

**Department of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Planning Division**

250 South Fourth Street, Room 300  
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1385  
(612) 673-2597 Phone  
(612) 673-2526 Fax  
(612) 673-2157 TDD

---

**MEMORANDUM**

---

DATE: October 23, 2012  
TO: Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Committee  
FROM: Beth Elliott, Principal City Planner  
SUBJECT: National Register of Historic Places Nomination – Peavey Plaza

---

**Background**

On August 29, 2012 the Minnesota Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) sent the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission a letter requesting comments on the nomination of Peavey Plaza to the National Register of Historic Places (Attachment A). The property is located at 1101 Nicollet Mall.

Attachment B includes a copy of the nomination, prepared by Hess Roise, for your review.

---

On May 25, 2012, the Minneapolis City Council voted to approve the demolition based on the following adopted Findings of Fact:

1. *The applicant is seeking approval of the demolition of Peavey Plaza in order to rebuild the plaza area as a new, more cost effective, code compliant, and contemporary public gathering space that better supports the event use that Peavey Plaza has come to accommodate.*
2. *Peavey Plaza is not an individually designated historic landmark, nor does it lie within a recognized historic district.*
3. *Peavey Plaza has not been studied by the City for historic preservation designation, but the City Planning Department made a preliminary determination that Peavey Plaza may be a “historic resource” that could potentially qualify for such designation. MCO § 599.110 (historic resource defined as “[a] property that is believed to have historical, cultural, architectural, archaeological or engineering significance and to meet at least one of the criteria for designation as a landmark or historic district as provided in this chapter.”)*
4. *Therefore, it is necessary for the applicant to apply to the HPC for review and approval of its demolition plans.*
5. *Pursuant to § 599.480(a) of the City’s Heritage Preservation Ordinance, a request for demolition approval shall be granted if it is determined that a property is not a historic resource. Even if a property is determined to be a historic resource; however, demolition approval may be granted if*

*a finding is made that there are “no reasonable alternatives to the demolition.” MCO § 599.480(b). Similarly, even property that has historic designation may be demolished if there are “no reasonable alternatives to the destruction.” MCO § 599.350(b).*

6. *Restoration of Peavey Plaza is not feasible. The plaza has already been materially altered from its original design in several areas, compromising the architectural integrity of the original design. Modifications include the complete replacement of all grass areas with paving, changes to plumbing systems for the water features, and the replacement of planter beds with pre-cast concrete modular retaining wall systems in areas along Nicollet Mall and 12<sup>th</sup> Street.*
7. *Peavey Plaza is functionally obsolete, and it is not economically feasible to replicate the current design. The City does not have adequate local public funding to comprehensively repair, modernize, or replicate the current plaza design.*
8. *Private donors and/or outside funding sources have indicated a willingness to contribute financially to the construction of a new Peavey Plaza if tangible improvements to serve current public needs are provided in the new design.*
9. *Peavey Plaza was built primarily with concrete. The concrete is spalling and rebar is exposed. The concrete’s deficiencies cannot be repaired.*
10. *Peavey Plaza could not legally be built today because it is a public facility and is inaccessible per the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Making it accessible would require a ramp of over 200 feet in length that would take up a significant amount of space. Such a ramp would fundamentally alter the original design, and still would not offer disabled persons dignified, equal access to the plaza.*
11. *Members of the disabled community have confirmed that Peavey Plaza’s current design does not provide disabled persons with equal access to the facility itself, or to public programs offered at the facility.*
12. *Peavey Plaza’s storm water management systems are not code compliant and require complete replacement at significant expense.*
13. *Peavey Plaza’s current design with “hidden” spaces and corners contributes to nuisance activity and crime.*
14. *Peavey Plaza’s current design does not meet guidelines set forth by Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.*
15. *Owners and operators of property located adjacent to or near Peavey Plaza have reported crime and ongoing unsavory or illicit activity taking place on the plaza, all of which can be attributed to the plaza’s sunken design and hidden areas.*
16. *The city cannot address the Plaza’s public safety and accessibility concerns in a financially feasible and sustainable way.*
17. *Peavey Plaza’s sunken design with large steps and drop-offs contributes to accidents and personal injuries.*
18. *Peavey Plaza’s sunken design with large steps does not allow for the movement of vehicles and equipment into the lower level, thus increasing operating and maintenance costs.*
19. *Peavey Plaza’s sunken design with large steps does not lend itself to serving as a venue for public events.*
20. *Peavey Plaza’s design offers poor access for electrical systems.*
21. *Peavey Plaza’s plumbing systems supporting the water features have failed and require replacement. Two of the three original pumps are broken, the cast iron piping buried underground and in concrete foundations has rusted, and some pipes are clogged. Replacement parts for the public are no longer available.*
22. *Correction of the issues noted above would require the disturbance of the majority of Peavey Plaza and replacement of the original features with new construction at significant expense. The result would be the replacement of Peavey Plaza with a facsimile of the original design that would be more costly than the proposed new design.*

23. *Necessary maintenance of Peavey Plaza in its current state would require a capital expenditure that the city cannot currently fund.*
24. *Comprehensive restoration of Peavey Plaza cannot be achieved without demolition or destruction of existing plaza structures.*
25. *Even if Peavey Plaza were replaced with a facsimile of the current design, the new plaza would remain functionally obsolete, inaccessible, and prone to safety issues that are inherent to the design.*
26. *Replacement or replication of Peavey Plaza using the current design would still necessitate a demolition permit and destruction of the exiting plaza.*
27. *Peavey Plaza is costly to operate and generates little income to cover these costs. The city's Public Works Department maintains the plaza and annual maintenance costs have ranged from \$176-284 thousand dollars per year during the last seven years.*
28. *A new design for the plaza area will correct the foregoing deficiencies and provide a space that is safe, easily accessible to all members of the public, sustainable, economical to operate, and that will support income generating events and activities.*
29. *There are no reasonable alternatives to demolition or destruction of Peavey Plaza.*

This action of the City Council became effective when it was subsequently ratified by the Mayor and published in *Finance & Commerce*; thus representing the official decision of the City.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Because Peavey Plaza is the subject of an active lawsuit, staff recommends submitting the City's above-referenced, adopted Findings of Fact to the State Historic Preservation Officer.

**Attachments**

- A. May 25, 2012 City Council Findings of Fact
- B. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Report