



Legislation Text

File #: Ord. 1027, **Version:** 1

Meeting Date: September 7, 2021

To: City Council
Ben Martig, City Administrator

From: Mikayla Schmidt, City Planner

Consider Second Reading of the Ordinance on the Northfield Depot Reassessed as a Local Heritage Preservation Site.

Action Requested:

The City Council approves the second reading of the ordinance designating the Chicago Milwaukee St. Paul & Pacific Railway Depot (Northfield Depot) as a local Heritage Preservation Site.

Summary Report:

The city may, from time to time, determine that certain places, buildings, structures, properties, or district areas or properties within the community are of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, landscaping, and culture and those locations should be subject to additional review as it relates to the Land Development Code (LDC).

The property owner, Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC), Planning Commission (PC), or City Council, may initiate an application for Heritage Preservation Site Designation. In this case, Save the Northfield Depot initiated the application who owns the property.

The building, originally constructed in 1888, is being reassessed as a local Heritage Preservation Site. In 1980, the HPC and Council designated the Northfield Depot as a local heritage site. Moving the Depot building triggered the need to reassess the buildings designation as a local heritage site.

Process:

The Heritage Preservation Commission and Planning Commission shall review the application for designation in accordance with the Type 4 review procedure as established in Section 8.4.7, Type 4 Review Procedure (Planning Commission or Heritage Preservation Commission Recommendation and City Council Decision) and shall make a recommendation to the City Council. Section (I) Action by the Heritage Preservation Commission references 8.5.7, Heritage Preservation Site Designation, which modifies Section 8.4.7, Type 4 Review Procedure.

Both the HPC and PC, approved motions with a recommendation to City Council of support for the Northfield Depot to continue as a local heritage preservation site.

In addition to the approval criteria as established in Section 8.5.7(C), the HPC may also refer to the applicable Secretary of the Interior standards, and current procedure as recommended by the state historic preservation

office when determining if a site should qualify as a Heritage Preservation Site.

After the HPC has made a recommendation, the PC shall review the application for designation in accordance with the Type 4 review procedure as established in Section 8.4.7, Type 4 Review Procedure (Planning Commission or Heritage Preservation Commission Recommendation and City Council Decision) and shall make a recommendation to the City Council.

Communication with Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office:

Prior to designating a proposed Heritage Preservation Site, the HPC shall forward information concerning the proposed designation to the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (MN SHPO) for comment within 60 days. MN SHPO was notified of the review of the Northfield Depot as a reassessed Heritage Preservation Site on January 4, 2021.

The MN SHPO provided a response letter on February 26, 2021 and based on the reasoning in their letter, they "...concur that the Chicago Milwaukee St. Paul & Pacific Railway Depot is a good candidate for local designation under Criterion A."

The recommendation of the HPC and decision of City Council shall be sent to the MN SHPO in accordance with applicable state statutes.

Review and Decision by the City Council:

The City Council shall review and make a decision on a Heritage Preservation Site application in accordance with Section 8.4.7, Type 4 Review Procedure (Planning Commission or Heritage Preservation Commission Recommendation and City Council Decision).

Prior to making a decision, the City Council may request a review and recommendation by the Planning Commission for the designation's conformance with the comprehensive plan. The City Council shall adopt findings in support of any decision to designate a Heritage Preservation Site in the form of an ordinance. Save the Northfield Depot (STND) member, Alice Thomas, drafted a memo, which outlines why the Northfield Depot is in conformance with the comprehensive plan and is attached as part of Exhibit B. STND has submitted several documents as part of their application, which are referenced in the findings and is attached as a part of Exhibit B.

Approval Criteria:

All of the following criteria shall be considered in the review of Heritage Preservation Site designation applications:

- (1) That the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, landscaping, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association; or

Staff Response:

The Northfield Depot was originally constructed only thirty years after Minnesota became a State and represents westward expansion and white settlement that was propelled by construction of the railroad system and incentivized through the Homestead Act and General Allotment Act. The restored structure is of significance to American history, as well as period architecture, engineering and culture based on

the integrity of the building's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and association. The application from Save the Depot describes the architecture character as:

“...a swooping hip roof and flared eaves held up by graceful, detailed timber brackets, Northfield's 1888 Milwaukee Depot offers a classic, if modest, example of what might be termed “Richardsonian Depot Vernacular,” an architectural style typical of many Midwest train stations from 1870-1900.”

The architecture of the building also keys in significant cultural aspects of the time. Separate facilities and entrances were created for men and women, which included entrances, ticket windows, waiting rooms and exit doors.

The Depot has been relocated from its original site on the south side of 3rd Street West. However, based on National Register standards, per the application language under Criteria Consideration B: Moved Properties, the property is “the surviving property most importantly associated with an historic event”, which, in general is the growth and development of Northfield. Furthermore, the National Register describes that the orientation, setting and general environment must be comparable to the historic location and compatible with the property's significance. The Depot is orientated to face the same railroad track (as it had at its original location) and as stated previously, is located just across the street from its original location. This block, from 2nd to 3rd Street (on the west side of Highway 3) was concentrated with railroad related buildings, businesses and depots, which supports the National Register's criteria for the setting and general environment, as well as association for the area.

The design of the building speaks to significance of the building as well. The Depot is a classic example of many Midwest train stations of that era. Brick exterior with large stone block were typical with the large overhang of the roof, which gave passengers shelter. Other details such as cottage style windows, which were functional not decorative (the larger panes on the bottom provided better visibility of on-coming trains for the passengers and station master), doors with transoms, detailed brackets, a patterned brick chimney, and roof cap cresting with finials were unusual for a small town.

Materials and workmanship of the Depot are explained in great detail as part of Appendix C: Historic/Original and Current Materials - Exterior and Appendix F: Original and Current Materials - Interior. The appendices support the significance of the Depot as it outlines the historic/original and current materials used to maintain the buildings historic integrity.

- (2) That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

Staff Response:

Railroads were a significant influence on settlement patterns. The application quotes from the National Register Criteria that “A railroad station that served as the focus of community's transportation system and commerce” is one type of significance associated with events. Passenger rail was key to the economic development and quality of life in Northfield and was supported by businesses, colleges,

farmers, and town leaders. Appendix D lists several other events that are significant to Northfield's history.

- (3) That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

Staff Response:

Several persons of significance are associated with the Depot and are detailed in Appendix D and page five of the application.

- (4) That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (5) That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history; or

Staff Response to No. 4 & 5:

The Depot's period of significance is from 1888-1944. This timeframe shows, per the application on page four, "the parallel growth of passenger and freight service in Northfield and of rail service as a whole..." and "The Depot, therefore, represents a period when the passenger train service was considered an essential part of rail transportation."

- (6) That have a unique location or singular physical characteristics representing established and familiar aspects of a view, vista, site, area or district in the city.

Staff Response:

Also stated in response to No. 1, this block, from 2nd to 3rd Street (on the west side of Highway 3) was concentrated with railroad related buildings, businesses and depots, which supports the National Register's criteria for the setting and general environment, as well as association for the area.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends a motion approving the ordinance which affirms the designation of the Northfield Depot to continue as a local Heritage Preservation Site at its new location on Lot 2 Block 1 of the Depot Addition.

Alternative Options:

The City Council could make a motion to disapprove the Northfield Depot continuing as a local Heritage Preservation Site.

Financial Impacts:

NA

Tentative Timeline:

PC Review: Thursday, May 20, 2021

HPC Review: Thursday, June 10, 2021

City Council Review & Public Hearing/1st Reading: August 17, 2021

City Council 2nd Reading: September 7, 2021

Tentative Date to Publish the Summary Ordinance: September 15, 2021 and then adopted 30 days following publication