

Historical Summary

Bayfront Property Area

500 to 1000 Railroad Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55805

Prepared for City of Duluth Brownfield Assessment Grant

City of Duluth

March 2008

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Prepared for City of Duluth Brownfield Assessment Grant (2005)

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Introduction

This historical summary is prepared for the City of Duluth regarding the Duluth Bayfront area which includes property on the Duluth bayfront between 500 and 1000 Railroad Street, Duluth, Saint Louis County, Minnesota (hereafter referred to as the Property). A summary of existing historical background information for the subject Property has been requested by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in support of evaluating plans to perform a supplemental Phase II investigation at the Property. If approved, the investigation work would be performed for the City of Duluth using its EPA brownfields assessment grant funding. The City of Duluth was awarded brownfield assessment grant funding in 2005 for use in performing assessment work within the City. [Figure 1](#) shows the Property location within the City's target assessment area.

The Property is owned by the Duluth Economic Development Authority (DEDA). DEDA is a separate operating entity from the City of Duluth. [Figure 2](#) shows the Property layout. The subject parcel outlines and their identification numbers are shown on [Figure 2](#). As shown on the figure, there are two existing boat slips (Slip 2 and 3) and one filled former Slip 4 within the Property area.

The 14.7-acre Property is located on the northern shore of the St. Louis River which expands to an open water area called Superior Bay in this vicinity, prior to discharging into Lake Superior northeast of the Property. Superior Bay of the St. Louis River is adjacent to the northeast and eastern sides of the Property ([Figures 2 and 3](#)). Directly north is a parking lot and city park with a playground (Bayfront Park and Playfront playground) and beyond that the Great lakes Aquarium and the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center. To the south and west are commercial/industrial properties which are also generally level and at approximately the same elevation as the Property. Interstate Highway I-35 lies west of the Property, beyond Railroad Street. Railroad Street defines the western limit of the Property area. The Property is level, vacant land sitting three to five feet above the mean lake level elevation. The sole structure on the Property is a small wood frame vacant garage which sits on the pier west of Slip 3 ([Figure 3](#)). The garage building is less than 50 years old.

Previous Property Background Information

The following previous environmental assessment, historical review, and correspondence documents were reviewed prior to preparing this historical summary:

- *Phase I Environmental Property Assessment: Rice's Point Railyard.* Prepared by Barr Engineering Company, March 2004 for the City of Duluth and Canadian Pacific Railway (funded under the City's EPA-funded pilot assessment grant), and
- *Phase I Environmental Property Assessment: City of Duluth (DEDA) Waterfront Properties, 500-1000 Railroad Street, Duluth, Minnesota.* Prepared by Barr Engineering Company, March 2004, for the City of Duluth (funded under the City's EPA-funded pilot assessment grant).
- *Phase II Environmental Site Assessment Report, Duluth Waterfront Property, Duluth, Minnesota.* Prepared by Barr Engineering Company, August 2004, for the City of Duluth (funded under the City's EPA-funded pilot assessment grant).
- Archaeological and historical evaluation of Bayfront Landing Outlet Mall and Bayfront Park Expansion Site, SHPO Number 94-3275. Letter addressed to Dennis Gimmestad, State Historic Preservation Office, from David Rutford of RREM, Inc. for the City of Duluth, March 13, 1995.
- Bayfront Landing Mall and Park Development SHPO # 94-327 5, letter from Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, to Mr. Ben Wopat, Corps of Engineers, Regulatory Branch, St. Paul, MN, April 20, 1995.
- Permit #94-2166 Amendment & Extension- City of Duluth, Duluth Harbor – St. Louis County, letter from Daniel Retka, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to Karl Nollenberger, Administrative Officer, City of Duluth, August 12, 1996.

A 2004 limited Phase II investigation was performed to determine whether there was evidence of a release(s) in the area of Slips 2, 3, and 4. Results of the Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) indicated the presence of trace concentrations of volatile organic compounds; trace semi-volatile organic compounds; Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) metals (particularly chromium); and diesel range organics; and confirmed the presence of debris material, indicative of placed fill, in the subsurface. Groundwater characterization was not included in the 2004 Phase II ESA. The Phase II ESA report recommended conducting a supplemental investigation(s) to fill-in additional details regarding contaminants of concern and, potentially, groundwater characterization at the properties.

Overview of Past Property Uses

The following section describes the historical development of the Slips 2, 3, and 4 Properties. Additional information about historical uses is provided in the property ownership history section. Reference materials are summarized at the end of this report and copies are included in appendices to this report.

Pre-development Period (before 1860s)

Prior to the development and settlement of the Duluth area, this area was primarily wetland and swamp as well as a portaging area between the Superior Bay and Lake Superior, as shown on the historical maps (Ref. 1g).

Early Development and Shipping Period (1870s to 1920s)

This historical period was initiated by the cutting of the Minnesota channel in 1872. As a result of the opening of the channel, the waterfront area at the north end of Superior Bay developed quickly. Early dockage was built over wooden piers with little or no fill added. Businesses in the Property area included a coal dock, the Duluth Boat Club, an Armour Packing facility, Northern Pacific Railroad Freight House and a variety of warehouses. Slips were platted starting in 1886 (Ref. 1a, 1b, 1c, 1f).

Height of Shipping and Waterfront Use Period (1920s to 1970s)

By the 1920s, Duluth had a very busy waterfront. The protected bayfront housed freight depots, warehouses, cement storage, passenger docks, railroad depots and manufacturing; making an ideal port resource for shipping, transport, loading and unloading (Ref.1a, 1b, 1c, 1e, 1f). Wooden pilings were used to build above the wetland areas and were then filled in as use increased.

Diversification of Waterfront Use (post 1970s)

After approximately 1970, the types of businesses and uses at and around the Property continued to change to include commercial, entertainment and recreational uses. By the 1950s, rail and boat shipping was supplemented by trucking. Former buildings located on the Property included freight warehouses, a freight depot and a whole sale food distributor warehouse and operation facility (former Gamble Robinson Whole Sale Foods 800 Railroad Street West and Jenos Inc. food production 824 Railroad Street West, Ref. 1g). The adjacent property to the west was formerly used by the Northern Pacific Railroad for siding tracks and an access road (now referred to as Railroad

Street) which served the Property and adjacent former industrial ship loading facilities on the piers between Slips 2, 3 and 4. Waterfront property began to include more public uses, such as development of the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center (DECC), small boat dockage, the Great Lakes Aquarium, Playfront and Bayfront Park (Ref. 1b, 1c). During this period the Property became vacant and structures were demolished and removed. Bayfront Park was built adjacent to the eastern side of the Property as shown on Figure 3.

Current Site Conditions and Uses

As noted above, the Property consists of vacant former industrial port land and a filled former boat slip (former Slip 4). There is one vacant garage building on the pier beside Slip 3. Former building slabs are present on the Property, as visible in Figure 3. A nearby property to the northeast has been a Portland cement manufacturer (Lafarge) with lime kilns and a limestone loading and unloading dock since approximately the early 1900s. Photographs of the Property and surrounding area, taken during the Phase I Assessment in 2004, are presented in Appendix H.

Conceptual Development Plans

A Phase I Environmental Assessment and a focused Phase II investigation were completed for the Property and surrounding Bayfront area in 2004 by Barr Engineering Company, for the City of Duluth. The next phase of investigation will be a supplemental Phase II investigation. At this time, the City anticipates that the likely redevelopment of the Property may include recreational and waterfront-oriented uses to compliment the nearby Bayfront Park outdoor pavilion and the Great Lakes Aquarium. No development plan or schedule currently exists for the Property.

Property Ownership History

Previous area-wide Phase I ESA work (referenced above) did not include research of specific ownership histories for all property parcels within the assessment areas – the scope did not include performing title searches for individual properties. The following information regarding past ownership of the Property parcels has been provided by the City Assessor’s office and its electronic database ([Appendix A](#)). The Property ownership summary by parcel identification numbers as follows:

**010-0210-00010 Purchased by DEDA in 1993 from ETOR Real Estate Corp.
ETOR Real Estate Corp. purchased the parcel in 1986 from ETOR
Property Ltd. Partnership.
ETOR Property Ltd. Partnership purchased the parcel in 1968.**

**010-0210-00220 The parcels purchased by DEDA in 1993 from ETOR Real Estate
Corporation**

**010-0210-00300 ETOR Real Estate Corp. purchased the parcels in 1986 from ETOR
Property Ltd. Partnership**

010-0210-00340 ETOR Property Ltd. Partnership purchased the parcels in 1970.

010-0200-00760 DEDA owns

010-0200-00820

010-0200-00970

010-0200-01020

010-0200-01030

010-0200-01040

010-0200-01050

010-0200-01060

010-0200-01090

010-0200-01100

010-0200-01160

010-0200-01190

010-0200-01220

010-0200-01490

and

Former (filled) Slip #4 (no parcel identification number assigned).

The following general ownership and use information is summarized from Barr's 2004 Phase I ESA which utilized historical fire insurance maps, aerial photographs, reverse city directories, and site visit. Information sources as listed in the Reference Resources section of that summary.

- 1888 Slip 2: Bowen and Bartlett Storage and warehouse, planked dock on piles, Duluth Roller Mill, Chicago, St. Paul, Mississippi and Omaha Railroad (CSPM&O RR)
Slip 3: Warehouse, Limestone Dock
- 1908 Slip 2: Northern Pacific Railroad, CSPM&O RR, iron clad dock
Slip 3: City Dock Company, Lime Stone Mill
Slip 4: platted. No structures on Slip 4 property – water only
- 1950 Slip 2: Northern Pacific Railroad, CSPM&O RR, iron clad dock and planked dock
Slip 3: Cutler-Magner Warehouse (on wood posts), Stone Yard, Cement Storage and Shipping, Lime Kilns, Western Electric, Heating and Ice Plant
Slip 4: National Carloading Corp., Oil Warehouse
- 1955 Slip 2: Northern Cold Storage, Northern Pacific Railroad, CSPM&O RR, Fish House
Slip 3: Huron Portland Cement, Cutler-Magner Co. Warehouse, Stone Yard, Lime Kilns, Telephone Supply, Western Electric, Heating and Ice Plant
Slip 4: National Car Loading Corporation on the west (an apparent warehouse with railroad sidings) and Duluth Terminal and Cold Storage on the east (warehouse), Oil Warehouse, private garage
- 1963 Slip 2: Northern Pacific Railroad, CSPM&O RR, Northern Cold Storage
Slip 3: Huron Portland Cement, Cutler-Magner Co. Warehouse
Slip 4: Duluth Terminal and Cold Storage, National Carloading Corp.
- 1969 Slip 2: Northern Pacific Railroad, CSPM&O RR
Slip 3: Huron Portland Cement, Cutler-Magner Co. Warehouse
Slip 4: Structures as of 1963 remain. The head of Slip 4 appears to have been filled and a structure is present at the northwest end of Slip 4 (possible warehouse construction).
- 1972 Slip 3: Cement plant remains in use along Slip 3.
Slip 4: Approximately one-third of Slip 4 appears to have been filled. A multi-story building, parallel with Railroad Street, is located at the head of the filled slip (Gamble Robinson Whole Sale Food, 800 West Railroad Street and Jenos Inc. food production manufacturers, 824 West Railroad Street).
- 1975 Slip 4: Entire Slip 4 has been filled. Buildings remain the same as in 1972 except that the car loading and cold storage warehouses are no longer present.
- 1991 and 1997: Foundation slab present for former warehouse parallel with Railroad Street at the north end of Block 12. No buildings remain on Slip 4 area.

Filling appears to have occurred during a time when the piers were being used for private commercial purposes and to create a site for the food company building at 800 to 824 West Railroad Street.

Reference Resources

The following resources are numbered for use as references.

REF#	Resource	Years
Primary Resources		
1a	U.S. Geological Survey Topographic and Historical Maps (Appendix E)	1895, 1953, 1969, 1975, 1993
1b	Aerial Photographs (Appendix C)	1939, 1953, 1961, 1972, 1975, 1981, 1991, 1997
1c	Historical Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (Appendix B)	1888, 1908, 1950, 1955, 1963, 1969
1d	City of Duluth Plat Maps (Appendix D)	1886, 1902, 1954 and 1976, 1987, 1996
1e	Downtown/ Bayfront Map and Images (Appendix G)	Late 1800s, 1910 (date of publication not available for photographic images)
1f	Historical Maps (Appendix F)	1865, 1871, 1888, 1909, 1927, 1935 (date of publication not available for all maps)
1g	Reverse City Directory	1981
Supplemental Resources		
5a	City of Duluth Engineering file records – City Engineer File #5018, Project file for Railroad Street, Garfield Avenue to 8 th Avenue West, City Job #8754MA93, 1998 (see Ref. 7a).	File review conducted on 11/6/03
5b	Zoning Regulations for the City of Duluth, Minnesota; Chapters 50 & 51 of the Legislative Code, updated February 14, 2003 (see Ref. 7a).	2003

5c	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Leaking Underground Storage Tank Site Database (see Ref. 7a).	Information from MPCA's on-line database, reviewed on-line on November 7, 2003 and January 13, 2004.
MPCA File Review Documents & Investigation Reports		
6a	Leak File for Leak #2094, Food Service of America gasoline tank. Includes excavation report (J&D Tank Services, November 1990) and Remedial Investigation Report (American Engineering Testing, Inc., 1993) (see Ref. 7a).	1990 1993
Additional Investigations		
7a	Barr Engineering Company, <i>Limited Phase I Assessment (Historical Records Review), Bayfront Property, Duluth, MN</i> , April 14, 1992.	1992

Figures

Appendix A

City of Duluth Assessor's office database print-out for Property

Appendix B

Historical Fire Insurance (Sanborn) Maps

Appendix C

Historical Aerial Photographs

Appendix D

Historical Plat Maps

Appendix E

Historical Topographic Maps

Appendix F

Historical Maps

Appendix G

Other Historical Images or Figures

Appendix H

2004 Property Photographs