

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

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FILE NAME: 1626 East Lake Street

DATE OF APPLICATION: May 15, 2007

APPLICANT: City of Minneapolis, Department of Regulatory Services, Problem Properties Unit

DATE OF HEARING: July 10, 2007

HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Gustavus II Adolphus Hall / Historic Resource

CATEGORY: Historic Resource

CLASSIFICATION: Designation Study

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Brian Schaffer

DATE: July 2, 2007

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**A. BACKGROUND:**

On August 3, 2006, following nearly a year of public meetings regarding the Gustavus II Adolphus Hall, the Public Safety and Regulatory Services subcommittee of the City Council (PS & RS) reviewed a recommendation by the Regulatory Services Department to demolish the building and recommended approval of the demolition. On August 4, 2006 the City Council adopted the recommendation of PS & RS to demolish 1626 East Lake Street.

In its regularly scheduled hearing on January 30, 2007, the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) directed staff to conduct a designation study of the Gustavus II Adolphus Hall, located at 1626 East Lake Street. The purpose of the study was to determine the historic significance of the structure and to develop a mitigation plan if the building was to be demolished. The consulting firm of Mead & Hunt was hired by CPED-Planning to conduct the designation study. (see attachment 1). This staff report is based on the research and analysis performed by Mead & Hunt.

Since the January 30, 2007 HPC meeting CPED-Planning staff has not had contact with the owner, Floyd Olson, or anyone on his behalf. However, the owner provided access to the property to the consultant team from Mead & Hunt. Tom Deegan, Manager of the Problem Properties Unit, has had one conversation with the Mr. Olson in this time. In that conversation, Mr. Olson informed Mr. Deegan that they intended to rehabilitate the structure. To date, there has not been a building application made to the city to perform any work to the structure.

On May 7, 2007 the property was foreclosed on and acquired through a sheriff's sale by Chris Rydrych. The six month redemption period expires on November 7, 2007, after which the property could be turned over to Mr. Rydrych.

**B. DESCRIPTION**

The following is based on the *Gustavus II Adolphus Assessment* prepared by Mead & Hunt and submitted to CPED Planning on June 4, 2007.

## *The Gustavus II Adolphus Society*

Between 1880 and 1920 Swedish immigrants migrated towards specific neighborhoods in Minneapolis. This concentration of immigrants allowed for immigrants to conduct business in their native language and maintain many of the cultural traditions from their homeland. These concentrations of immigrants generated a variety of fraternal cultural organizations. Finnish-American scholar Micheal Karni describes the role of many fraternal organizations:

Their basic function was to provide a measure of security in case of sickness and above all at the time of death...[but] the mission of the fraternal aid society- to provide 'for mutual moral and material assistance' – took it far beyond a simple economic function. It assumed a vital role in the new ethnic communities. Along with the church and the newspaper, it served to create and sustain group identity and cohesion"<sup>1</sup>

The Gustavus II Adolphus Society was one of the organizations to develop out of the concentration of Swedish immigrants. The Gustavus II Adolphus Society was formed in 1886 and provided death and disability benefits to members as well as opportunities for entertainment, discussion, and physical exercise.

The society rented spaces and frequently changed their location for the first forty years of their existence. Meetings were held in the Norden Hall at 100 Washington Avenue South, The Snider Block on Hennepin Avenue, the Center Block on Nicollet, the Svea Music Room at 505 ½ Washington Avenue South and at the Svenska Broderna (Swedish Brotherhood) hall at the corner of Fourth Street and Eighth Avenue South. The society decided to construct their own building in 1924, nearly 38 years after the society was originally formed.

The Society reached its apex during the 1960s and then began a slow membership decline as members aged. In 1995 the society moved its meetings to the American Swedish Institute.

### *The Gustavus II Adolphus Society Hall.*

The Society received a building permit on February 9, 1924 to construct the two-story brick building. The structure was built with a rectangular plan and measures approximately 64 by 113 feet. The building rests atop a concrete foundation with a steel structural frame and double-wythe masonry walls consisting of brick veneer on the exterior and plastered key tile on the interior. The second story floor system consists of deep joists spaced twelve inches on center. The roof was supported by a series of steel trusses designed to provide a clear span over the meeting space and dance floor.<sup>2</sup>

The principal façade was organized into three bays separated by brick pilasters. The structure had curvilinear parapets, brick spandrel panels, and Bedford limestone details. Fenestration included arched window openings on the upper level and plate glass storefronts on the lower level. Stone cartouches on the pilasters between the arched second story windows read “E”, “J”, “B,” and “F,” which stand for the Society’s motto: “Equality, Justice, Brotherhood, Forward.”<sup>3</sup> A curved, cast-iron canopy centered in the principal façade at street level invited passerby to mound the steps to the upstairs hall. A wide stone plaque above the entrance read “Gustavus II Adolphus 1924”

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<sup>1</sup> Micheal G. Karni, “Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations: An Introduction,” in *Records of Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations in the United States: Essays and Inventories*, St. Paul, MN: Immigration History Research Center, 1981, 3

<sup>2</sup> *Gustavus II Adolphus Assessment* prepared by Mead & Hunt and submitted to CPED Planning on June 4, 2007

<sup>3</sup> “The Gustavus II Adolphus Society” [Website] <http://www.pihl.us/TheGustavusIIAdolphusSociety-dot-org/history.htm>

The building's interior spaces were similar to those found in other fraternal halls from the early twentieth century. It is designed with a large meeting space and dance floor on the upper level and retail spaces on the first level. Six retail spaces on the lower level provided a revenue stream that subsidized the Society's activities.

According to Society Secretary Don Lisell, the new building was intended "to demonstrate that Swedes were substantial citizens." The organization, he said, "wanted to build something of quality for the city of Minneapolis." The new building represented a milestone in the evolution of the Society. The organization that had been established nearly four decades earlier to serve immigrants had matured into a social and cultural society providing entertainment for members. The interior layout clearly reflected this new purpose.<sup>4</sup> According to Lisell, the upper level originally included a large assembly area, an elevated stage, wood dance floor, a lounge area with a bar, a secondary meeting room dubbed "the little hall", restrooms and a coat room. In 1956 a two-story addition was attached to the northwest corner of the building, creating space for an institutional kitchen and a new meeting area on the upper level, as well as retail space on the lower level. The Society conducted regular meetings and various social activities at the building until 1995, when it moved its meetings to the American Swedish Institute.

In 1930, Inez Lindquist, a millner, operated out of one of the retail spaces on the first floor, and Joseph W. Grossman sold furniture from another (Minneapolis Directory Company 1930). More recently the building has been home to numerous businesses including: Apocalipsis, Goldie's Soul and Creole Restaurant, Gus Lucky's Art Café, John's New and Used Furniture, Rendezvous Ballroom, Sallie's Soul and Creole and Baraka Rugs.

On January 16, 2004, a fire broke out on the upper level of the Hall causing significant damage to the upper level assembly area. The building has remained roofless and exposed to the weather since then, and has sustained further damage as a result. (See attachment 4)

### **C. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The research performed by Mead & Hunt and CPED-Planning staff indicates that the Hall was found to possess historical significance for its association with the following two criteria for local designation.

- (1) The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history.
- (4) The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction.

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

The following is an excerpt from the *Gustavus II Adolphus Assessment* prepared by Mead & Hunt and submitted to CPED Planning on June 4, 2007

The Society is a small, independent ethnic organization initially formed to provide social and financial support to new Swedish immigrants, and to help them negotiate the challenges of entering into a foreign culture. The organization was rich in enthusiasm, but poor in finances for several decades following its establishment in 1886. As a result it held its meetings in borrowed spaces throughout the city. Although the group aspired to acquire its own building, it was not

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<sup>4</sup> *Gustavus II Adolphus Assessment* prepared by Mead & Hunt and submitted to CPED Planning on June 4, 2007

able to accomplish this goal for nearly forty years. During its existence, the organization has intentionally remained small and somewhat insular, limiting its membership to 500 men, and steadfastly refusing to merge with larger local or national Swedish-American cultural groups. Consequently, the impact of the Society on the city's social and cultural life has been limited.

By the time the hall was built in 1924, the organization's original function had evolved. The Society was no longer an assembly of new immigrants, but had become a mature organization of second generation Swedes. Unlike facilities such as Dania Hall, Norden Hall, and Svea Hall, that had served other early ethnic groups in the city, the Hall functioned less as a port of entry or settlement house than as a venue for social events and cultural celebrations. As such, the Hall reflects the Society members' successful assimilation into Minneapolis society, their prosperity, and status as solid citizens and not the Society's involvement with the settlement of Minneapolis by a new immigrant population.

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

The layout and design of fraternal halls are reflective of the organizations they housed. The activities of fraternal organizations were intended for members and not for the general public. Accordingly, the spaces where these activities occurred were placed on the upper level of the building, away from the general public. To subsidize the activities of the organization the lower level of the halls contained spaces for retail businesses. Fraternal halls typically appear like any other commercial structure, with the only evidence of the organization presence being a canopy or sign over a street level, member-only entrance to the assembly space above.

The Gustavus II Adolphus Hall embodies many characteristics that are common with the architecture of fraternal halls. The Hall's large second floor space was designed and engineered with steel trusses to provide an unobstructed assembly area to be used by the Society. The Hall also contained six retail spaces that subsidized the cost of the structure.

The presence of the organization was identified through decorative materials integrated into the structure such as the stone cartouches on the pilasters between the arched second story windows that read "E", "J", "B," and "F," and the stone plaque above the main entrance. The organization's presence was also identified through the cast iron canopy, the sheet metal sign and the Swedish lion grates on the double doors leading to the upper level hall space.

These elements provide important clues to the Hall's identity and purpose and distinguish the property from other commercial buildings, however, these elements alone do not reflect a distinctive architectural type or style, nor do they embody broad patterns of history. The mere presence of these individual components is not sufficient to convey the building's significance.

The feature of the building that exhibits the significance of the Hall was the second story assembly space. This assembly space was the epicenter of the fire that occurred on January 17, 2004. This portion of the building was completely destroyed by the fire. The character defining features such as the partition walls that defined the spaces on the upper level, the wood dance floor, the stage platform, and the surface finishes have all been destroyed by the fire. The exposure to the elements due to the lack of the roof has only exacerbated the damage caused by the fire. As a result, much of the internal fabric of the assembly hall/meeting area is absent and hence its significance. The nature and character of the spaces originally created and functioned to accommodate the Society's activities are no longer discernable.

## **D. FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE**

Although the Hall no longer warrants local designation, it is one of the few remaining small-scale commercial buildings remaining in this section of East Lake Street. The Hall is valuable to the historic context of the neighborhood and helps form the streetscape of East Lake Street. The study prepared by Mead & Hunt suggests that a reuse/feasibility study be conducted prior to any action to demolish the Hall. CPED-Planning highly encourages the rehabilitation of the structure, but is not in the position to coordinate a reuse study on behalf of the property owner.

The property is currently in a redemption period following a sheriff's sale of the property. The redemption period expires November 7, 2007. At that time the ownership of the building may change. Mr. Rydrych, who acquired the property in the sheriff's sale, has indicated to CPED-Planning staff that he intends to rehabilitate the structure if he gains control of the property after the redemption period expires.

### **Mitigation & Salvage Plan**

#### *Mitigation Plan*

In the event that the demolition of the Gustavus II Adolphus Society occurs, staff believes that a mitigation plan must be adopted to properly document the structure. Interpretative materials should contain

- The Mead & Hunt Report and attachments
- The original building permit and permit index cards
- A photographic survey of the interior and exterior the Hall.

Staff believes a photographic survey will sufficiently document the structure and that architectural drawings of the structure are not necessary. Staff is recommending a photographic survey for two reasons, the fire destroyed all but one of second floor interior walls and structural drawings would not be documenting the historic features of the building as they are not present. Secondly, the exterior elevations of the structure, the decorative architectural elements and the second floor assembly space and other rooms have been well documented through photographs taken as part of the research performed by Mead & Hunt. Interior photographs of the first level are necessary to have a complete survey document of the structure.

Copies of the approved mitigation document shall be submitted to the Heritage Preservation Commission, the Gustavus II Adolphus Society, the American Swedish Institute, the Minneapolis History Collection at the Minneapolis Public Library, the Hennepin County Historical Society, the Immigration History Collection at the University of Minnesota, and the Minnesota Historical Society.

A component of the Mitigation Plan is installing an interpretative history on or near the site. This could be done by installing a kiosk which would include information about the Gustavus II Adolphus Hall and the Society. The location of the kiosk could be on the sidewalk in the public right-of-way or on the site of the former building. If a new building is constructed on the site an informational plaque could be placed on the new building stating information about the Hall and the Society.

#### *Salvage Plan*

In addition to a mitigation plan, a salvage plan must be compiled, submitted and executed the event of demolition. While the individual architectural elements do not have enough significance on their own to justify designation of the property, they do convey the work of craftsman and are representative of the

Society and should be preserved. The Gustavus II Adolphus Society should be given first right of refusal for all architectural and decorative elements, followed by the American Swedish Institute, and the Hennepin County Historical Society with the intent they will be used for exhibit and education purposes.

In the event that none of the organizations can use these material for education or exhibit purposes, proceeds from the sale of these items to salvage contractors shall be passed on to the organization for educational purposes related to the Society and the building in accordance with all applicable ordinances and laws.

The situation in which the demolition of the Hall is proposed creates a unique circumstance for demanding the salvage of materials. The City of Minneapolis does not own the building, but has the legal right to demolish the structure through the City's 249 Ordinance. According to the city attorney's office a waiver will need to be signed by the property owner authorizing the items to be removed and given to another party prior to demolition.

## **E. APPLICABLE ORDINANCES:**

### ***Chapter 599. Heritage Preservation Regulation***

#### **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:

- (2) 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 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 commence a designation study of the property. (2001-Or-029, § 1, 3-2-01)

**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)

## **ARTICLE VIII. HISTORIC RESOURCES**

**599.440. Purpose.** This article is established to protect historic resources from destruction by providing the planning director with authority to identify historic resources and to review and approve or deny all proposed demolitions of property.

**599.450. Identification of historic resources** The planning director shall identify properties that are believed to meet at least one of the criteria for designation contained in section 599.210, but that have not been designated. In determining whether a property is an historic resource, the planning director may refer to building permits and other property information regularly maintained by the director of inspections, property inventories prepared by or directed to be prepared by the planning director, observations of the property by the planning director or any other source of information reasonably believed to be relevant to such determination.

**599.460. Review of demolition permits.** The planning director shall review all applications for a demolition permit to determine whether the affected property is an historic resource. If the planning director determines that the property is not an historic resource, the demolition permit shall be approved. If the planning director determines that the property is an historic resource, the demolition permit shall not be issued without review and approval by the commission following a public hearing as provided in section 599.170.

**599.470. Application for demolition of historic resource.** An application for demolition of an historic resource shall be filed on a form approved by the planning director and shall be accompanied by all required supporting information, as specified in section 599.160.

**599.480. Commission decision.** (a) *In general.* If the commission determines that the property is not an historic resource, the commission shall approve the demolition permit. If the commission determines that the property is an historic resource, the commission shall deny the demolition permit and direct the planning director to commence a designation study of the property, as provided in section 599.230, or shall approve the demolition permit as provided in this section.

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

(c) *Mitigation plan.* The commission may require a mitigation plan as a condition of any approval for demolition of an historic resource. Such plan may include the documentation of the property by measured drawings, photographic recording, historical research or other means appropriate to the significance of the property. Such plan also may include the salvage and preservation of specified building materials, architectural details, ornaments, fixtures and similar items for use in restoration elsewhere.

*The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (1990)*

### **Building Site**

#### **Recommended:**

-Identifying, retaining, and preserving buildings and their features as well as features of the site that are important in defining its overall historic character. Site features can include driveways, walkways, lighting, fencing, signs, benches, fountains, wells, terraces, canal systems, plants and trees, berms, and drainage or irrigation ditches; and archeological features that are important in defining the history of the site.

-Retaining the historic relationship between buildings, landscape features, and open space.

-Providing continued protection of masonry, wood, and architectural metals which comprise building and site features through appropriate surface treatments such as cleaning, rust removal, limited paint removal, and re-application of protective coating systems; and continued protection and maintenance of landscape features, including plant material.

#### **Not Recommended:**

-Removing or radically changing buildings and their features or site features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the building site so that, as a result, the character is diminished.

-Removing or relocating historic buildings or landscape features, thus destroying the historic relationship between buildings, landscape features, and open space.

-Removing a historic building in a complex, a building feature, or a site feature which is important in defining the historic character of the site.

### **F. FINDINGS:**

1. The Gustavus II Adolphus Hall was constructed forty years after the founding of the Gustavus II Adolphus Society. The building represents the successful assimilation of an immigrant group into the city and the Society's transformation into an entertainment and cultural role and not the Society's involvement with the settlement of Minneapolis by a new immigrant population.
2. The existence of the Gustavus II Adolphus Society is significant as part of the larger pattern of fraternal and cultural organizations in the cultural and social history of Minneapolis.
3. The impact of the Gustavus II Adolphus Society as an organization onto itself is limited in its significance due to the limited membership and the existence of numerous other organizations that were generally similar in nature.
4. The layout of the building, Gustavus II Adolphus Hall, was significant because it embodied the distinctive characteristics of the architecture of fraternal halls. In particular, the second floor assembly space was the essential character defining physical feature of the hall. The assembly hall was destroyed in the 2004 fire in the building. The damage from fire and exposure to the elements has diminished the historic integrity of the Hall.
5. The decorative elements of the external structure provide important clues to the Gustavus II Adolphus Hall's identity and purpose and they distinguish the property from other commercial buildings of the era. However, these elements alone do not reflect a distinctive architectural type or style, nor do they embody broad patterns of history. The mere presence of these individual



components is not sufficient to convey the significance of the building as whole or the significance of the Society as a fraternal organization.

#### **G. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt staff findings and **approve** the demolition of the historic resource, known as the Gustavus II Adolphus Hall, located at 1626 East Lake Street with the following conditions:

1. A mitigation plan shall be completed prior to HPC approval of a permit for the demolition of the structure. The mitigation plan shall include:
  - i. The Mead & Hunt report from June 4, 2007 cited in this report.
  - ii. A copy of the original building permits and building permit index cards.
  - iii. A photographic survey of the interior and exterior of including all decorative elements of the structure. The photographs shall be printed in black and white on photographic paper in accordance with the HABS guidelines of the National Park Service.

The mitigation plan shall be printed and bound Copies of the mitigation plans shall be provided to the following groups:

1. Heritage Preservation Commission,
  2. The Gustavus II Adolphus Society
  3. The American Swedish Institute
  4. The Minneapolis Public Library
  5. The Hennepin County Historical Society
  6. The Immigration History Collection at the University of Minnesota
  7. Minnesota Historical Society.
2. A salvage plan shall be completed prior to HPC approval of a permit for the demolition of the structure. The applicant for the wrecking permit shall provide interested parties with the option of salvaging items of the Gustavus II Adolphus Hall. The applicant shall provide written notification to Gustavus II Adolphus Society, the American Swedish Institute and the Hennepin County Historical Society no less than thirty days prior to the demolition to give the interested organizations a reasonable amount of time to coordinate the salvage of materials.
3. An interpretative plaque is installed on the site with information about he Gustavus II Adolphus Hall and the Society. The location of the kiosk shall be on the site of the former building. If a new building is constructed on the site an informational plaque shall be placed on the new building.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. *Gustavus II Adolphus Assessment* by Mead & Hunt; June 4, 2007
2. HPC staff report on Demolition of a Historic Resource from January 30, 2007
3. Email from Tom Deegan, Manager of the Problem Properties Unit, City of Minneapolis, Department of Regulatory Services
4. Photographs