

From: David Siebert

Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 5:35 PM

To: astratioti@zmhotels.com; planning <planning@DuluthMN.gov> **Cc:** David Siebert

Subject: Demolition of Building

I am the owner of Duluth Candy Co. across the street from the building known as the Old Astoria hotel and I would like to share my thoughts on the building. A company from California bought the building and gave plenty of notice on their intentions to put up a new building on the property (I believe that the news covered the story, but could be mistaken on this point.)

The tenants were told there was a new owner and that at some point they would need to move out. When the notice came to vacate, the tenants were given plenty of time to move. The Preservation Society did nothing during any of the previously mentioned steps until the building was completely vacated and a crew had already gone through removing all the required items prior to applying for a demolition permit. Then the Preservation Society decided to make noise and hold up progress on the property.

I find the actions taken by the Preservation Society quite disgusting!

I have tried to contact the Preservation society twice with no response and would like to ask 2 questions:

1. Do they have the money to buy the building outright from the owner and fix it up? If not, then they should not be allowed to demand what is done with the property.
2. The building does nothing for the Duluth downtown area, it does not stand out, it has no major historical significance, and needs more repairs done to it than it may be worth. Why is the Preservation Society making Duluth look like a slum? The Cozy Cove is another example of buildings beyond functional repair that are, in my opinion, being held Hostage.

As a business owner I will say that I miss the businesses that were there because we helped each other and there was greater foot traffic in the area. I will also tell you that I would greatly appreciate an expedient decision to tear the building down so that the homeless do not break in and end up burning the building down. The empty building looks horrible and needs to be demolished. The last point I will make is that the business that bought the property has the right to do with it as they see fit and to allow the Preservation Society to hold the City of Duluth and this business hostage over a badly dilapidated building is wrong..

I will do my best to attend the meeting.

thank you for your time

David Siebert

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Steven Robertson

From: rod raymond
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 1:58 PM
To: Steven Robertson
Cc: Miles Ringsred
Subject: Re: Follow up on Astoria Hotel, 102-108 E Superior St

Thanks Steven, as a business owner in the neighborhood historic structures like this enhance our business.

Tearing this historical building down and turning it to a parking lot would hurt our business. So I would like to know how our voices will heard.

We adamantly oppose tearing down this building.

You may not know this but I owned the Carlson bookstore building (also known as the lange motor building). My _____ building looked exactly like the Astoria before I restored it. Now it's home to Blacklist brewing and other businesses. It adds character to the district and helps my businesses (the Brewhouse, Oliver Inn, Rathskeller, Evolve Yoga) thrive.

I've CCed my attorney on this note and will forward this to other members of the Historic Arts and Theater district committee.

I truly hope the historic commission and other powers that be will save this building. We can't build them like this anymore.

...Cheers to the good life!

On May 26, 2022, at 11:58 AM, Steven Robertson <srobertson@duluthmn.gov> wrote:

Hello. You had emailed us several weeks ago about the old Astoria Hotel, 102-108 E Superior Street. The property owner has submitted a zoning application for demolition of this structure. Since this structure is contributing to the historic nature of the downtown historic district, a review by the Historic Preservation Commission is required. This letter is being mailed out today (see attached).

Let me know if you have any questions. Thank you!

Steven Robertson

From: Al S <>
Sent: Thursday, June 9, 2022 9:37 PM
To: planning
Subject: A Duluthian against the planned Hotel Astoria demolition

Dear City of Duluth Council and Planners,

As a member of the Duluth community, I am writing to you to respectfully voice my opinion that the planned demolition of the historic Hotel Astoria building located at 102 E. Superior St. be prevented.

I and many others believe that this building is an asset to the city for its historic significance and ongoing value as a place for local businesses to operate. We believe that the Hotel Astoria and other endangered structures are both a symbolic link to our thriving past and an enduring economic driver for small business and tourism in Duluth. Such a structure should not be destroyed only to be replaced with a parking lot. It most certainly should not be done at the expense of Duluthians at the whim of owners from across the country with no interest in our city beyond tearing it down for personal gain.

The planned demolition is not a good deal for Duluth. Ask yourself, is it a fair trade to displace three local businesses patronized by visitors and locals in exchange for a new place to leave your car? Is it a savvy decision to deprive the owners and staff of The Chinese Dragon, Hucklebeary and Old Town Antiques and Books of their livelihood while parking lot profits are mailed out of the state? Will a parking lot generate more tax dollars than three local businesses in a prime location? Will a parking lot enhance the beauty or charm of the HART district? Will it draw more tourists? People don't travel to Duluth or visit downtown for the parking lots. We can certainly find somewhere to build a new lot or ramp, but the Hotel Astoria, once gone, cannot be replaced.

Please continue to support Duluth, its people, businesses and legacy by preventing the demolition of the historic Hotel Astoria building.

Sincerely,

Al Skomars
Un citoyen du Lhut

Alexander K. Skomars
www.SanguinePictures.com

Steven Robertson

From: planning
Sent: Monday, June 13, 2022 8:08 AM
To: Steven Robertson
Subject: FW: Old Astoria Hotel Comment

For HPC

From: Blake Romenesko
Sent: Sunday, June 12, 2022 9:20 PM
To: planning <planning@DuluthMN.gov>
Subject: Old Astoria Hotel Comment

Hello,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed demolition permit of the Old Astoria Hotel at 102 E. Superior St. Removing this building would greatly diminish the quality of the Duluth Commercial Historic District. This building is a business block as it holds a high density of small storefronts in a single building. Business blocks were standard in old downtown. Only a handful remain and those that are, including this one before the owner evicted the businesses last winter, are productive in several aspects. They contribute greatly to the tax base, losing this building to a parking lot would lose \$15,000 annually in tax revenue. Block buildings are also thriving small business centers home to unique shops and restaurants. Not a single storefront in the remaining historic blocks is unoccupied. In the past, the small businesses that operated in the Astoria have often been my main reason to visit downtown.

Today I live on the outskirts of downtown and the vitality of life for me and my neighbors depends heavily on a walkable downtown with diverse shops and restaurants to patronize. Like my 130-year-old home, the Astoria needs some work. With 40% in historic tax credits available, the current owner is very capable of operating this historical building profitably.

Blake Romenesko
311 W. 4th St.
Duluth, MN 55806

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A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

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☐ REPLY TO CLOQUET OFFICE

WWW.HANFTLAW.COM

June 13, 2022

WILLIAM M. BURNS
JOHN D. KELLY*
FREDERICK A. DUDDERAR, JR.
R. THOMAS TORGERSON*
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HEATHER E. MUTCHLER
RICHARD R. BURNS*, OF COUNSEL
CHARLES H. ANDRESEN, OF COUNSEL
*ALSO ADMITTED IN WISCONSIN

Via Email Only

Members
Heritage Preservation Commission
c/o Mr. Steven Robertson
Senior Planner, City of Duluth
City of Duluth Planning & Construction Services
411 W. First Street, Room 210
Duluth, MN 55802

Re: 102-108 E Superior Street / Bullseye Building
Our File: 28005.008

Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of our client, North Creek Investors II, LLC, the owner of the property at 102-108 E. Superior Street, I am submitting this information in connection with your meeting to be held today, June 13th, at 12:00 p.m.

Late last week, we were furnished with information relating to the meeting and issues that exist relative to proposed demolition of this property.

You will note this letter is more of a position and submission statement than new information since the principal information is contained in the Application. This is submitted on behalf of our client and includes a letter from Anne Stratioti, ZMC Hotels (parent entity), dated May 18, 2022 and the Structural Engineering Report prepared by Northland Consulting Engineers, L.L.P. dated April 11, 2022. That Application, Anne's letter and Northland's Report are attached. Anne will also be testifying here today.

I have had the privilege of being involved in a number of matters involving historical preservation issues and the utilization of historic tax credits. I was also heavily involved in the efforts to obtain and then extend the Minnesota State Historic Tax Credit, which has been a boon to historic renovation but, unfortunately, is currently looking like it will expire.

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Historic projects I have been involved in and which utilize historic tax credits include: Munger Terrace, Chester Terrace, Bridgeman Russell Building, NorShor Theatre, the Old City Hall project, and now, Duluth Armory. Several other projects were determined not to be feasible from a historic tax credit standpoint: Townview Apartments, Prindle House, Tech Village and Wieland Building.

I consider myself a strong advocate for historic preservation where it is appropriate and certainly would have hoped that was the case here. However, the harsh realities of construction costs, 2022 development in a central business district facing record vacancies, and the current nature of the building in question calls for its demolition. In addition, observation by the naked eye reveals that its value as a contributing historic structure is very limited and that its historic features mostly have been lost for many years.

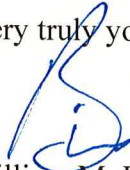
The submission that ownership has made here is compelling, starting with the referenced in the Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the ZMC letter, and the Report from Northland. These are all submitted with this letter with our request that they be included in the record of this hearing and in your decision making.

We feel that if one steps back from this property and looks at what it was, what it is, what it is not, and what its potential is, it is clear that:

- The historic features of the building were removed, deteriorated, or replaced long before our client's acquisition of this property.
- The property contains no real unique historical features in a subjective sense and does not appear central to the District.
- There is no realistic or feasible way, at this point in time, to renovate this property and it cannot be allowed to stay in its current state.

We submit that the information here supports the fact that this building is appropriate for demolition. The information submitted makes clear the impracticability of a renovation, and our request that the Heritage Preservation Commission approve the demolition of this property is appropriate. Ownership will, of course, comply with the rules as the evolve on this issue.

Very truly yours,



William M. Burns

WMB/cah

Enclosures: Application for Certificate of Appropriateness
Letter from Anne Stratioti, ZMC Hotels (5/18/22)
Structural Engineering Report, Northland Consulting Engineers, L.L.P. (4/11/22)