906

RE: Town Talk Diner Designation Study – Submittal for State Historic
Preservation Office Comment

Mr. Koop:

The City of Minneapolis is pleased to submit the enclosed designation study for the Town Talk Diner, 2707½ East Lake Street, Minneapolis. Enclosed you will find one paper copy of the designation study. I would be happy to provide additional copies and/or an electronic version on your request.

Constructed in 1946, the Town Talk Diner was designed and built by Sebco, Inc. for Paul Pearson. The Town Talk Diner appears eligible for designation as a City of Minneapolis Landmark due to its exemplification of the Streamline Moderne style of architecture, association with post-war development in Minneapolis, and uniqueness of design.

In accordance with state and local law, we respectfully request your comments within 60 days: by December 3, 2012 (though we would gratefully accept them sooner if they are available). Staff is available to discuss the designation study or the design guidelines in the upcoming weeks, should you wish to have a meeting. Please contact me with any questions that you may have. We look forward to receiving your comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Vrchota", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chris Vrchota, City Planner.
612-673-5467
chris.vrchota@minneapolismn.gov



Appendix E: Letter from SHPO



December 8, 2012

Chris Vrchota
CPED-Planning Division
City of Minneapolis
250 South 4th Street—Room 110
Minneapolis MN 55415

RE: Local designation of the Town Talk Diner, 2707 ½ East Lake St., MHS Referral No. 2013-0157

Dear Chris,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above referenced designation. It has been reviewed pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §471.193, subd.6., and Section 599.210 of the City of Minneapolis Code of Ordinances.

Constructed in 1946, the Town Talk Diner is a small, narrow, two-story commercial building that was designed and built as infill between two existing early twentieth-century buildings. The Lake Street façade is a simple, straightforward composition of the Streamline Moderne style. The first-floor storefront is comprised of stainless steel and a large glass window, with a fluted vertical panel on the left and a fluted horizontal panel spanning the full width of the building. Above the storefront is a sign larger than the storefront with rounded, streamline blocky letters: "TOWN TALK DINER." The Town Talk Diner is a distinctive and well-conserved example of commercial Streamline Moderne architecture, and as such, is an ideal candidate for local designation.

If you have any questions regarding our assessment of this property, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Koop'.

Michael Koop
Historic Preservation Program Specialist
State Historic Preservation Office

**Appendix F: Staff Report to City Planning
Commission**

**Community Planning & Economic Development
Planning Division**
250 4th Street South, Room 300 PSC
Minneapolis, MN 55415



City of Minneapolis
*Department of Community Planning
& Economic Development - CPED*

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Planning Commission
FROM: Chris Vrchota, 612-673-5467
DATE: November 14, 2012
RE: Town Talk Diner (2707 ½ East Lake Street) Designation Study – CPC Review and Comment
CC: Jeremy Hanson Willis, Executive Director
Jason Wittenberg, Acting Planning Director
Chris Vrchota, Principal Investigator

Designation Study Review and Comment

Chapter 599, Heritage Preservation, of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances outlines the review process for designation studies. The City is required to submit the designation study to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the City Planning Commission (CPC) for review and comment. A copy of the draft designation study has been submitted to the Minnesota SHPO. Enclosed is a copy of the draft designation study for your review and comment.

Section 599.260 of the Heritage Preservation Regulations requires the planning director to submit all proposed designations to the City Planning Commission for review and comment on the proposal within thirty (30) days. In its review, 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.

This item will be on the December 6, 2012 Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion and comment.

The following memorandum analyzes the proposed designation using the three factors outlined in the section 599.260 of the ordinance.

The relationship of the proposed designation to the city's comprehensive plan:

The designation of the Town Talk Diner meets relevant policies of the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth.

- Policy 1.4 states: “Develop and maintain strong and successful commercial and mixed use areas with a wide range of character and functions to serve the needs of current and future users.”

Designating the Town Talk Diner could potentially support and contradict this policy. On one hand, designation of the property would promote the preservation of the storefront and the sign, addressing the “character” portion of the policy. On the other hand, if the space is designated and the inability to change the sign creates difficulty for those seeking to lease or occupy the space, it could be contrary to the “serve the needs of current and future users” portion of the policy.

- Policy 8.1 states: “Preserve, maintain, and designate districts, landmarks, and historic resources which serve as reminders of the city's architecture, history, and culture.” Objective 8.1.1 goes on: “Protect historic resources from modifications that are not sensitive to their historic significance.”

If the Town Talk Diner is deemed to be significant enough to warrant designation, designating it as a new historic landmark would directly meet the intent and goal of Policy 8.1. The protections placed on the property as a result of designation would serve to meet policy objective 8.1.1.

The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding area: If the site is not designated and the storefront is altered, especially if the sign were removed, some of the character of Lake Street would be diminished. Designation of the Town Talk Diner would help preserve the unique character of this significant thoroughfare.

The consistency of the proposed designation with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the City Council: The *Hiawatha/Lake Station Area Master Plan*, which was adopted by the Minneapolis City Council on May 18, 2001, did not envision substantial redevelopment or change to this location. It was identified for “retail revitalization”, but there was no specific vision given for this area. The plan focused primarily on areas with strong potential for redevelopment and improvement.

**Appendix G: Staff Report to Heritage
Preservation Commission**

**Appendix H: HPC Actions from Designation
Hearing**

Appendix I: Request for Council Action

**Appendix J: Zoning and Planning Committee
Actions**

Appendix K: Actions of the Full City Council

Appendix L: Publication in *Finance and
Commerce*