

city of saint paul
planning commission resolution
file number 13-25
date May 17, 2013

Saint Paul Gas Light Company Island Station
HERITAGE PRESERVATION SITE DESIGNATION

WHEREAS, Chapter 73 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code directs that the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) shall recommend to the Mayor and City Council area and buildings which the HPC has reason to believe are eligible for designation as heritage preservation sites; and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Gas Light Company Island Station (Island Station) at 437 Shepard Road (380 Randolph Avenue, formerly 1 Ross Road; RA-SPC-3323) is located in Section 12 of Township 28N R23W, about two miles upstream from downtown Saint Paul. It is in Planning District 9, known as the West 7th/Fort Federation. The electric-steam plant was constructed in 1924 and designed by the firm of Toltz, King and Day (now TKDA). It occupies the foot of a peninsula on the west side of the Mississippi River about 100 feet from the shoreline. This peninsula was originally the 6-acre Ross Island and was reached by a wood bridge (razed). The west half of the island is now infilled in part by ashes sluiced out of the plant furnaces; and

WHEREAS, Island Station was first surveyed as part of the *Historic Sites Survey of St. Paul and Ramsey County* in 1983. An inventory form was filed and the building was listed as a site of "Major Significance." A National Register nomination form was completed in 1984 for the owner at the time and recommended that the property was eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) but did not evaluate it under specific criteria.

moved by Wencil
seconded by _____
in favor 14-0 with 1 abstention (Spaulding)
against _____

(cont.) In 1984 a memo from the State Historic Preservation Office found the property did not meet the NRHP criteria for eligibility. A 2003 Environmental Assessment Worksheet noted the Island Station was not eligible for the NRHP and two additional studies for nearby developments in 2004 and 2006 noted that Island Station had been recommended by the SHPO as not eligible for listing in the NRHP; and

WHEREAS, In early 2013, the Department of Parks and Recreation hired Landscape Research to complete an *Historic Significance Evaluation Study* (Study) for the St. Paul Gas Light Company Island Station pursuant to City of Saint Paul Ordinance No. 12-55. The Study further established the historical significance of the site and also examined the broader context of the Island Station as it relates to electric steam power generation in early Twentieth Century Saint Paul. On March 28, 2013, the HPC accepted the *Study* and voted to commence the designation process for the potential historic site. The State Historic Preservation Office has received the Study and the draft nomination form and is currently reviewing the proposal to locally designate the site; and

WHEREAS, the property contains the main plant, a screen house and a scale/car puller house and have a fair degree of integrity while the condition of the main plant structure is considered poor. There is also a gable-roofed metal garage of unknown construction date at the northwest of the plant. The Period of Significance for the site is from 1924 when the building(s) was constructed to 1973 when the site was decommissioned as a power plant; and

WHEREAS, as required by Legislative Code 73.05 (b), the Heritage Preservation Commission has requested that the Planning Commission review the proposed designation and comment on the following: 1) the relationship of the proposed designation to the Comprehensive Plan; 2) the effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding neighborhood; and 3) any other planning considerations, along with a recommendation for approval, rejection, or modification of the proposed designation; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Saint Paul Planning Commission finds the following regarding the proposed St. Paul Gas Light Company Island Station designation:

1. *Relationship of the proposed designation to the Comprehensive Plan.* The proposed designation of the St. Paul Gas Light Company Island Station is generally consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. The Historic Preservation Chapter recognizes that heritage preservation has been used effectively in Saint Paul as a tool for community development and revitalization (Strategies HP 3.11, 3.12, 4.3, 5.3 and 5.9). Specifically, the Land Use Chapter identifies this area as an opportunity site (LU1.54). The Land Use

Chapter further encourages supporting the protection and enhancement of the visibility of architectural landmarks (LU3.18).

Specifically, the Great River Passage Master Plan Comprehensive Plan Addendum (adopted by the City Council in 2013) provides a vision for preserving and redeveloping the Island Station to become a year-round destination with a focus on river-oriented arts and leisure activities. The Fort Road Development Plan Summary (adopted by the City Council in 2005) and the District 9 Area Plan Summary (adopted by the City in 2010) highlight strategies to preserve and reuse Island Station, if not for housing, then the building for park use.

2. *Effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding neighborhood.* Designation would have a positive effect on the surrounding area, both residential and commercial, and act as an anchor for redevelopment in the Ft. Road neighborhood and along this stretch of the Mississippi River. Having design review guidelines (Preservation Program) will help to ensure the site develops while maintaining its architectural and historical character over the long term. Designation, with the accompanying Preservation Program, would also provide clarity to future owners or developers in visioning how the building could be adaptively reused and incorporated within a larger development.
3. *Other planning considerations and recommendation for approval, rejection, or modification.* Retaining and reusing the current historic building provides a development opportunity with proximity to and good views of the river valley.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Planning Commission finds the designation of the Saint Paul Gas Light Company Island Station as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site, along with its Preservation Program, is consistent with the goals and strategies within Comprehensive Plan.