

**Central Corridor Historic Properties Initiative**

**Heritage Conservation on the Green Line**

**Historic Saint Paul**

**Phase One Final Report**

26 June 2013

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## I. INTRODUCTION & PROJECT GOALS

Historic Saint Paul's Central Corridor Historic Properties Initiative/Heritage Conservation on the Green Line project's purpose is to identify and promote redevelopment opportunities for historic properties along the Central Corridor. This first phase of the project has involved identifying properties, collecting information and data about them, and developing strategies for their preservation and reuse.

The project has been funded by grants from the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative and from and the Arts and Cultural Heritage fund created by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment and administered by the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society.

### Project Goals:

- Identify and promote redevelopment opportunities for historic properties along the Central Corridor—in order to:
  - Create unique destinations.
  - Add vibrancy to and enhance the overall character of the corridor.
  - Create collaboration among preservation and development interests.
  - Leverage economic development activity and affordable housing opportunities.
- Promote preservation and reuse of, and investment in, historic buildings (and avert their demolition)—as an effective component of community development (revitalization?), identity, and place-making in face of light rail development pressures and opportunities.
- Increase public awareness, interest, and support of historic resources as important community assets and effective development opportunities.
- Revitalize underutilized commercial properties that have historical, architectural, and cultural significance, demonstrating the connection between heritage preservation and sustainable development.

The original intent for the project's first phase was to develop A) marketing prospectuses for three to five targeted buildings and B) a public education campaign. We quickly realized, however, that developing prospectuses would not be effective or desirable, as we found that most of the buildings are not sitting vacant, awaiting new owners and uses, but have occupants and owners not interested in selling. It became clear that developing customized strategies, including technical, financial, and design tools and assistance, for a handful of focus buildings is the appropriate approach. (Only one of the nine focus buildings ultimately selected is for sale.)

## II. PROCESS

The project's process included these elements:

- Focus on buildings listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Their significance is already established/not in question and they are eligible for 20 percent state and 20 percent federal historic tax credits.
- Collect a wide range of data to understand property status, issues, and opportunities.
- Conduct an initial scan of the data in order to identify priority buildings.
- Meet with community stakeholders to gather input.
- Consider threats, opportunities, historic significance, utilization (e.g., underutilized, vacant), community interest and support, and other factors, to focus on a small number of buildings and develop strategies for their preservation and reuse/revitalization.

We started by creating a spreadsheet and collecting a wide range of data to understand and evaluate each building and site.

- The data includes status (vacant, occupied, underutilized, for sale, etc.), occupants & use, local & national historic designation status and eligibility, threats (e.g., vacant, underutilized, low building value, adjacent property for sale), owner & contact info, tax data (land and building valuations, tax and assessment amounts, taxes paid), zoning, building and lot info (e.g., size, stories, sale date/price, parking), historic info (architect, date, plans, use, significance), and notes.

We also gathered information from official Central Corridor historic property investigations and evaluations and from other sources, made site visits to and photographed many of the buildings, and compiled historic photographs.

As the data collection progressed, we held 17 meetings with stakeholders to gather input about the project, buildings, and issues:

- Brian McMahon, University United
- Gretchen Nicholls, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
- Amy Sparks, Saint Anthony Park Community Council
- Tim Griffin, Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation
- Amy Spong, Saint Paul PED/Heritage Preservation Commission
- Michael John Olson, Hamline Midway Coalition
- Noel Nix, aide to Councilmember Melvin Carter, Ward 1
- Councilmember Russ Stark and Samantha Henningson, Ward 4
- Beverly Hawkins, Brenda Bailey, and Craig Johnson, Model Cities

- Mike Temali, Neighborhood Development Center
- Land Use Committee, Saint Anthony Park Community Council
- Doug Gasek and Erin Hanafin Berg, Preservation Alliance of Minnesota
- Councilmember Dave Thune and Pat Lindgren, Ward 2
- Councilmember Melvin Carter, Ward 1
- Irna Landrum and Max Holdhusen, Summit-University Planning Council
- Veronica Burt, Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee

We also participated in two events/meetings organized by others:

- Frogtown Neighborhood Association and others re: Victoria Theater reuse
- AIA St. Paul's Unauthorized Design re: Macy's

As noted in the Introduction, it became clear, in doing the initial data scan and in the initial stakeholder meetings, that most of the buildings are not for sale and preparing prospectuses, as originally intended, was not what was needed. (Remember that only one of the nine focus buildings ultimately selected is for sale.) We discovered that developing customized strategies, including technical, financial, and design tools and assistance, for a handful of focus buildings is the appropriate approach.

As a result of the stakeholder meetings, we added many buildings and some districts to the spreadsheet and added some issues for consideration. The meetings also made clear the need for making connections to tools to support the work.

### Historic Properties Inventory

The spreadsheet, or Historic Properties Inventory, started with the historic districts and individual structures listed in Attachment A, Properties Determined Eligible for or Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NR), to the Metropolitan Council's 2009 Programmatic Agreement for the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Project. The five districts are:

- University-Raymond Commercial Historic District—a certified local district for which contributing buildings have been determined eligible for federal tax credits.
- Minnesota Transfer Railway Co. district (NR eligible)—the Minnesota Transfer Co. roundhouse building at 805 Cleveland Av. N. is counted in the inventory as a building rather than a district.
- Minnesota State Capitol Mall district—determined NR eligible.
- Saint Paul Urban Renewal district—the center of downtown toward the riverfront, determined NR eligible.
- Lowertown district—a designated federal and local district.

Also included in the initial inventory were the 14 individual buildings on University Avenue included in Attachment A (including the Minnesota Transfer Railway roundhouse).

We first expanded and eventually narrowed the list. Sixty-nine buildings were added to the inventory over the course of Phase One, resulting in a total of 83 structures. The additional buildings included:

- Buildings suggested during stakeholder meetings.
- Some individual buildings in the University-Raymond and Lowertown historic districts.
- Some additional downtown buildings, including 18 contributing buildings in the potential St. Paul Urban Renewal District (determined NR-eligible).
- Two buildings from the Metropolitan Council's *Construction Protection Plan for Historic Properties*.

Churches and most state-owned buildings were excluded. (The Metropolitan Council is having NR nominations prepared for two churches as part of the Programmatic Agreement: St. Louis King of France Church and Rectory, 506 Cedar Street in downtown, and Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church, 105 University Avenue West, just east of the Ford Building and northwest of the Capitol.)

Of the 83 buildings included in the inventory, 43 are on University Avenue, three are near University Avenue in the western part of the city, two are in the Capitol area (the Ford Building is also counted as being on University), and 36 are in downtown.

### Focus Buildings

From the Historic Properties Inventory, 12 buildings, all located on University Avenue, were identified as preliminary focus buildings, based on:

- Preservation and economic development threats and opportunities.
- Status with regard to occupancy/vacancy and utilization.
- Potential to improve the appearance and vitality of University Avenue as well as to increase awareness of the value of preserving and reusing historic buildings.
- Proximity to one another and potential to collectively enhance community development.
- Potential to house more-active uses contributing to the vitality of University Avenue.
- Historic significance and architectural character/aesthetic appeal.
- Potential for small to moderate improvements to have significant impacts on the buildings and their relationship to University Avenue.
- Other nearby developments and opportunities.

The 12 preliminary focus buildings (from west to east, with historic and common names, address, date built, and architect, plus building area, number of stories, and distance to LRT station) were:

- *Brown-Jaspers Store Fixtures Co./SOS Office Furniture building*, 2441 University Av. W., 1930, Clarence Johnston (24,000 sf, 3 st., 2 blocks to Raymond Station).
- *Twin City Commercial Bulletin/Minneapolis-Saint Paul building*, 2429 University Av. W., 1909, Bertrand & Chamberlain (15,200 sf, 2 st., 2 blocks to Raymond Station).
- *Red Wing Stoneware Co. Sales Office & Warehouse/Twin City Janitor Supply building*, 2345 University Av. W., 1930, Kenneth M. Fullerton (11,320 sf, 1 st., at Raymond Station).
- *Louis F. Dow Co./Dow building*, 2242 University Av. W., 1923, Toltz King & Day (82,160 sf, 3 st., 1 block to Raymond Station).
- *Wright, Barrett & Stillwell/Wright building*, 2233 University Av. W., 1912-13, J. Walter Stevens (72,224 sf, 3 st., 1 block to Raymond Station).
- *Griggs, Cooper & Co. Sanitary Food Manufacturing Plant/Griggs Midway building*, 1821 University Av. W. & 528-40 Fairview Av. N., 1911-25, Toltz King & Day (507,823 sf excluding out buildings, 3-4 st., closest point of complex is across street from Fairview Station—platform is ½ block further).
- *St. Paul Casket Co. Factory/Landfill Music & Book building*, 1222 University Av. W., 1922, Allen H. Stem (57,00 sf, 4 st., 2 blocks from center of both Hamline and Lexington stations—split-side platforms, building is at edge of 5 min./¼ mile walking radius from both stations).
- *Brioschi-Minuti Co. Building*, 908-10 University Av. W., 1922, Torello "T. J." Minuti, designer (8,160 sf, 2 st., at Victoria Station).
- *Victoria Theater*, 825 University Av. W., 1915, Franklin Ellerbe (5,505 sf, 2 st., at Victoria Station).
- *Rath, Mills & Bell Co./Ray-Bell Films building*, 823 University Av. W., 1915 with 1921 addition, Mark Fitzpatrick (9,462 sf, 2 st., at Victoria Station).
- *Minnesota Milk Co./Old Home Foods building*, 370-78 University Av. W., 1912 by Charles H. Berger & 1932 remodel by Charles Hausler (c. 30,000 sf, 2 st., at Western Station).
- *Ford Motor Co./Ford building*, 117 University Av. W., 1913, Ford supervisory architect John Graham and Kees & Colburn (58,891 sf, 3 st., at Rice Station).

Nine of these 12 buildings were selected as focus buildings—the first three were excluded. We developed customized preservation and revitalization strategies for the focus buildings and initiated conversations with some of the property owners.

The first three buildings listed above were not selected as focus buildings, based on their occupancy and other factors. They are located in the University-Raymond local historic district, which affords a measure of protection.

Eight of the nine focus buildings have been determined eligible for listing in the National Register or eligible for tax credits. The Dow and Wright buildings are contributing buildings in a certified local district and are, therefore, eligible for tax credits (but may not be individually NR-eligible). The Victoria Theater was determined not eligible but that was before significant information about the building's cultural significance was uncovered which led to its being locally designated in 2011. The theater's NR eligibility has not been reevaluated since.

As part of its obligation under the Programmatic Agreement, the Metropolitan Council last week hired a consultant to prepare, by August 2014, NR nominations for five of the focus buildings. The Met Council or the project developer will prepare a NR nomination for the Minnesota Milk Building (Part 1 tax credit application already approved by National Park Service). NR nominations are not being prepared for the Dow, Wright, and Victoria Theater buildings.

Of the nine focus buildings, all located on University Avenue:

- One is actually a huge complex of several buildings—the 1911-25 Griggs Midway Building.
- Four are large, three to four story buildings originally built as factories from 1912 to 1923 and ranging in size from 57,000 to 82,000 square feet (Dow, Wright, Casket, and Ford buildings).
- Three are small, two-story buildings of 5,000 to 10,000 square feet, built from 1915 to 1922 and located within a half-block of Victoria Street (Brioschi-Minuti, Victoria Theater, and Ray-Bell Films buildings).
- One—Minnesota Milk Building—is a medium-sized (approx. 30,000 sf) building, redevelopment of which is already planned.
- Four, coincidentally, are located along the western half of University Avenue—Highway 280 to Lexington Parkway, and five are on the eastern half of the avenue—Lexington Parkway to the Capitol. The buildings, or groups of buildings (two buildings at Hampden and three at Victoria), are rather evenly distributed along the avenue.
- Six are located *at* LRT stations, two (Dow and Wright) are one block from a station, and one (Casket) is two blocks from the center of two stations—and one block from the closest entry to the two stations.

The range of sizes and types of buildings can serve a variety of types of uses—from larger users, potentially, to smaller, community-oriented, businesses.

With regard to the nine focus buildings' occupancy/use status:

- The three westernmost ones are occupied and stable.
- Three are vacant—Ford, Victoria Theater, and Minnesota Milk buildings. (MN Milk rehabilitation project is planned/underway; Victoria Theater is the only one of the nine buildings for sale and negotiations are underway with a community organization for lease with option to buy.)
- Two are underutilized (Casket building is a record and book warehouse; first floor of Brioschi-Minuti has been vacant for approximately four years).
- One—Ray-Bell Films—had a long-vacant storefront until a few months ago. We are already working with the owner, tenant, and other partners to make significant improvements to the building's façade.

### For Sale or Vacant

Relatively few of the 83 buildings in the Historic Properties Inventory are for sale or vacant.

Only seven are for sale: Twin Cities Commercial Bulletin and Minnesota Chemical (both occupied), and Silgan, Midway National/American Bank, Whitaker Buick, 1745 University, and Victoria Theater (all vacant). An agreement to sell the Dayton's/Macy's building was reached last week but details have yet to be negotiated. Of these buildings, only Twin Cities Commercial Bulletin has been determined eligible for federal historic tax credits.

Eight buildings in the inventory are vacant, and two more have vacant first floors. In addition to the five vacant buildings listed in the preceding paragraph, the Ford, Minnesota Milk, and Dayton's/Macy's buildings are vacant. The Ford and Minnesota Milk buildings are NR-eligible and are focus buildings. The two buildings which lack first-floor tenants are the Brioschi-Minuti and Twin City Hardware and Heating Co. buildings. Of these vacant buildings, only the Brioschi-Minuti building has been determined NR-eligible.

### Public Education

Midway through the project, we developed a six-panel, tri-fold brochure, *Heritage Preservation on the Green Line*, that features 21 historic downtown and University Avenue buildings, plus existing and potential historic districts. Historic and contemporary photographs of many of the focus buildings are included. The brochure's purpose is to promote awareness of historic resources and opportunities in the Central Corridor generally and specifically with regard to the 12 preliminary focus buildings. The brochure summarizes and highlights these properties and includes a map.

### Property Owners

The final step in the project's first phase was to contact owners of some of the focus buildings, as appropriate, to discuss their buildings, potential strategies, and their interest in participating in the project's next phase—working with them to implement the preservation/revitalization strategies. The strategies were developed during the process of expanding, evaluating, and narrowing the inventory or list of buildings. The results:

- The owners of three buildings (Dow, Wright, and Brioschi-Minuti) and the manager of one building (Griggs Midway) are interested in working with Historic Saint Paul to explore and address issues and implement strategies. (The Dow and Wright buildings have overlapping ownership.)
- The owner of one building, the Casket building, has not responded to phone and email messages. He apparently receives numerous inquiries about this significant and sizeable building but rarely, if ever, responds.
- We are working with community partners on two adjacent buildings—the Victoria Theater and Ray-Bell Films buildings—but have not ourselves communicated with the property owners

directly. The partners have. We have met and worked with a community organization that is negotiating to lease/buy the theater. We have met with a community development organization that is working with the Ray-Bell owner and continue to work with that organization on an exterior rehabilitation project—including technical and financial assistance.

- We are monitoring the two final projects, and will provide assistance and support as necessary, but have not contacted the owners directly. Planning for the Minnesota Milk rehabilitation project is well underway. The State of Minnesota is well aware of preservation issues with regard to the Ford Building—letters were exchanged last year between several preservation organizations, including Historic Saint Paul, and the State. The Executive Secretary of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board has expressed support for having the Ford Building as one of this project's focus buildings.

### III. FINDINGS

- Preservation strategies customized for each historic building are necessary—to address their particular circumstances and opportunities.
- Private sector development activity is concentrated on the western part of University Avenue, from Prior Avenue to the city limit, and is likely to continue to be so. Several large development projects are planned for University Avenue between Hamline Avenue and Dale Street. These projects involve non-profit developers and public subsidies.
- The advent of light rail is causing property values along University Avenue to increase significantly. Using an income approach to determine assessed value can, in some instances, apportion most of a property's value to the land and very little to the building, making the properties more attractive for demolition and new development—or, less likely, reinvestment in the existing historic buildings.
- Parking is a critical issue for all buildings, uses, and businesses—and is related to the viability of historic buildings. Limited parking may significantly dampen the reuse potential of historic buildings—which often have little or no off-street parking. Property and business owners and realtors are extremely concerned about the lack of off-street and on-street parking along University Avenue. Several have commented that the city and others seem to be doing little or nothing to address the issue and that the lack of parking has prevented leasing of vacant spaces and the sale of buildings. The city's reducing the off-street parking requirement to zero has not eliminated the need for parking.
- It may seem, particularly to private property owners, that there are few if any tools and assistance available to support preservation and reuse of, and appropriate treatments to, historic buildings.
- A number of new development and redevelopment projects are planned for University Avenue, some of which are near or involve historic structures. These should be monitored for impacts and opportunities.
- University Avenue, because of its length and historic development, does not have a strong or cohesive historic character.
- With considerable new development along University Avenue, careful consideration should be given to new buildings that reflect this time, with high-quality design and materials, rather than imitating

historical architectural styles and diminishing the quality, integrity, diversity, and character of the avenue.

- Saint Anthony Park's Creative Enterprise Zone in the University-Raymond area is prospering and is very important to engaged community members and their vision for the community. They want the historic commercial and warehouse buildings that house many artists and other creative enterprises to remain as affordable, un-gentrified "working buildings" rather than have tenants displaced by expensive renovations aimed at new uses and users. The city's comprehensive plan was recently amended to address this set of issues.
- Contributing buildings in the University-Raymond local district have some level of protection against demolition but this protection cannot be counted on with absolute certainty.

#### IV. PROPOSED PRESERVATION & REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES

##### STRATEGIES FOR FOCUS BUILDINGS (and other buildings if/as appropriate)

###### General:

- Work with property and business owners and community stakeholders to develop and implement strategies.
- Focus on small to moderate-sized improvements that will significantly improve both the appearance and historic character of buildings and their contribution to making University Avenue a vital, attractive, and successful artery.
- Prepare before and after images/renderings, as appropriate, to help people visualize the projects.
- Monitor business and development projects along the avenue to take advantage of preservation and reuse opportunities (e.g., American Bank; proposed replacement of Fire Station No. 20).

###### Develop a complement of financial and technical resources:

- Promote use of city and other financial and technical assistance programs for business and property owners and assist them as necessary.
- Promote use of state and federal historic tax credits as appropriate.
- Consider STAR grants.
- Promote adoption of these policies from Saint Paul's *Historic Preservation Plan*, adopted 2009 as part of the city's comprehensive plan, re: financial incentives:
  - Policy 5.14: Pursue the ability to tax designated properties based on their current use rather than their "highest and best" use.
  - Policy 5.15: Explore the development of a City property tax abatement program to encourage the rehabilitation of historic resources designated as City heritage preservation sites.

- Explore the possibility of putting together a “small deal” fund for housing.
- Consider preservation/facade easements (exterior and interior).
- Consider transfer of development rights.
- Develop/provide low-cost or free design and technical preservation advice and assistance.
- Explore parking issues, strategies, and both general and specific solutions.

Public education and awareness:

- Promote sustainability of preservation and its effectiveness as a community economic development and place-making approach.
- Implement public education initiatives such as:
  - Talks/presentations/discussions about the history and future of University Avenue.
  - Printed and/or download-able information and/or podcasts about the history and architecture of University Avenue—for LRT riders and others (partner with PAM).
  - University-Raymond district walking tour
- Partner with the Metropolitan Council on public education efforts.
- Work with a range of stakeholders to develop an effective marketing and branding campaign for University Avenue to capitalize on its diversity, resources, and historic character.

Preservation:

- Pursue local historic designation and National Register listing of numerous buildings and districts.
- Encourage the city of Saint Paul to prioritize and commission historic context studies—particularly an industrial context with which to evaluate significance and create more funding opportunities for larger complexes such as the American Can Co./Silgan property.
- Apply for Minnesota Historical & Cultural Heritage Grants for a) historic properties, b) National Register and local designation, c) historic preservation planning, and d) historic preservation survey, inventory and evaluation.

More specifically targeted strategies:

- Explore and promote Main Street strategies for Snelling Avenue between University Avenue and Hamline University to promote traditional neighborhood/pedestrian-oriented development.
- Work with the Creative Enterprise Zone initiative to ensure access to affordable work space for creative enterprises.
- Historic Saint Paul to work with Neighborhood Development Center to develop the next phase of this project—particularly but not exclusively with regard to Casket building and the three Victoria Station buildings. Also consider other potential partners such as U7.

STRATEGIES FOR INDIVIDUAL FOCUS BUILDINGS:

1. **Dow Building**, 2242 University Av. W.: This three-story, lower-rent, “working” building is occupied by artists, artisans, and a few retail businesses.

- Remove concrete block and slider windows from infilled original window openings on the University Avenue elevation and install new windows compatible with the materials, appearance, and character of the original steel window sash. Original windows remain on the east and south/rear elevations but not on the west and north/University elevations.

The Dow Building is a focus building because of its historic significance, architectural detail, and prominence—and the dramatic impact that replacing non-original windows on the University elevation would have on the visual and historic character of the building and the avenue. The building owner is willing to explore this possibility but is concerned about economic feasibility, particularly with regard to energy costs and the extent to which any rent increases would cover the costs.

2. **Wright Building**, 2233 University Av. W.: This 3.5-story building was renovated for office use in 1987 and contains lower-rent office spaces. The Wright and Dow buildings have the same owners, who believe they are currently at their highest and best uses and do not foresee undertaking expensive, extensive renovations for new users.

- Redo tuckpointing of brick spandrels between the two upper floors of the Wright Building’s University Avenue elevation. It does not match the color or appearance of pointing on the rest of the building and, most importantly, apparently is too hard and will cause spalling, cracking, and failure of surrounding brick. Test existing mortar.

The Wright Building is a focus building because of the significant damage that might be caused by mortar that is too hard in a small, highly visible location, the solution to which is relatively simple.

3. **Griggs Midway Building**, 1821 University Av. W.: This large office complex consists of two main buildings, and two smaller buildings on Wheeler Street North. The Fairview Avenue building was renovated in 2007. One of the smaller buildings is a power plant, half of which is vacant, leasable space, and the other building is occupied by the Midway YMCA Youth Development Center. Windows on most of the main buildings have been replaced.

- Remove glass block and infill windows from the University Avenue elevation, and possibly the east and west elevations, of the 1821 University Avenue building and replace with new windows, filling original openings, that are compatible with the materials, character, and appearance of the original windows.
- If possible, coordinate effort and timing with implementation of plans for a new Dickerman Park located, in part, between University Avenue and the Griggs Midway Building (adjacent to LRT station). Work with building management to relocate existing parking in this area elsewhere—perhaps to north side of complex (structured parking?).
- Consider removing infilled brick and block from the power plant’s original window openings, and installing new windows that are compatible with the materials, character, and appearance of

the original windows—at least in the leasable portion of the building, to create an attractive, unique, and spectacular space.

The Griggs Midway Building is a focus building because of its historic significance and very prominent, visible location—adjacent to the Fairview Station, and the significant impact the moderately-scaled project of replacing windows on one elevation of a large complex, and relocating parking, would have on its historic and visual character and its relationship to University Avenue.

4. **St. Paul Casket Co. Building**, 1222 University Av. W.: This prominent, four-story, industrial building is significantly underutilized. It is used primarily for storage of books and records and is owned by the owner of the Applause and Cheapo music stores. There is a small retail store at the rear of the building—open only 9-5:30 M-F.
  - Improve the building’s appearance and relationship to University Avenue by repairing windows and opening up the painted-over first-floor windows on the University Avenue elevation, removing the tall chain-link fencing in front of the building, and locating one or more active uses at the front of the ground floor, perhaps including the book and music store currently at the rear of the building.
  - Discuss with the building owner the building’s long-term future and potential (new home of the Minnesota Museum of American Art perhaps?).

The Casket Co. building is a focus building because of its historic significance, prominence, underutilization, great unrealized potential, and the possibility of relatively small, short-term improvements to have significant impacts on the building’s appearance, historic character, and relationship to University Avenue.

The following three buildings—the Brioschi-Minuti, Victoria Theater, and Ray-Bell Films buildings—present a very special opportunity. Located on the eastern part of the avenue, they are grouped within one-half block of Victoria Street and face the Victoria Street light rail station. The theater and film buildings are adjoining and are adjacent to a large redevelopment project planned by Model Cities. Each of the three buildings is historically significant and architecturally distinguished—and has unrealized potential. The first-floor commercial space of the Brioschi-Minuti Building is vacant. The Victoria Theater is a registered vacant building. The Frogtown Neighborhood Association, with local artistic partners, is seriously exploring acquiring the building for a community owned and operated arts performance and education center. The Ray-Bell Films Building has a new restaurant tenant and a new orange coat of paint. The front façade could be much improved by small and moderately scaled improvements including new windows and doors, new signage, and either new paint that differentiates the brick from the stucco or chemically removing the paint altogether. As noted previously, we have already been working with community partners on the two adjacent film-related buildings.

5. **Brioschi-Minuti Building**, 908-10 University Av. W.: The first floor contains the remains of a uniform store that ceased operation approximately four years ago. The second floor has one apartment which is occupied. (The building’s Certificate of Occupancy expired 2009.) The one-story building adjoining to the west is long-vacant and for sale. The building owner is committed to keeping the building—in good condition—but feels completely stymied by the lack of significant off-street

parking. He says a number of potential commercial tenants have lost interest due to the small number of parking spaces at the back of the building. The owner is interested in buying the vacant building next door for parking and would even consider demolishing only the rear part of that building.

- Encourage and assist the owner to find a commercial tenant and make any necessary repairs and maintenance to the building.
  - Help the owner find a solution to the parking problem—possibly shared parking.
  - Ideally, replace second-story replacement windows on the University Avenue elevation with new windows compatible with the appearance, material, and character of the original, industrial steel sash, and consider improvements to first-story openings as well.
  - Explore the possibility of the Brioschi-Minuti successor firm playing some role in the building's revitalization. The Minuti-Ogle Company is a wall and ceiling contractor located in Oakdale.
6. **Victoria Theater**, 825 University Av. W.: The theater was locally designated as a heritage preservation site 4.13.2011 and has been a registered vacant building since April 2009. Community members and organizations are very keen to have the theater preserved and reused.
- Work with the building owner, realtor, Frogtown Neighborhood Association (District 7), Mike Temali/NDC, Model Cities, Greater Frogtown CDC, the Councilmember, Aurora St. Anthony NDC, and others to find a new, viable use for the building.
  - Explore off-street parking options for this building.
7. **Ray-Bell Films Building**, 823 University Av. W.: The building has one second-floor apartment and a wholesale bakery at the rear operated by the building owner. An Ethiopian restaurant just opened in the long-vacant space at the front of the building. This is a small building with appealing architectural character that is not at all apparent in its current guise. Some relatively small fixes and alterations would significantly improve the appearance and integrity of the building.
- Work with the building and restaurant owners, and NDC/U7, to improve the building's appearance. Issues include stucco and brick colors/treatment, signage type and locations, door and window replacement on the front elevation, second-story window hood, tuckpointing and masonry repair, and parking lot screening. (See attachment for details)
8. **Minnesota Milk Co. Building**, 370-78 University Av. W.: The planned redevelopment of this entire block at the southeast corner of University and Western avenues includes new residential and commercial buildings and rehabilitation of the historic dairy building for commercial uses. Project planning is well underway.
- Continue to monitor the project and provide ongoing support and assistance as needed.
9. **Ford Building**, 117 University Av. W.: This three-story structure, built as a Ford assembly plant in 1913, is vacant and owned by the State of Minnesota. The rear and side walls are covered with chain-link fencing and, on the front elevation, all the brick and terra cotta above the third-story windows have been removed. Aside from a church also fronting on University (for which the Met Council is having a NR nomination prepared), and its parking lot, the remainder of the block consists

of surface parking lots owned by the State. The State does not seem to be interested in doing anything with the Ford Building.

The state legislature recently approved funding for a large parking ramp that would occupy the northern half of this block and wrap around to the University/Rice corner. It is unlikely, but possible, that the ramp project will include demolition of the Ford Building. Plans have not yet been developed.

- Monitor the planned parking ramp project in order to minimize adverse impacts to the Ford Building—and encourage positive outcomes.
- Work with Brian McMahon, state legislators who represent the area, Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, Ramsey County Historical Society, the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, and others to develop and implement strategies for reuse of the building. One idea is to use it as a public service center for state agencies.

## VII. NEXT STEPS

- Secure funding for this project's next phase—to work with property and business owners and community stakeholders to refine and implement the reinvestment and building improvement strategies outlined above—particularly for the nine focus buildings.
- Consider how to address one and two story buildings that don't meet the formal threshold for historical significance but contribute to the historic character of University Avenue.
- Consider how to address a number of smaller, Art Deco style buildings along the avenue.
- Consider broadening the project's focus to include historic industrial buildings in the Midway/University Avenue corridor.