

**Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED)**  
Demolition of a Historic Resource  
BZH-27756

**Proposal:** Demolition

**Applicant:** Quartersawn Design Build, Jeff Nicholson, 952-237-9290

**Address of Property:** 5701 Oliver Avenue South

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

**Date Application Deemed Complete:** May 9, 2013

**Public Hearing:** June 18, 2013

**Appeal Period Expiration:** June 28, 2013

**Ward:** 13

**Neighborhood Organization:** Armatage

**A. BACKGROUND**

Per Section 599.460 of the Heritage Preservation Regulations, 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 may meet at least one of the seven local designation criteria, a proposed demolition would require a demolition of historic resource application.

On March 26, 2012, CPED staff informed Bollig Excavation, the wrecking contractor that a demolition of the single family house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South would require a demolition of historic resource application and public hearing in front of the heritage preservation commission. In the letter informing the wrecking contractor of the decision, CPED highlighted that the subject property is a contributing structure to the Penn Model Village Addition Potential Residential Historic District. On May 9, 2013, Jeff Nicholson of Quartersawn Design Build, submitted a demolition of historic resource application.

**B. DESCRIPTION**

The subject property is located at the northeast corner of 57<sup>th</sup> Street West and Oliver Avenue South in the Armatage Neighborhood of Southwest Minneapolis. The one story, flat roof house with an attached garage was built in 1946 and is located on a 12,590 square foot lot. The architects that designed the house were McEnary and Krafft. James Leck Company built the house for the Penn Model Village Incorporated.

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In 2011, a reconnaissance level survey was completed of the Windom, Kenny, and Armatage neighborhoods. These neighborhoods create the southwest corner of the city. The objectives of the reconnaissance survey were to:

- Identify and document intact historic-age resources in the survey area that qualify for City of Minneapolis local landmark or National Register of Historic Places (National Register) designation.
- Identify themes that may require further intensive-level research and survey to understand their significance and associated property types.

The Windom Kenny, and Armatage survey identified 17 individual properties and three potential districts that are good candidates for intensive research and survey to determine if they qualify for historic designation by the City or for listing in the National Register. The Penn Model Village Addition Potential Historic District was one of the three potential districts that were identified. The survey recommended that the Penn Model Village Addition Potential Historic District was significant under Criterion 1 (History) and Criterion 4 (Architecture). The survey also noted that it may be eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A (Community Planning and Development) and Criterion C (Architecture).

There are 30 structures that are part of the proposed Penn Model Village Addition Potential Historic District. The 2011 Historic Resources Inventory report stated the following about the Penn Model Village Addition Potential Historic District:

*The Penn Avenue Addition is bounded by 57th Street to the north, 58th Street to the south, Penn Avenue South to the west, and Newton Avenue South to the east. Oliver Avenue South runs through the middle of the one-block-long residential area and curves at the southern end around a small park. This addition represents a cohesive collection of single-family residential properties built in 1946 and 1947. Three Contemporary-style houses, which feature shed or flat roofs, prominent horizontal lines, and large window walls on the primary facades, stand out among the Minimal Traditional and Ranch-style homes comprising the addition (5741 Oliver Avenue South, 5701 Penn Avenue South, and 5729 Penn Avenue South). These distinctive houses anchor three of the four corners of the addition.*

All of the structures that were part of the 1946-1947 addition are extant; 27 of the structures were identified as contributing structures to the district as part of the 2011 historic resources inventory, including the subject property at 5701 Oliver Avenue South.

However, between 1949 and 1959, the house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South had three additions that substantially changed its original floor plan (see American Builder magazine article page 89 and 5701 Oliver Avenue and Penn Model Village elevation comparison, design and today attachments). In addition, alterations have replaced the original siding, window openings, windows, and exterior doors; the chimney, which projected from the roof at around the center of the house was removed.

## **PROPOSED CHANGES**

The applicant, Quartersawn Design Build, is proposing to demolish the house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South and build a new two-story house with a flat roof. The house is being designed and built for Theodore Huseby and Matthew Farner. In their letter to the Heritage Preservation Commission, Mr. Huseby and Mr. Farner state that “It is most certainly not our intention to move into the neighborhood

with a suburban style home with a large, out-of-scale roof. They also state that ‘they purchased this property with the intentions of building a home that is mid-century inspired and scaled to fit the neighborhood. Our specific request to our architects and designer at our very first meeting was that we wanted to build something with styling that fit the character of the existing neighborhood.’

### **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.

### **D. SIGNIFICANCE**

According to 2011 Historic Resources Inventory report that was completed of the Windom, Kenny, and Armatage neighborhoods, the subject property may have historic significance given its association with a time period that exemplifies a broad pattern of cultural and social history (Criterion 1), for embodying a distinctive characteristic of an architectural type or style (Criterion 4), and for exemplifying a development pattern distinguished by uniqueness and quality of design (Criterion 5).

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

The subject property may be associated with a time period that exemplifies a broad pattern of cultural and social history. As the 2011 Historic Resources Inventory report states, the Windom, Kenny, and Armatage neighborhoods experienced a housing boom after World War II. The Penn Model Village Addition is an early and intact example of a post-World War II development (1946-1947) in the Armatage neighborhood. All of the houses built in the development are extant and according to the 2011 Historic Resources Inventory, 27 were considered to contribute to the potential historic district.

In addition, these houses have a direct tie to the efforts of providing housing for service members returning from World War II. The sponsor and financier, Farmers and Mechanics Savings Bank, reserved the homes for veterans. The architects worked to keep the final cost from exceeding the GI Bill priority limit of \$10,000. This allowed soldiers to qualify for a low interest and zero down payment loan. American Builder magazine reported the challenges that the architects faced in staying under this limit.

*“In March 1946, the bank publicized its efforts and work began to proceed in earnest. Then began a period of worry and soul searching. Houses by the hundreds were standing partially completed for lack of vital building materials. Costs were soaring. The architects rejected plan after plan to keep costs from exceeding the GI priority limit of \$10,000. Many of the dream gadgets and wrinkles that had been considered were completely forgotten. The story of the building operation was a tale of rising prices and shortages. It was nearly a year from ground*

*breaking to final completion. Sales were completed in the fall of 1947, and the last house occupied in December 1947.*

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

In a cursory review, the house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South is not known to be associated with the lives of a person significant to the history of Minneapolis that would warrant local designation. Harold Phelps, who fought in World War II, was the original owner along with his wife Hazel. Mr. and Mrs. Phelps lived at 5701 Oliver Avenue until at least 1959 (source: City of Minneapolis directories). Harold Phelps, who died in 1984, is buried at Fort Snelling National Cemetery, beside his wife, Hazel, who died in 1988.

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

The property is associated with the Penn Model Village Triangle Park at 58<sup>th</sup> Street and Oliver Avenue South. The triangle park became a part of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board park system in 1950, when the developer donated the land to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. The property's individual association with the Penn Model Village Triangle Park, however, does not warrant local designation.

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

The building at 5701 Oliver Avenue South did embody the distinctive characteristics of an early example of a one-story, mid-century modern house in Minneapolis. The house was similar to typical ranch-style houses with its one-story, u-shape design, low roof, and minimal use of exterior decoration. However, the building at 5701 Oliver Avenue South was also unique in that it was built with a flat roof, compared to most mid-century modern ranch-style houses in Minneapolis that were built with a hipped roof. The house design received praise from national publications including *American Builder* and *American Home*. However, the subject property has had exterior alterations and additions that have compromised its original architectural integrity (see section D4 for integrity analysis). The changes include three building additions that have compromised its original layout. In addition, alterations have replaced the original siding, window openings, windows, and exterior doors; the chimney, which projected from the roof at around the center of the house was removed.

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

The subject property is part of the post-World War II Penn Model Village housing development and may exemplify a development pattern distinguished by uniqueness and quality of design. The 30-house development featured 13 different designs that combined contemporary styles with traditional designs in a cohesive manner. The Penn Model Village housing development received national recognition by *American Builder* and *American Home* magazines for its planning and for being a quality housing development. In 1948, *American Builder* magazine stated that the "The Penn Model Village Addition

show[s] how extra value can be added to small homes by intelligent use of community planning and close collaboration between architect and builder."

The Penn Model Village development was also unique for Minneapolis in its layout. As American Builder stated in their feature article, "The development featured larger lots that were arranged in an irregular pattern by curving the central street [Oliver Avenue South] through the two blocks and eliminating alleys." At the south end of the development, Oliver Avenue was designed to split into two roads. This split in the road created a small triangular-shaped park fronting 58<sup>th</sup> Street West. The developer donated the pocket park to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board in 1950. Penn Model Village Triangle Park is still part of the park system.

The housing development received a lot of local interest from potential home buyers. According to American Builder magazine, more than 30,000 people came to look at the houses during the public exhibition. A brochure encouraging prospective home buyers to view the housing development stated:

*"You've got a date with a Dream Home some sunny Spring or Summer day at Penn Model Village."....The things you'll see will help you plan your own new home. Plans for all these delightful new homes are available at low cost through the architects and their associates."*

It is unknown at this time, how many homes throughout Minneapolis were built based on one of the 13 different Penn Model Village housing designs.

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

The design of the house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South was done by Dale McEnary and Edwin Krafft, who could likely be considered master architects. However, the house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South does not exemplify their work. Dale McEnary and Edwin Krafft formed their partnership in 1934. Their pre-World War II practice concentrated on prestigious residences and culminated in 1941 in the design for the modern Farmers and Mechanics Savings Bank in Minneapolis (88 6<sup>th</sup> Street South), which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. After the war, the firm diversified into all types of architecture, concentrating on the design of traditional churches but also encompassing factories, retail stores, warehouses, apartment buildings, parking ramps, theaters, and schools (source: Northwest Architectural Archives website). They also designed the 1961 Central Library that was demolished in 2002 to clear land for the current Central Library.

The James Leck Company was the contractor that built the house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South. James Leck was a prolific and significant builder in Minneapolis, who was also recognized nationally for his great work as a builder. Leck's local work includes the University of Minnesota Memorial Stadium (1924-1981), the Northland Greyhound Bus Terminal (currently First Avenue Night Club), the Hardware Mutual Insurance Company Building at 2344 Nicollet Avenue (currently Waldorf School), and the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway Company Main Office (converted into the Franklin Avenue condominiums in 2004) at 111 Franklin Avenue. The Franklin Avenue condominiums are within the Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District. Outside of Minnesota, Leck's work includes the University of Michigan and Notre Dame's football stadiums, and the U.S. Post Office in Spokane, Washington, which is a Spokane local landmark. The house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South does not exemplify James Leck's work compared to the aforementioned examples. Better examples of Mr. Leck's work in Minneapolis still remain

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

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

**E. UNSAFE OR DANGEROUS CONDITION**

The applicant does not state that the property is in an unsafe and dangerous condition. Mr. Nicholson, the builder of the new house, however, does state that the existing house is in disrepair, with numerous poorly designed, and crafted additions having been added to the home over the years (see integrity analysis for more details).

**F. REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO DEMOLITION**

A rehabilitation of the property would be an alternative to the proposed demolition. However, the applicant states “It is not economically feasible for any respectable remodeler to take the time to calculate the costs of remodeling the existing house. Such an exercise would require a design for starters, since the home as oddly rearranged as it is, would need to be completely reconfigured in any renovation.”

**G. 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 5701 Oliver Avenue South has been compromised with the loss of original design, materials, and workmanship.

*Location:* The single-family house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South retains its integrity of location. The house was built in 1946 at its current location.

*Design:* Although the house has maintained a flat roof, the design of the house has changed substantially since it was originally built. In 1949, a 12 foot by 14 foot rear porch was added (B305072). In 1957, a 27 foot by 15 foot by 8 foot rear addition was added (B357194), and in 1959, a 26 foot by 24 foot by 8 foot recreational room addition was added (B367455). The original house, which was 63 feet wide by 20 feet deep, is now 90 feet wide and approximately 27 feet deep. The home has also been modified by other alterations. In 1986, a building permit was issued to ‘renovate the entire structure’ including the siding (B521265). Furthermore, the original u-shaped floor plan, siding, window and door openings, and prominent chimney do not remain.

*Setting:* The setting of 5701 Oliver Avenue South remains intact. All of the houses built as part of the housing development are extant. The 2011 reconnaissance survey identified 27 of 30 houses within the development as contributing to the potential historic district, including the subject property.

*Materials:* The materials of the single-family house have been compromised. The original chimney, siding, windows, and doors have either been replaced or no longer remain.

*Workmanship:* The house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South does not retain the integrity of the original workmanship. As previously stated most of the original exterior elements have been removed or replaced. This includes the original siding, windows, doors, and chimney.

*Feeling:* The property retains its integrity of feeling with the historic context of the neighboring houses from the same era. Even though the house has had substantial alterations, it does not feel out of character with the other houses within the Penn Village Model Addition.

*Association:* The subject building retains sufficient residential context of the same vintage to maintain its integrity of association.

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

The Hennepin County Property Information webpage shows that the property was sold in April 2012 for \$213,500. The estimated market value of the building and land in 2013 was \$205,000, \$73,500 for the building and \$131,500 for the land. The valuation of the building dropped significantly from 2012, when it was valued at \$117,500 in 2012 (total valuation of building and land in 2012 was \$249,000) and \$141,000 in 2011 (total valuation of building and land in 2011 was \$272,500).

## **I. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

## **J. FINDINGS**

1. In 2011, a reconnaissance level survey was completed of the Windom, Kenny, and Armatage neighborhoods and identified the Penn Model Village as a potential historic district that may be eligible for local designation. The property at 5701 Oliver Avenue South was identified as a contributing resource to the Penn Model Village Addition Potential Residential Historic District. It is a one story, flat roof house with an attached garage built in 1946.
2. The survey recommended that the Penn Model Village Addition Potential Residential Historic District was significant under Criterion 1 (History) and Criterion 4 (Architecture). It also noted that it may be eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A (Community Planning and Development) and Criterion C (Architecture).
3. There are 30 structures that are part of the proposed Penn Model Village Addition Potential Residential Historic District; 27 of the structures were identified as contributing structures to the district, including the subject property at 5701 Oliver Avenue South. The subject property was not identified as one of the three contemporary-style houses that stand out among the minimal traditional and ranch-style houses. Those properties are located at 5741 Oliver Avenue South, 5701 Penn Avenue South, and 5729 Penn Avenue South.
4. The property at 5701 Oliver Avenue South may be associated with a time period that exemplifies a broad pattern of cultural and social history. The 30 houses in the Penn Model Village Addition, including the subject property, were an early part of the City of Minneapolis post-World War II housing boom; all the homes being built between 1946 and 1947. The housing development received national recognition for being a well-designed urban development. The Penn Model

Village development was also unique for Minneapolis in its layout. The two-city block development featured a curvilinear Oliver Avenue that split into two roads at the south end of the development.

5. The building at 5701 Oliver Avenue South did embody the distinctive characteristics of an early example of a one-story, mid-century modern house in Minneapolis. However, additions and alterations comprised its original architectural integrity. The changes include three building additions that have compromised its original layout. In addition, alterations have replaced the original siding, window openings, windows, and exterior doors; the chimney, which projected from the roof at around the center of the house was removed.
6. The Penn Model Village housing development may exemplify a development pattern distinguished by uniqueness and quality of design. The Penn Model Village housing development received national recognition by American Builder and American Home magazines for its community planning and for being a quality housing development. In addition, the housing development is unique in that it was built with a curvilinear street that created varying shaped lots and parkland for those living in the Penn Model Village and surrounding area to enjoy. The amount the Penn Model Village housing plans were used by other developers and home owners throughout Minneapolis is unknown.
7. The property may have exemplified the work of a master builder and architect. However, additions and alterations have compromised its architectural integrity. The house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South was designed by Dale McEnary and Edwin Krafft, and built by James Leck. Both the architects and the builder could be considered masters in their profession that completed significant works in the City of Minneapolis.
8. The integrity of the house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South has been compromised with the loss of original design, materials, and workmanship.
9. The applicant does not state that the property is in an unsafe and dangerous condition, and a rehabilitation of the property would be an alternative to the proposed demolition. However, the applicant states “It is not economically feasible for any respectable remodeler to take the time to calculate the costs of remodeling the existing house. Such an exercise would require a design for starters, since the home as oddly rearranged as it is, would need to be completely reconfigured in any renovation.”
10. The Hennepin County Property Information webpage shows that the property was sold in April 2012 for \$213,500. The estimated market value of the building and land in 2013 was \$205,000, \$73,500 for the building and \$131,500 for the land. The valuation of the building dropped significantly from 2012, when it was valued at \$117,500 in 2012 (total valuation of building and land in 2012 was \$249,000) and \$141,000 in 2011 (total valuation of building and land in 2011 was \$272,500).
11. The applicant, Quartersawn Design Build, is proposing to demolish the house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South and build a new two-story house with a flat roof.

#### **D. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt the above findings and **approve** the demolition of the house at 5701 Oliver Avenue South.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Property owner statement
- Letter stating reasons for demolition
- Notification to the neighborhood and council member
- Zoning map and oblique aerials of Penn Model Village Potential Residential Historic District
- 2011 reconnaissance survey map of Windom, Kenny, and Armatage neighborhoods
- 2011 reconnaissance survey narrative and map of Penn Model Village Potential Residential Historic District
- Advertisement for the Penn Model Village and close up view of 5701 Oliver Avenue South front elevation and floor plan
- American Builder magazine article, September 1948 and American Home magazine article, June 1949
- 5701 Oliver Avenue elevation comparison, design and today, provided by applicant and CPED
- 1952 Sanborn map of Penn Model Village Potential Residential Historic District
- Images of 5701 Oliver Avenue South
- Existing survey
- Plan set for new construction: site plan, floor plans, elevations, section