

Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 9th, 2026 @ 12:00 p.m.
Duluth City Hall Council Chambers

Call to Order and Roll Call

President Jess McCullough called to order the meeting of the city of Duluth Heritage Preservation Commission at 12:03 p.m. on Monday, February 9th, 2026, in the Duluth city hall council chambers.

Attendance

Members Present: Ken Buehler, Kathleen Cargill, Jess McCullough, and Andrea Wedul

Members Absent: John Hest and Michael Schuetze

Staff Present: Chris Lee, Jenn Moses, Tom Church, and Sam Smith

Consideration of Meeting Minutes

Heritage Preservation Commission Meeting – January 12th, 2026

MOTION/Second: Wedul/Cargill approved

VOTE: (4-0)

Consideration of Matters Regarding Commission Action

None.

Other Business/Presentations

Downtown 1st Street Discussion by City of Duluth Staff – Tom Church, Senior Housing Developer, addressed the commissioners and presented a map of the future downtown development project area boundary. The development of downtown Duluth is a priority for the administration and city staff. There are many sites, particularly along the 1st street corridor, that are historically listed, have structures that are contributing to historic districts, or have the potential to be designated as historic properties. Staff are hoping to play a proactive role in the downtown redevelopment discussion and would like to hear any other considerations from commissioners.

Church spoke about the focus area for economic development staff's EPA Brownfields redevelopment work. Staff will make an effort to prioritize the use of Brownfield funds for projects within this defined area, but they are not limited to this area. Staff are hoping to promote that there is some money available to property owners and developers if they have a site in the downtown area that needs remediation. Some priority sites include the New Garrick building, the Shoppers ramp, and the site of the former Kozy bar. He also talked about Union Gospel Mission's future plans to relocate and build a new facility on 2nd street.

Church also talked about the downtown Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) project that other planning staff are working on. The City initiated this Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) in anticipation that the downtown area could see significant infill and redevelopment within the coming years, including areas that are within the City's shoreland area and would require environmental review. The purpose of the AUAR is to help the city adequately plan for this redevelopment and provide a mitigation plan for how the city and

future developers will manage the environmental impacts, and it will also help cut down on costs and project timelines for developers.

Housing is a priority for development in the downtown area; however, it is expected that some of the future projects will be mixed use. Church encouraged commissioners to share their thoughts and considerations.

Commissioners: Commissioners asked questions about plans for the New Garrick building, timelines for development, and how areas within the boundary are being prioritized.

Staff: Church responded that there are no plans for the New Garrick building at this time, but there are some remediations to the building that need to happen first. These larger DEDA sites will likely need to go through an RFP process.

Right now, staff are working to clear a path for redevelopment to occur throughout the downtown district. Staff are somewhat bound by the term of the current comprehensive plan, but they hope that this work can be ongoing for many years to come. Development can be tricky in Duluth for many reasons, and this is an effort to remove some of those barriers. There is not a clear answer for how the non-city owned sites should be prioritized for redevelopment at this time, but staff are working to be proactive and collaborate with other city departments to help facilitate the development process in a meaningful way. Church reiterated that 1st street has a higher concentration of blighted properties, so the goal is to start addressing some of those properties while prioritizing housing. There are several other funding sources available, which include the Historic Fund and the Storefront Loan Program through the 1200 Fund, and the Housing Trust Fund. The funding sources also help to decide which properties will be redeveloped first.

Commissioners: McCullough stated that he supports prioritizing housing during a time of housing crisis in Duluth, and he noted that the HPC has seen many historic buildings demolished over the years. He asked staff how it can be ensured that the different funding sources will be used to create long-term housing and not short-term housing, such as boutique hotels. Cargill asked staff if it would be possible to set up tours of these project buildings for commissioners.

Staff: Church stated that there will be language in the development agreements that restrict certain types of uses. He added that some buildings may not be able to be saved due to poor structural integrity. Conversion projects on historic buildings can also be challenging due to modern building and fire code requirements and the additional costs that come with bringing those buildings up to code.

Church believes it would be a good idea for commissioners to tour the buildings, perhaps as a brown bag meeting. Staff will continue to provide updates on this project to the HPC as it progresses.

Communications

None.

Report of Final Disposition on Matters Previously Before the Commission

None.

Reports of Officers, Staff and Committees

Planning Commission Liaison Update – Commissioner Wedul stated that the February planning commission agenda includes two subdivision applications as well as an update from staff on the Lester Park Land Use Study.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:36 p.m.

Respectfully,

Jenn Moses, Manager
Planning & Economic Development