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Council Member Cam Gordon
Minneapolis City Hall
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Hess Roise

Council Member Gordon:

I write in response to a letter from Abdi Warsame, Executive Director/CEO of the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, dated June 11, 2021. The letter correctly indicates that the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) reviewed a report I coauthored in 2015 and a designation study prepared by CPED in 2019 and concluded that Glendale does not merit designation due to its compromised historical integrity. The letter implies, though, that this was our conclusion as well, which is not correct.

I respectfully disagree with the SHPO and assert that Glendale has sufficient integrity to qualify for both National Register and local landmark designation. Preservationists have traditionally placed a high value on aesthetics when evaluating a property's significance, favoring high-style buildings or vernacular properties with pristine features. These biases devalue properties that have, like the people associated with them, experienced different and sometimes difficult realities and expressed standards of beauty not conforming to "mainstream" parameters. Similar biases are evident when it comes to assessing "historic integrity." Many properties fall in gray zones where more than one interpretation of the same condition can be justified by the seven "aspects of integrity" outlined in National Register bulletins, so it is not surprising when preservationists reach opposing conclusions. I believe that alterations resulting from pragmatic maintenance efforts or from aesthetic preferences not embraced by the dominant culture should not be simply shrugged off as diminishing a property's authenticity. The alterations could, instead, be valued as another chapter of a property's history, or the impact of these changes could be inconsequential given the nature of the property's significance. This approach will help us move towards a more equitable preservation of our shared culture.

Sincerely,



Charlene Roise

